

House Bill 442

By: Representatives Schofield of the 60th, Smyre of the 135th, Burnough of the 77th, Beverly of the 143rd, Bennett of the 94th, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 7 of Chapter 3 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
2 relating to scholarships, loans, and grants, so as to create a grant program to encourage
3 certain physicians to practice in underserved areas of the state; to provide for procedures,
4 conditions, and limitations; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for
5 other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 Article 7 of Chapter 3 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
9 scholarships, loans, and grants, is amended by adding a new part to read as follows:

10 "Part 6B

11 20-3-518.10.

12 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

13 (1) 'Board' means the Georgia Board for Physician Workforce created by Code Section
14 49-10-1.

15 (2) 'Physician' means a rheumatologist, neurologist, endocrinologist,
16 allergist/immunologist, neuro-ophthalmologist, infectious disease specialist, psychiatrist,
17 or any specialist with additional training who primarily provides ongoing evaluation and
18 management services to patients with complex medical conditions and who does not
19 qualify for federal Health Resources and Services Administration funding.

20 (3) 'Program' means the Physician Underserved Area Grant Program.

21 (4) 'Underserved area' means an area designated by the board which has a critical
22 shortage of physician specialists.

23 (b) There is established the Physician Underserved Area Grant Program under the
24 administration of the board.

25 (c) The board shall promulgate guidelines for the selection of physicians to the program
26 based upon the following criteria:

27 (1) Demonstrated need for the type of specialist in an underserved area of the state, as
28 determined by the board; and

29 (2) Willingness to continue practicing as a physician in the state after completing the
30 program.

31 (d) A physician applying to the program shall be:

32 (1) A resident of this state or agree to become a resident of this state within six months
33 of being accepted into the program; and

34 (2) Licensed to practice medicine in this state.

35 (e)(1) A physician accepted into the program may be reimbursed an amount up to
36 \$25,000.00 per year for each year of practice in an underserved area. The underserved
37 area requirement may be waived if the board determines there is a critical need in another
38 area of the state.

39 (e)(2) A physician can participate in the program for a maximum of four years, receiving
40 a maximum payment amount of \$100,000.00.

41 (f) Physicians accepted into the program shall execute a contract with the board. The
42 contract shall include, but not be limited to, the following terms and conditions:

43 (1) The physician shall agree to practice in this state not fewer than the four full
44 consecutive years immediately following completion of specialty training;

45 (2) The physician shall agree to practice on a full-time basis;

46 (3) The physician shall permit the board to monitor compliance with the contract
47 requirements;

48 (4) The contract shall be renewable on an annual basis upon certification by the board
49 that the physician has complied with the terms of the contract; and

50 (5) The contract shall terminate if the physician dies, is not able to perform the duties of
51 a physician, or is not able to maintain the license to practice medicine due to physical or
52 mental disability.

53 (g) If the physician's license to practice is suspended or revoked, the board shall have the
54 authority to terminate the physician's participation in the program and demand repayment
55 of all payments rendered to date.

56 (h) A physician who fails to begin or complete the obligations contracted for shall
57 reimburse the state all amounts received under this program and interest thereon as
58 determined by the board. Both the physician and the board shall make every effort to
59 resolve conflicts in order to prevent a breach of contract.

60 (i) Any person who knowingly or intentionally procures, obtains, or aids another to
61 procure or obtain acceptance into this program through fraudulent means shall be

62 disqualified from participation in the program and shall be liable in an amount equal to
63 three times the amount obtained from the program.

64 (j) The establishment and operation of this program are subject to appropriations from the
65 General Assembly to fund the payments required and the administration of the program.

66 (k) The board may adopt regulations necessary to carry out the purposes of this Code
67 section."

SECTION 2.

69 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.