

HOUSE No. 03804

By Mr. Sannicandro of Ashland, for the committee on Higher Education, on House, No. 1832, a Bill establishing an education loan repayment program for social workers in areas of need and certain direct care human services workers (House, No. 3804). November 10, 2011.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Eleven

An Act establishing an education loan repayment program for social workers in areas of need and certain direct care human services workers.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. To provide for certain unanticipated obligations of the commonwealth, to provide
- 2 for an alteration of purpose for current appropriations, and to meet certain requirements of law,
- 3 the sum set forth in this section is hereby appropriated from the General Fund unless specifically
- 4 designated otherwise in this section, for the several purposes and subject to the conditions
- 5 specified in this section, and subject to the laws regulating the disbursement of public funds for
- 6 the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012. This sum shall be in addition to any amounts previously
- 7 appropriated and made available for the purposes of this item.

- 8 XXXX – XXXX For the Licensed Certified Social Worker and Direct Care Human Services
- 9 Worker Student Education Loan Repayment Pilot Program Trust Fund established in section 2 of
- 10 this act \$2,400,000

11 SECTION 2. (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of any general or special law to the contrary,
12 there shall be a licensed certified social worker and direct care human services worker student
13 education loan repayment pilot program, hereinafter referred to as the pilot program, for the
14 purpose of increasing and retaining access to child welfare services, social services, and direct
15 care human services in the commonwealth. The pilot program shall provide financial assistance
16 to eligible program participants to assist them in repaying student education loans, as defined in
17 this section; provided, that the pilot program shall be limited to a total of 100 licensed certified
18 social workers, and 100 direct care human services workers who are employed by the department
19 of developmental services or providers under contract with the department.

20 The pilot program shall be administered by the board of higher education. The board, in
21 collaboration with the executive office of health and human services, shall promulgate guidelines
22 governing the pilot program. The guidelines shall include, but need not be limited to, the
23 following provisions: (1) eligibility shall be limited to persons with incomes that do not exceed
24 500% of the federal poverty level; (2) eligibility shall be limited to persons entering the field of
25 social work or direct care human services after July 1, 2011; (3) eligibility shall be limited to
26 social workers who are licensed certified social workers as defined in section 130 of chapter 112
27 of the General Laws and who are employed in child welfare, or in a geographic or programmatic
28 setting defined as high need under the guidelines governing the pilot program, or to direct care
29 human services workers employed by the department of developmental services or providers
30 under contract with the department; (4) the commonwealth shall repay a student education loan
31 at a rate not to exceed \$250 per month for a period not to exceed 48 months; (5) payments by the
32 commonwealth shall be made directly to the lender on behalf of a pilot program participant, and
33 shall cover only loan payments owed by the participant in the months during which the

34 participant works in the commonwealth as a licensed certified social worker in child welfare, or
35 in a geographic or programmatic setting defined as high need under pilot programs guidelines, or
36 as a direct care human services worker employed by the department of developmental services or
37 providers under contract with the department; (6) procedures for selecting 200 pilot program
38 participants among eligible applicants; and (7) measures to deal with situations in which a pilot
39 program participant ceases to comply with program requirements.

40 For the purposes of this section, the term student education loan shall mean any indebtedness,
41 including interest on such indebtedness, incurred to pay tuition, fees or other direct expenses
42 incurred in connection with the pursuit of an undergraduate or graduate degree by an applicant,
43 but shall not include loans made by any person related to the applicant, or loans paid by credit
44 card.

45 (b) There is hereby established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a separate fund to
46 be known as the Licensed Certified Social Worker and Direct Care Human Services Worker
47 Student Education Loan Repayment Pilot Program Trust Fund, hereinafter referred to as the
48 Education Loan Repayment Fund, to which shall be credited any appropriations or other monies
49 authorized by the general court and designated to be credited thereto. The board of higher
50 education shall hold the Education Loan Repayment Fund in an account separate from other
51 funds or accounts. Amounts credited to the Education Loan Repayment Fund shall be used,
52 without further appropriation, by the commissioner of higher education or his designee, to carry
53 out the licensed certified social worker and direct care human services worker student education
54 loan repayment pilot program established in this section.

55 (c) The licensed certified social worker and direct care human services worker education loan
56 repayment pilot program shall expire once the final payment is made under this section by the
57 board of higher education on behalf of all pilot program participants. The board of higher
58 education shall evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot program and its benefits and costs to the
59 commonwealth and shall submit a report, together with its recommendations on whether a
60 permanent program should be established and if so how such program should be structured, to
61 the general court by filing the report with the house and senate committees on ways and means
62 and the joint committee on higher education, not less than one year prior to the expiration of the
63 pilot program.