

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

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

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

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

"Part 6B

20-3-518.10.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(2) Licensed to practice medicine in this state.

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

(2) A physician can participate in the program for a maximum of four years, receiving 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."

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SECTION 2.

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