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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO LOAN REPAYMENT FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that many Hawaii  
2 residents are unable to obtain timely and appropriate health  
3 care due to shortages of primary and behavioral health care  
4 professionals in the State. These shortages not only threaten  
5 individual health, but the entire State's health care system.  
6 Areas of Hawaii that have been designated by the federal  
7 government as medically underserved have been most significantly  
8 affected by shortages of primary and behavioral health care  
9 professionals, including physicians, nurse practitioners,  
10 physician assistants, and psychologists. Social workers,  
11 marriage and family therapists, and registered nurses are also  
12 urgently needed in these areas.

13           In many cases, the increasingly high cost of education for  
14 health care professionals binds graduates to a career path that  
15 provides sufficient income to repay often exorbitant student  
16 loans. These career paths frequently lead to professional  
17 practice in highly specialized fields of care in urban areas,



1 rather than in general practice on the neighbor islands or in  
2 underserved areas in the State where the need is greatest. The  
3 legislature further finds that states with robust primary health  
4 care systems have lower costs and improved patient outcomes.  
5 Recognizing this correlation, many states have made the policy  
6 decision to dedicate public funds to the development of a strong  
7 primary health care workforce for underserved areas.

8       The legislature also finds that the Hawaii state loan  
9 repayment program administered by the John A. Burns school of  
10 medicine of the University of Hawaii at Manoa leverages public  
11 funds and private donations to access matching federal funds  
12 through the National Health Service Corps Branch State Loan  
13 Repayment Program of the United States Department of Health and  
14 Human Services. Since September 1, 2012, the loan repayment  
15 program has supported seventy-six recipients in exchange for  
16 work commitments in underserved geographic practice areas in  
17 Hawaii, with eighty per cent remaining in Hawaii and sixty-one  
18 per cent remaining at the site where they performed their  
19 service. Currently, health care professionals who have  
20 benefited from the loan repayment program serve on all islands  
21 and in the communities at Hilo, Kihei, Waianae, Wailuku, and



1 Waimea; at health clinics in Kalihi-Palama and Kokua Kalihi  
2 Valley; and in public institutional settings at the federal  
3 detention center in Honolulu, Halawa correctional facility, and  
4 Maui County correctional center.

5 The legislature recognizes the considerable positive public  
6 outcomes achieved using general fund allocations during the  
7 2017-2018 biennium and fiscal year 2019-2020 to educate, train,  
8 and facilitate health care professionals to work in underserved  
9 areas. Currently, the loan repayment program supports twenty-  
10 three active health care professionals in Hawaii.

11 The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to the  
12 department of health to fund the Hawaii state loan repayment  
13 program administered through the John A. Burns school of  
14 medicine of the University of Hawaii at Manoa to provide loan  
15 repayment for health care professionals who commit to work in a  
16 federally-designated health professional shortage area.

17 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
18 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
19 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and  
20 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
21 year 2024-2025 for the Hawaii state loan repayment program



1 administered through the John A. Burns school of medicine of the  
2 University of Hawaii at Manoa; provided that no funds shall be  
3 released unless matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis by funds  
4 from a private or another public source.

5 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
6 of health in coordination with the John A. Burns school of  
7 medicine of the University of Hawaii at Manoa for the purposes  
8 of this Act.

9 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on June 30, 3000.

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# H.B. NO. 661 H.D. 1

**Report Title:**

Health Care Professionals; Hawaii State Loan Repayment Program;  
Behavioral Health Care; University of Hawaii; John A. Burns  
School of Medicine; Department of Health; Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds for the loan repayment program for health  
care professionals; provided that the funds are matched on a  
dollar-for-dollar basis by funds from a private or another  
public source. Effective 6/30/3000. (HD1)

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