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**SENATE BILL 5010**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Frockt, Rolfes, Kohl-Welles, Hasegawa, Jayapal, Keiser, and Ranker

AN ACT Relating to the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program fund; adding a new section to chapter 28B.115 RCW; and making appropriations.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28B.115 RCW to read as follows:

The legislature finds that improved access to comprehensive health care services is vital to achieve health equity and an increased quality of healthy life for the people of Washington. Many underserved communities facing financial barriers, including those related to providers' health education loan debt and disparate salaries, struggle to attract and retain well-trained health professionals. Health professional shortage areas also face additional health care delivery challenges, including patient income or transportation barriers and lower provider service reimbursements.

The health professional loan repayment and scholarship program fund assists underserved communities in recruiting and retaining qualified health professionals. The incentive program also encourages interested and academically prepared health care students and professionals to consider practice in shortage areas. The legislature finds that interested students who are encouraged to explore the benefits and unique professional challenges presented in rural health practice are more likely to establish community roots and remain in the area in which they are trained. Providing underserved communities additional resources to recruit qualified health professionals reinforces the state's commitment to improve access to comprehensive health care for all persons in Washington.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The sum of four million dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated from the general fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, for the purposes of restoring funding to the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program fund.

(2) The sum of four million dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated from the general fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, for the purposes of restoring funding to the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program fund.

(3) The amounts appropriated in this section shall be deposited into the health professional loan repayment and scholarship program fund.

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