
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 974 Session of
2021

INTRODUCED BY BROOKS, COLLETT, KANE, SANTARSIERO, MUTH, STEFANO,
CAPPELLETTI, YUDICHAK, STREET, HUTCHINSON, COSTA, BAKER AND
SCHWANK, DECEMBER 17, 2021

REFERRED TO EDUCATION, DECEMBER 17, 2021

AN ACT

1 Providing for the Student Loan Forgiveness Program for Nurses
2 and Nurse Faculty; and imposing duties on the Pennsylvania
3 Higher Education Assistance Agency.

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

6 Section 1. Short title.

7 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Student Loan
8 Forgiveness Program for Nurses and Nurse Faculty Act.

9 Section 2. Declaration of purpose.

10 The General Assembly declares that the purpose of this act is
11 to provide an incentive for individuals to pursue training in
12 nursing or training to become nurse faculty and remain in this
13 Commonwealth to live and work in nursing.

14 Section 3. Definitions.

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

18 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance

1 Agency.

2 "Nurse faculty." A registered nurse with at least one year
3 of clinical experience in nursing who possesses an advanced
4 degree in nursing from an accredited college or university
5 located in this Commonwealth and is employed as full-time or
6 part-time faculty teaching in a field of nursing education in
7 this Commonwealth.

8 "Program." The Student Loan Forgiveness Program for Nurses
9 and Nurse Faculty established under section 4(a).

10 "Qualified health care facility." Any of the following
11 facilities:

12 (1) An assisted living residence.

13 (2) A home care agency.

14 (3) A home health care agency.

15 (4) A hospice agency.

16 (5) A hospital.

17 (6) A Living Independence for the Elderly (LIFE)
18 program.

19 (7) A long-term care facility.

20 (8) A personal care home.

21 "Recipient." An individual who receives student loan
22 forgiveness under the program.

23 Section 4. Student Loan Forgiveness Program for Nurses and
24 Nurse Faculty.

25 (a) Establishment.--The Student Loan Forgiveness Program for
26 Nurses and Nurse Faculty is established in the agency.

27 (b) Administration.--The agency shall administer the program
28 for the purpose of providing student loan forgiveness for
29 eligible individuals who enter into an agreement with the agency
30 as provided under subsection (d).

1 (c) Qualifications.--To qualify for the program, an
2 applicant must meet all of the following criteria:

3 (1) Be employed as a registered nurse, certified
4 registered nurse practitioner or clinical nurse specialist.

5 (2) Be a resident of this Commonwealth.

6 (3) Hold an undergraduate academic degree, graduate
7 level academic degree or doctoral academic degree from an
8 accredited college or university located in this
9 Commonwealth.

10 (4) Have been hired as a full-time employee of a
11 qualified health care facility in this Commonwealth.

12 (5) Have successfully completed at least the first year
13 of full-time employment as an employee of a qualified health
14 care facility in this Commonwealth.

15 (d) Loan forgiveness.--The agency shall forgive up to
16 \$1,000,000 annually in student loans for recipients. Recipients
17 who are not nurse faculty must enter into an agreement with the
18 agency to be employed at a qualified health care facility in
19 this Commonwealth for a period of five years. Recipients who are
20 nurse faculty must enter into an agreement with the agency to be
21 employed full time or part time at an accredited college or
22 university located in this Commonwealth for a period of five
23 years. Annual recipients shall include at least one individual
24 from each of the following regions of the Commonwealth:

25 (1) Northwest Region composed of Cameron, Clarion,
26 Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence,
27 McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren Counties.

28 (2) Southwest Region composed of Allegheny, Armstrong,
29 Beaver, Butler, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset,
30 Washington and Westmoreland Counties.

1 (3) Northcentral Region composed of Bradford, Centre,
2 Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter,
3 Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga and Union Counties.

4 (4) Southcentral Region composed of Adams, Bedford,
5 Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon,
6 Juniata, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry and York Counties.

7 (5) Northeast Region composed of Carbon, Lackawanna,
8 Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Susquehanna,
9 Wayne and Wyoming Counties.

10 (6) Southeast Region composed of Bucks, Berks, Chester,
11 Delaware, Lancaster, Montgomery, Philadelphia and Schuylkill
12 Counties.

13 (e) Agreement provisions.--The agreement under subsection
14 (d) shall include the following terms:

15 (1) A recipient who is not nurse faculty shall agree to
16 be employed at a qualified health care facility in this
17 Commonwealth for a combined total of no less than five years.

18 (2) A recipient who is nurse faculty shall agree to be
19 employed at an accredited college or university located in
20 this Commonwealth for a combined total of no less than five
21 years.

22 (3) The recipient shall permit the agency to determine
23 compliance with the work requirement and all other terms of
24 the contract.

25 (4) Upon the recipient's death or permanent disability,
26 the agency shall not be required to provide student loan
27 forgiveness under the program.

28 (5) The agency may terminate student loan forgiveness
29 and demand repayment of the amount of student loans forgiven
30 if:

1 (i) the recipient is convicted of or pleads guilty
2 or no contest to a felony; or

3 (ii) the State Board of Nursing has determined that
4 the recipient has committed an act of gross negligence in
5 the practice of nursing or has suspended or revoked the
6 recipient's license to practice.

7 (6) A recipient who fails to begin or complete the
8 obligations contracted for shall pay to the agency the amount
9 of the loan received under the terms of the contract.
10 Providing false information or misrepresentation on an
11 application or verification of service shall be deemed a
12 default. Determination as to the time of the default shall be
13 made by the agency. The recipient and the agency shall make
14 every effort to resolve conflicts to prevent a breach of the
15 agreement.

16 (f) Agreement enforcement.--Notwithstanding 42 Pa.C.S. §
17 8127 (relating to personal earnings exempt from process), the
18 agency may seek garnishment of wages of a recipient who fails to
19 comply with the agreement under subsection (d) for the amount of
20 student loan forgiveness provided to the recipient.

21 Section 5. Tax applicability.

22 Student loan forgiveness received under this act shall not be
23 considered taxable income for purposes of Article III of the act
24 of March 4, 1971 (P.L.6, No.2), known as the Tax Reform Code of
25 1971.

26 Section 6. Funding.

27 Student loan forgiveness payments under this act shall be
28 made only to the extent that funds are appropriated for the
29 program and are sufficient to cover administration of the
30 program. Student loan forgiveness under this act shall not

1 constitute an entitlement derived from the Commonwealth or a
2 claim on any funds of the Commonwealth.

3 Section 7. Regulations.

4 The agency shall promulgate regulations necessary to
5 administer this act.

6 Section 8. Effective date.

7 This act shall take effect in 60 days.