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HOUSE BILL 2024

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State of Washington

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By Representatives Darneille, Jarrett, Goodman, Eddy, Pedersen, Hudgins, Williams, Lantz, Kessler, Appleton, Clibborn, Hasegawa, Upthegrove, O'Brien, McDermott and Ormsby

Read first time 02/05/2007. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to the University of Washington school of law  
2 public service legal loan repayment assistance program; adding a new  
3 section to chapter 28B.20 RCW; creating a new section; and making  
4 appropriations.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** It is the intent of the legislature to  
7 provide access to legal education and to improve access to the justice  
8 system for the residents of the state of Washington. Until 2006, the  
9 University of Washington law school was the only law school in the  
10 state and one of only a few top ranked public law schools that did not  
11 have a loan repayment assistance program in place for graduates who  
12 enter public interest law. The nationwide decline in the percentage of  
13 new lawyers choosing to enter public interest law fields, from five and  
14 four-tenths percent to two and nine-tenths percent in the last thirty  
15 years, can be substantially attributed to dramatic increases in higher  
16 education debt coupled with wide discrepancies between public and  
17 private salaries for new lawyers. Today, more than three-quarters of  
18 all low-income households in Washington experience at least one civil

1 legal problem each year. Low-income residents face more than eighty-  
2 five percent of their legal problems without help from an attorney.

3 In 2006 the University of Washington law school established a loan  
4 repayment assistance program to provide graduates who pursue careers in  
5 public interest legal positions with payment assistance toward their  
6 student loan debt. However, while the structure is in place, the  
7 program lacks the resources and accountability measures to allow it to  
8 be effective in its purpose. Therefore, the legislature finds that it  
9 is in the best interest of the state to contribute funding to the loan  
10 repayment assistance program endowment fund at the University of  
11 Washington law school. It is the intent of this act to provide for the  
12 partial or full repayment of educational loans of University of  
13 Washington law school graduates who provide legal services in a public  
14 service area of the law within Washington state.

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.20 RCW  
16 to read as follows:

17 The appropriation of funds from the general fund to the University  
18 of Washington school of law public service legal loan repayment  
19 assistance program is subject to the following requirements:

20 (1) The University of Washington law school shall report to the  
21 legislature by December 1, 2008, and every two years thereafter, with  
22 information about the loan repayment assistance program. The report  
23 shall contain at least the following information:

24 (a) A financial summary of the endowment fund;

25 (b) The amounts and sources of funds received;

26 (c) The number of individuals receiving assistance from the program  
27 and information related to the positions in which these individuals are  
28 working;

29 (d) Efforts being undertaken to increase the amount of the  
30 endowment fund;

31 (e) Any available information regarding the effect of the loan  
32 repayment assistance program on student recruitment and enrollment; and

33 (f) Other information the school of law deems relevant to the  
34 evaluation of the program.

35 (2) In its rules for administering the program, the school of law  
36 must make provision for cases of hardship or exceptional circumstances,

1 as defined by the school of law. Examples of such circumstances  
2 include, but are not limited to, family leave, medical leave, illness  
3 or disability, and loss of employment.

4 (3) The loan repayment assistance program must be available to  
5 otherwise eligible graduates of the law school who work in positions  
6 with nonprofit organizations or government agencies. Such positions  
7 must be located within Washington state. Government agencies shall  
8 include the various branches of the military.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The sum of five hundred thousand  
10 dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for  
11 the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008, from the general fund to the  
12 University of Washington school of law loan repayment assistance  
13 program endowment fund for the purposes of this act.

14 (2) A sum equal to the total amount contributed to the University  
15 of Washington school of law loan repayment assistance program endowment  
16 fund from private sources subsequent to the effective date of this  
17 section, up to a maximum of five hundred thousand dollars, is  
18 appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009, from the general  
19 fund to the University of Washington school of law loan repayment  
20 assistance program endowment fund for the purposes of this act.

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