STATE OF NEW YORK

8350

IN SENATE

January 19, 2024

Introduced by Sen. BROUK -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to creating the school-based mental health loan repayment program

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Legislative findings. The legislature acknowledges that there is a mental health crisis among our youth, especially in our most vulnerable communities. The legislature also acknowledges that there is a shortage of mental health professionals working in schools across the state. In order to combat the youth mental health crisis, the legislature acknowledges the benefits of a loan repayment program for the professionals working in the most underserved schools.

§ 2. Section 605 of the education law is amended by adding a new subdivision 13 to read as follows:

13. New York state school-based mental health loan repayment program. a. Purpose. The president shall grant loan repayment awards for the purpose of increasing the number of youth mental health professionals employed in underserved schools across New York state. Such awards shall be made on a competitive basis to applicants who have graduated from an institution of higher education approved or registered by the regents.

b. Eligibility. (1) To be eligible to receive an award pursuant to this subdivision, an applicant must be a resident of New York state who has graduated from an institution of higher education and has an outstanding student loan debt.

(2) For purposes of this subdivision, a youth mental health professional can be a certified or licensed school psychologist, school counselor, or social worker.

(3) Underserved schools shall be schools with student to mental health professional ratios below the recommended levels promulgated by the president in conjunction with the commissioner for purposes of this subdivision.

(4) Such award shall be made annually to eligible applicants who, prior to accepting such award, are committed to at least four years of

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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service as a youth mental health professional in an underserved school, and such award shall not exceed thirty thousand dollars per year and shall be made to applicants pursuant to the following schedule:

(i) thirty percent of the total award for the first year;

(ii) thirty percent for the second year; and

(iii) any unpaid balance of the total award not to exceed the maximum award amount for the third year.

(5) Recipients of such awards shall be eligible to apply for other awards established under this chapter.

c. Duration. Such award shall be made annually, for no more than four years, to applicants who remain eligible under this subdivision and who are certified as such by the corporation.

d. Amount. The corporation shall grant such awards within the amount appropriated for such purpose and based on availability of funds in an amount not to exceed the total cost of the completion of such degree programs. Cost of completion of such degrees shall include tuition at an institution of higher education approved or registered by the regents and other required or reasonable student fees.

§ 3. This act shall take effect immediately.