

PROVIDERS' COUNCIL

House Bill 124: An act establishing an education loan repayment program for direct care human services workers

Sponsored by: Representative Jeffrey Roy

Purpose of bill: To encourage direct care workers to enter and continue working in community-based human services programs. The bill would help human service organizations recruit and retain a stronger, more qualified workforce.

Recent action: Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities reported the bill out of committee favorably on March 16, 2016. It will now go to a subsequent committee for consideration.

Key Facts:

- Many employees have salaries starting at just \$12 an hour, but some make even less.
- The lack of affordable higher education for direct service workers and the burden of student debt greatly contribute to the sector's recruitment and retention difficulties.
- According to the Almanac of Higher Education, 12 million – or 60 percent of college students – took out loans in 2009-2010 to go to school. Additionally, there are 37 million student loan borrowers with a current balance, including 14 million under 30 years old.
- According to *Help Wanted 2*, more than 80 percent of respondents at human services agencies report direct care and support positions routinely have the most turnover.

If passed, this legislation would:

- Amend Section 16 of Chapter 6A to create a loan repayment program for low-paid, credentialed direct care human service workers.
- Help low-paid direct care workers by having the state repay qualified education loans at a rate not to exceed \$1,800 per year (\$150/month) for a period not to exceed 48 months. Payments will only be made during months the participant is working as a direct care human services worker in the state and will be made directly to the lender.
- Help human service providers recruit and retain **credentialed direct care human service workers**, defined as a worker who provides services by supporting individuals' and families' efforts to function in daily living situations and has been issued a credential by the Massachusetts Council of Human Services Providers, Inc.
- A **qualified education loan** shall mean any indebtedness – including interest – to pay tuition or other direct expenses incurred in connection with the pursuit of a certificate, undergraduate or graduate degree by an applicant.
- Direct EOHHS to administer the program in accordance with Dept. of Ed. guidelines.

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