

2017-2018 Legislative Session

190th General Court (2017-2018)

An Act relative to creating a loan repayment program for human service workers.

Section 16 of Chapter 6A shall be amended by inserting the following new section, 16A. There shall be a student loan repayment program for human service workers for the purpose of encouraging individuals to enter and continue to work in human service programs. The Executive Office of Health and Human Services shall administer the program in accordance with guidelines promulgated by the Department of Education.

The term “qualified education loan” shall mean any indebtedness, including interest on such indebtedness, incurred to pay tuition or other direct expenses incurred in the connection with the pursuit of a certificate, undergraduate or graduate degree by an applicant. It shall not include loans made by any person related to the applicant.

To be eligible for this program, a participant must be working a minimum of 35 hours per week as a human service worker and have an individual income of no more than \$45,000 per year. Further, individuals must have maintained 12 consecutive months of employment at a minimum of 35 hours per week to be eligible for this program. This program will help defray costs from previously incurred student loans for graduates holding certificate, undergraduate or graduate degrees.

Eligible participants in this program can be reimbursed up to \$1,800 per year based on the amount of loan payments made by the participant. The Commonwealth shall repay the eligible participant’s student loan at a rate not to exceed \$150 per month for a period not to exceed 48 months. Payments by the Commonwealth shall cover loan payments by the eligible participant only during the months in which the human service workers provides services in the Commonwealth, and the payments shall be made directly to the lender.

A “human service worker” is defined as an individual employed by a human service organization who provides services by supporting individuals’ and families’ efforts to function in daily living situations. Human service worker is a generic term for people who hold professional jobs in settings such as group homes; institutional or residential settings; correctional or community health centers; at family, child and youth service agencies; and at programs that help individuals affected by alcoholism, drug abuse, family violence and/or aging.