

JAN 18 2008

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO PHYSICIANS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that there is a critical
2 shortage of licensed physicians on the neighbor islands and that
3 access to health care in these medically underserved areas will
4 only deteriorate as the population ages. While it is reported
5 that Hawaii ranks eleventh in the nation for physicians per
6 capita, neighbor island residents have limited or no access to
7 physicians, including primary care physicians. According to the
8 state board of medical examiners, of the 4,009 licensed
9 physicians practicing in Hawaii, seventy-five per cent are
10 practicing on Oahu. Immediate action is necessary to retain and
11 attract licensed physicians to practice medicine in rural areas
12 on the neighbor islands.

13 A physician's residency generally consists of two to three
14 years of on-the-job training and continuing education after
15 graduation from medical school. Research indicates that
16 physicians tend to establish a practice in the geographic area
17 in which they receive their residency training. The family



1 medicine residency program at the University of Hawaii John A.
2 Burns school of medicine, department of family medicine and
3 community health has graduated six board-certified physicians
4 each year since 1994. Sixty per cent of these graduates are
5 practicing in rural, underserved, or academic family medicine.

6 Act 277, Session Laws of Hawaii 2007, appropriated funds to
7 expand the family medicine residency program to create residency
8 opportunities in rural areas on the neighbor islands. A rural
9 family medicine training site was developed on the Big Island
10 last year to rotate medical school graduates specializing in
11 family medicine through Hilo medical center. The goal is to
12 further expand the family medicine residency program to include
13 rural areas on Maui, Kauai, and Molokai in the future.

14 By participating in the family medicine residency program,
15 these physicians have already expressed a willingness to serve
16 rural areas and are acquainted with neighbor island residents
17 and facilities. A rural medical practice loan repayment program
18 would encourage physicians to participate in the family medicine
19 residency program in the first instance and, upon completion, to
20 establish their practices on the neighbor islands where they
21 received their residency training.



- 1 (2) Complete the family practice residency program at the
- 2 University of Hawaii John A. Burns school of medicine,
- 3 department of family medicine and community health;
- 4 (3) Have an outstanding eligible loan;
- 5 (4) Commit to practice medicine for a minimum of five
- 6 years in a rural area of a county in this State with a
- 7 population of 500,000 or less; and
- 8 (5) Meet any additional requirements determined by the
- 9 administrator.
- 10 (c) The administrator shall determine:
- 11 (1) The maximum number of annual qualifying physicians;
- 12 (2) The annual eligible loan repayment assistance amount
- 13 to be awarded to each qualifying physician; provided
- 14 that a qualifying physician shall not receive more
- 15 than five years of eligible loan repayment assistance;
- 16 and
- 17 (3) Any additional requirements for a physician to qualify
- 18 pursuant to section (b).
- 19 (d) Nothing in this section shall be construed to create
- 20 in any physician a right to any eligible loan repayment
- 21 assistance or any specific amount of eligible loan repayment



1 assistance under the rural medical practice loan repayment
2 program.

3 (e) There is established a special fund to be known as the
4 rural medical practice loan repayment program special fund into
5 which all appropriations, donations, and gifts shall be
6 deposited. The administrator may use any amount of the moneys
7 in the special fund to provide qualifying physicians with
8 eligible loan repayment assistance under the rural medical
9 practice loan repayment program. Upon determination by the
10 administrator, the fiscal officer of the University of Hawaii
11 John A. Burns school of medicine shall disburse payments to
12 qualifying physicians. The administrator shall submit an annual
13 report, including an accounting, to the legislature no later
14 than twenty days prior to the convening of each regular session.

15 (f) For purposes of this subpart:

16 "Administrator" means the dean of the University of Hawaii
17 John A. Burns school of medicine.

18 "Eligible loan" means any need-based federal, university,
19 or educational loan directly related to obtaining a medical
20 degree as determined by the administrator, except for loans that
21 are eligible for forgiveness or repayment assistance through



1 other sources and loans extended by a private individual or
2 family member.

3 (g) The administrator shall adopt rules pursuant to
4 chapter 91 as necessary to implement this section."

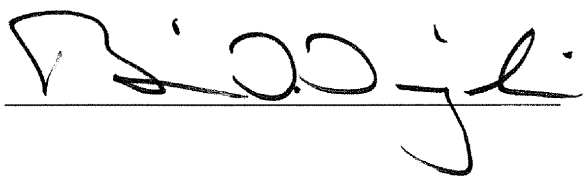
5 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
6 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
7 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2008-2009 for
8 deposit in the rural medical practice loan repayment program
9 special fund.

10 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the rural medical
11 practice loan repayment program special fund the sum of
12 \$ or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal
13 year 2008-2009 for the rural medical practice loan repayment
14 program pursuant to section 2 of this Act.

15 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the university of
16 Hawaii for the purposes of this Act.

17 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval;
18 provided that sections 3 and 4 shall take effect on July 1,
19 2008.

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INTRODUCED BY: 



Report Title:

Appropriation; Physicians; Neighbor Islands

Description:

Establishes a rural medical practice loan repayment program for licensed physicians who participate in the family practice residency program and who, upon completion of the program, commit to practice medicine for five years in rural areas on the neighbor islands. Appropriates funds.

