

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To amend the Public Health Service Act to modify the loan repayment program for the substance use disorder treatment workforce to relieve workforce shortages.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Ms. SMITH (for herself, Ms. MURKOWSKI, and Ms. HASSAN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend the Public Health Service Act to modify the loan repayment program for the substance use disorder treatment workforce to relieve workforce shortages.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Mental Health Profes-
5 sionals Workforce Shortage Loan Repayment Act of
6 2023”.

1 **SEC. 2. LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM FOR SUBSTANCE USE**
2 **DISORDER TREATMENT WORKFORCE.**

3 Section 781 of the Public Health Service Act (42
4 U.S.C. 295h) is amended—

5 (1) In subsection (a)(2), by inserting “, or the
6 individuals each agree to complete a period of service
7 in a mental health professional shortage area” be-
8 fore the period;

9 (2) in subsection (c)—

10 (A) by redesignating paragraphs (2)
11 through (5) as paragraphs (3) through (6), re-
12 spectively; and

13 (B) by inserting after paragraph (1), the
14 following:

15 “(2) Any loan used for obtaining a degree from
16 an accredited institution of higher education for edu-
17 cation in mental health or a related field leading to
18 a master’s degree, leading to a doctoral degree, or
19 consisting of post-doctoral study.”;

20 (3) by striking subsection (d) and inserting the
21 following:

22 “(d) REQUIREMENTS OF SERVICE.—Any individual
23 receiving payments under this program as required by an
24 agreement under subsection (a) shall agree—

25 “(1) to an annual commitment to full-time em-
26 ployment, with no more than 1 year passing between

1 any 2 years of covered employment, in substance use
2 disorder treatment employment in the United States
3 in—

4 “(A) a Mental Health Professional Short-
5 age Area, as designated under section 332; or

6 “(B) a county (or a municipality, if not
7 contained within any county) where the mean
8 drug overdose death rate per 100,000 people
9 over the past 3 years for which official data is
10 available from the State, is higher than the
11 most recent available national average overdose
12 death rate per 100,000 people, as reported by
13 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention;
14 or

15 “(2) to up to 6 years of full-time employment,
16 with no more than 1 year passing between any 2
17 years of covered employment, as a behavioral or
18 mental health professional in the United States in—

19 “(A) a mental health professional shortage
20 area of greatest need, as determined by the
21 Secretary for the purposes of this section, as
22 designated under section 332; or

23 “(B) any facility, program, center, or clinic
24 as determined appropriate by the Secretary for
25 purposes of this section because of a shortage

1 of mental health professionals, including private
2 physician practices and other medical facilities
3 designated under section 332(a) as having such
4 a shortage.”;

5 (4) in subsection (e)(2), by inserting “338B,
6 338I, or 846 of this Act, section” after “under sec-
7 tion”;

8 (5) in subsection (h)(2), by inserting “and be-
9 havioral and mental health services employees” after
10 “treatment employees”;

11 (6) in subsection (i)—

12 (A) by redesignating paragraphs (1)
13 through (3) as paragraphs (2) through (4), re-
14 spectively; and

15 (B) by inserting before paragraph (2) (as
16 so redesignated), the following:

17 “(1) The term ‘behavioral and mental health
18 professional’ means health service psychologists, li-
19 censed clinical social workers, licensed professional
20 counselors, marriage and family therapists, psy-
21 chiatric nurse specialists, and psychiatrists.”; and

22 (7) in subsection (j). by striking “\$25,000,000
23 for each of fiscal years 2019 through 2023” and in-
24 serting “\$50,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2023
25 through 2032”