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**College & Workforce Development  
Committee**

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**HB 2002**

**Brief Description:** Creating the social work professional loan repayment program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Ortiz-Self, Bergquist, Santos and Leavitt.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Establishes the Social Work Professional Loan Repayment Program (Program) for credentialed social workers employed with the Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration or the Department of Children, Youth, and Families.
- Requires the Washington Student Achievement Council's Office of Student Financial Assistance to administer the Program.
- Establishes the Social Work Professional Loan Repayment Program Account.

**Hearing Date:** 1/28/20

**Staff:** Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

**Background:**

Social Workers in Washington State.

A person may only use the designation of social worker if the person is licensed by the Department of Health as a social worker, or has graduated with at least a bachelor's degree from a social work educational program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. Licensure is dependent on education and experience.

Washington Health Corps.

In 2019 the Legislature established the Washington Health Corps, an umbrella program consisting of the existing Health Professional Loan Repayment Program (HPLRP) and the new Behavioral Health Loan Repayment Program (BHLRP).

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

The HPLRP provides licensed health care professionals with student loan repayment if the professional agrees to serve in a rural or underserved urban area with a designated shortage. The BHLRP provides licensed health care professionals with student loan repayment if the professional agrees to serve in underserved behavioral health areas. Both programs provide up to \$75,000 in loan repayment for a minimum three-year service obligation. The participant must work a minimum of a 24-hour work week, and if the participant defaults on his or her service obligation, the penalty is either an amount equal to the unsatisfied portion of the service obligation or the total amount paid by the program, whichever is less.

The 2019 eligible health care professionals included Doctors of Medicine, Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine, Naturopathic Doctors, Doctors of Dental Surgery, Doctors of Medicine in Dentistry, Registered Dental Hygienists, Nurse Practitioners, Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, Certified Nurse Midwives, Licensed Midwives, Pharmacists, Licensed Clinical Psychologists, Licensed Independent Clinical Social Workers, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, and Licensed Mental Health Counselors.

**Summary of Bill:**

The Social Work Professional Loan Repayment Program (Program) is established to provide loan repayment to credentialed social work professionals who provide social work services on behalf of the Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration (DSHS) or the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). To qualify, a social worker must either be licensed as a social worker or have a bachelor's degree from a social work educational program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. Social workers who have been employed by the DSHS or the DCYF for two years are eligible for the Program. Program participants are eligible to receive a maximum lifetime award of \$50,000, for up to a maximum of 10 consecutive years, until the loan is repaid. A participant may receive loan repayments quarterly, or more frequently, until either the loan is repaid, the participant discontinues service as a social worker for the DSHS or the DCYF, or the award limit is reached. If a participant discontinues service, the loan repayments will cease to be effective on the date of the discontinued service.

The Washington Student Achievement Council's (WSAC) Office of Student Financial Assistance (Office) is the program administrator. The Office must verify credentialed social workers to participate in the program, coordinate with the Office of Financial Management State Human Resources Division and the WSAC to publicize the Program, accept grants and donations for the Program, and adopt Program rules and guidelines. Participants must allow the Office access to loan records and to necessary information from lenders to verify eligibility and to determine payments. The Social Work Professional Loan Repayment Program Fund is created in the custody of the State Treasurer.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 27, 2020.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.