STATE OF NEW YORK

7257

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

May 19, 2023

Introduced by Sen. CANZONERI-FITZPATRICK -- 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 a loan forgiveness program for licensed mental health professionals in jails and prisons

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

Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new section 679-k to read as follows:

§ 679-k. New York state licensed mental health professionals in jails and prisons loan forgiveness program. 1. Purpose. (a) The president shall grant student loan forgiveness awards for the purpose of increasing the number of mental health professionals rendering mental health services in correctional institutions in New York state.

(b) For the purposes of this section, the term "correctional institutions" shall mean any place operated by the department of corrections and community supervision as a place for the confinement of persons under sentence of imprisonment or persons committed for failure to pay a fine, including any place owned and operated by county or municipal governments within New York as a place for the confinement of persons under sentence of detention, imprisonment or persons committed for failure to pay a fine.

2. Eligibility. To be eligible for an award pursuant to this section, applicants shall: (a) be licensed as a mental health professional pursuant to article one hundred sixty-three of this chapter; (b) comply with subdivisions three and five of section six hundred sixty-one of this part; and (c) have an outstanding student loan debt.

3. Priority. Such awards shall be made annually to applicants in the following priority:

(a) First priority shall be given to an applicant who has received payment of an award pursuant to this section in a prior year and who, in

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

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the year prior to application, has provided mental health services to incarcerated individuals and/or correction staff in a correctional institution;

(b) Second priority shall be given to applicants who have not received payment of an award pursuant to this section in a prior year and who have provided mental health services to incarcerated individuals and/or correction staff in a correctional institution; and

(c) Third priority shall be given to applicants who are currently providing mental health services to incarcerated individuals and/or correction staff in a correctional institution for less than one year.

4. Awards. The corporation shall grant awards in the value of two thousand dollars to individuals who have provided full-time mental health services to incarcerated individuals and/or correction staff in a correctional institution, provided that no recipient shall receive an award that exceeds the total remaining balance of the student loan debt and that no recipient shall receive cumulative awards, pursuant to this section, in excess of twenty thousand dollars. Awards shall be within the amount appropriated for such purpose and based on availability of funds.

5. Rules and regulations. The corporation is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this section. In the event that there are more applicants who have the same priority, as provided in subdivision three of this section, than there are remaining awards, the corporation shall provide in regulation the method of distributing the remaining number of such awards, which may include a lottery or other form of random selection.

§ 2. This act shall take effect immediately.