

SENATE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Sal N. DiDomenico

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act establishing a loan repayment program for human services workers.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Sal N. DiDomenico

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Middlesex and Suffolk

SENATE No.

[Pin Slip]

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. 77 OF 2023-2024.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)**

An Act establishing a loan repayment program for 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 Chapter 6A of the General Laws, as so appearing in the 2022 Official Edition, is hereby
2 amended by inserting after section 16Z the following new section:-

3 Section 16AA. (a) As used in this section, the following words shall, unless the context
4 clearly requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

5 “Advancing Health Equity in Massachusetts (AHEM)” priority geographic areas include
6 communities facing the largest health disparities, as identified by the Executive Office of Health
7 and Human Services. AHEM communities include Athol, Attleboro, Aye, Brockton, Chelsea,
8 Chicopee, Dennis, Dorchester, Fall River, Falmouth, Fitchburg, Gardner, Holbrook, Holyoke,
9 Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, Mattapan, New Bedford, North Adams, Orange, Pittsfield, Rockland,
10 Roxbury, Springfield, Southbridge, Ware, Wareham, Webster, Winchendon, Worcester, and
11 Yarmouth.

12 “human service provider,” a community-based human services organization with a
13 human services program funded by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the
14 Executive Office of Elder Affairs, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities or
15 the Department of Early Education and Care.

16 “human services worker,” an employee of a human service provider who provides
17 treatment, support or services to clients or their families.

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

22 (b) There shall be a student loan repayment program for human service workers to
23 encourage individuals to enter the field and maintain employment at human service programs.
24 The Executive Office of Health and Human Services shall administer the program in accordance
25 with guidelines promulgated by the Department of Higher Education.

26 (c) To be eligible for the program, a participant must be working a minimum of 35 hours
27 per week as a human services worker. Further, individuals must have maintained 12 consecutive
28 months of employment as a human service worker at a minimum of 35 hours per week to be
29 eligible for this program. This program will help defray costs from previously incurred student
30 loans for graduates holding a certificate or undergraduate/graduate degrees.

31 (d) Eligibility criteria may be created to determine how applicants to the program should
32 be prioritized and how much funding each would be able to apply for.

33 (e) Priority for funding should be given to applicants who 1) have at least three years of
34 experience in the human services field, 2) work in an Advancing Health Equity in Massachusetts
35 (AHEM) community, 3) earn less than \$60,000 annually, and 4) attest to their ability to
36 communicate with consumers and provide care in a language other than English, with the
37 language skill aligning with the needs of the site where they work.

38 (f) Applicants will be eligible for up to \$6,000 if they have an associate degree, up to
39 \$20,000 if they have a bachelor's degree and up to \$30,000 if they have a master's degree.

40 (g) Applicants must agree to service commitment in an eligible setting as follows: 1-year
41 commitment for an associate degree, 2-year commitment for a bachelor's degree and 3-year
42 commitment for a master's degree.