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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE BILL

No. 1690 Session of  
2021

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INTRODUCED BY SCHLOSSBERG, R. BROWN, McNEILL, ORTITAY, SNYDER,  
THOMAS, BENHAM, BRADFORD, CIRESI, T. DAVIS, DELLOSO, DeLUCA,  
DRISCOLL, GUENST, HANBIDGE, HARRIS, HILL-EVANS, HOHENSTEIN,  
HOWARD, MADDEN, MALAGARI, NEILSON, N. NELSON, ROZZI,  
SAMUELSON, SANCHEZ, STRUZZI AND WEBSTER, JUNE 24, 2021

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, JUNE 24, 2021

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AN ACT

1 Establishing the Emerging Health Service Psychologist Program;  
2 and providing for authorization of internship positions, for  
3 award of internship positions and for funding of program; and  
4 making an appropriation.

5 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
6 hereby enacts as follows:

7 Section 1. Short title.

8 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Emerging  
9 Health Service Psychologists Program Act.

10 Section 2. Definitions.

11 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall  
12 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the  
13 context clearly indicates otherwise:

14 "Commitment stipend." Money provided under the program to a  
15 qualified applicant who enters into a contract with the  
16 department under section 3(c)(1).

17 "Department." The Department of Health of the Commonwealth.

1 "Internship position." An internship position authorized by  
2 the department for the program under section 4.

3 "Mental health professional shortage area or facility." Any  
4 of the following:

5 (1) An area in this Commonwealth which has been  
6 certified by the department as having a shortage of mental  
7 health professionals based on any of the following:

8 (i) The designation of the area's geographic  
9 location by the Bureau of Health Workforce under the  
10 United States Health Resources and Services  
11 Administration as having a shortage of mental health  
12 professionals.

13 (ii) The department's determination that the area  
14 has a critical shortage of psychologists.

15 (2) A facility in this Commonwealth which has been  
16 certified by the department as having a shortage of mental  
17 health professionals based on any of the following:

18 (i) The designation of the facility by the Bureau of  
19 Health Workforce under the United States Health Resources  
20 and Services Administration as having a shortage of  
21 mental health professionals.

22 (ii) The department's determination that the  
23 facility has a critical shortage of psychologists.

24 "Program." The Emerging Health Service Psychologist Program  
25 established under section 3(a).

26 "Qualified applicant." An individual who meets all of the  
27 criteria under section 3(b).

28 "Recipient." A qualified applicant who receives a commitment  
29 stipend.

30 Section 3. Emerging Health Service Psychologist Program.

1 (a) Establishment.--The Emerging Service Psychologist  
2 Program is established within the department. The department  
3 shall administer the program to provide commitment stipends to  
4 qualified applicants who continue to practice psychology in  
5 mental health professional shortage areas. The department may  
6 consult with the Department of Human Services and the Department  
7 of Health to administer the program.

8 (b) Qualifications.--To qualify for the program, an  
9 individual shall meet all of the following criteria:

10 (1) The individual shall be a resident of this  
11 Commonwealth.

12 (2) The individual shall be a graduate of an accredited  
13 college or university holding a degree of Doctor of  
14 Philosophy in psychology, Doctor of Psychology or Doctor of  
15 Education in psychology or a doctoral degree in a field  
16 related to psychology.

17 (3) The individual may not have previously completed the  
18 equivalent of 12 months or 1,750 hours of a doctoral  
19 internship program or position accredited by the American  
20 Psychological Association or Canadian Psychological  
21 Association.

22 (4) The individual shall submit an application to the  
23 department on a form and in a manner specified by the  
24 department.

25 (c) Stipends.--The following apply:

26 (1) A qualified applicant shall be eligible to receive a  
27 commitment stipend if the qualified applicant enters into a  
28 contract with the department to continue serving in a mental  
29 health professional shortage area upon the completion of an  
30 internship position under section 4.

1           (2) A recipient shall be provided with a commitment  
2 stipend of an amount up to \$30,000 for the duration of the  
3 internship position.

4 Section 4. Authorization of internship positions.

5       Subject to the availability of funds for the program, the  
6 department shall authorize internship positions located within  
7 mental health professional shortage areas to participate in the  
8 program in accordance with the following:

9           (1) The department shall ensure that the authorized  
10 internship positions are equally distributed across rural and  
11 urban areas of this Commonwealth.

12          (2) The department shall ensure that internship  
13 positions provide qualified applicants with comprehensive  
14 clinical training, supervision and instructional experiences  
15 that prepare qualified applicants with the necessary  
16 competencies to enter into the health care workforce.

17          (3) The department shall prioritize authorizing  
18 internship positions in facilities that provide Medicaid-  
19 covered mental health services and are accredited by the  
20 American Psychological Association.

21          (4) The department shall ensure that internship  
22 positions satisfy the requirements for supervised experience  
23 necessary to obtain licensure to practice psychology in  
24 accordance with the act of March 23, 1972 (P.L.136, No.52),  
25 known as the Professional Psychologists Practice Act.

26 Section 5. Award of internship positions.

27       (a) Applications.--The department shall establish a process  
28 for a qualified applicant to apply for and receive an internship  
29 position in accordance with this act.

30       (b) Obligations of recipient.--A qualified applicant shall

1 enter into a contract with the department that requires the  
2 recipient, upon the successful completion of an internship  
3 position, to be employed as a psychologist in a designated  
4 mental health professional shortage area for a period of not  
5 less than 12 months. The recipient shall have the following  
6 duties:

7 (1) The recipient shall permit the department to  
8 determine compliance with the employment requirements and all  
9 other terms of the contract.

10 (2) The recipient shall apply for licensure to practice  
11 psychology in accordance with the act of March 23, 1972  
12 (P.L.136, No.52), known as the Professional Psychologists  
13 Practice Act, at the first opportunity after completion of  
14 the internship position.

15 (3) Within six months after receiving licensure to  
16 practice psychology under the Professional Psychologists  
17 Practice Act, the recipient shall be employed as a  
18 psychologist serving in a mental health professional shortage  
19 area. The department may exempt a recipient from the  
20 employment deadline under this paragraph in accordance with  
21 the policies and procedures adopted by the department as  
22 necessary to implement the program under section 7.

23 (c) Failure to comply.--A recipient who fails to comply with  
24 the requirements under subsection (b) shall reimburse the  
25 department for the amount of the commitment stipend. Money  
26 collected by the department from reimbursements under this  
27 subsection shall be used exclusively to fund the program and  
28 shall not be used for any other purpose.

29 Section 6. Funding of program.

30 The department shall award commitment stipends to recipients

1 to the extent that money is available to cover the  
2 administration of the program.

3 Section 7. Appropriation.

4 The sum of \$4,500,000 is hereby appropriated from the General  
5 Fund to the department for the purpose of administering the  
6 program.

7 Section 8. Regulations.

8 The department shall promulgate regulations, adopt policies  
9 and procedures and establish forms as necessary to implement  
10 this act.

11 Section 9. Effective date.

12 This act shall take effect in 90 days.