

HCS HB 1925 -- RURAL HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL GRANT PROGRAM

SPONSOR: Morse

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Healthcare Reform by a vote of 11 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 1925.

This bill requires the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) to, subject to appropriations, establish a rural health care professional grant program that provides incentives for certain health care professionals to practice and reside in rural counties, defined as counties with fewer than 35,000 inhabitants, after August 28, 2024. The Department must post eligibility criteria, contents of the grant application, and procedures and time lines by which health care professionals may apply for grants to enter into a grant agreement with DHSS. Provisions of grant agreements include that the health care professional must practice and reside in the rural county for a period of five years and a statement of damages to which the state is entitled should the health care professional breach the grant agreement.

This bill establishes the "Rural Health Care Professional Grant Program Fund". Moneys in the Fund shall be used solely for awarding grants and administering the grant program.

The program expires August 28, 2034.

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that any option to address the immense physician shortage in the state is worth exploring. One such option is to offer incentives to prospective physicians.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Morse; Missouri Academy of Family Physicians; Mo State Medical Association; Mo Nurses Association; Chance Hepola, Cox Health; Missouri Chiropractic Physicians Association; Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Jefferson City Medical Group; Missouri Association of Rural Health Clinics; Winton Policy Group; Saint Luke's Health System; and Missouri Hospital Association.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that they oppose the establishment of the grant program.

Testifying in person against the bill was Arnie C. Dienoff.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that in addition to the shortage of physicians, there is additionally a shortage of pharmacists, as well as certain other health care professions, in rural areas of the state.

Testifying in person on the bill was Missouri Academy of Physicians Assistants and Independent Colleges and Universities of Missouri.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.