

House Bill 163

By: Representatives McDonald of the 26th, Collins of the 71st, Gilliard of the 162nd, Powell of the 33rd, Barrett of the 24th, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 10 of Title 49 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the
2 Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce, so as to provide for student loan repayment for
3 medical examiners employed by the Division of Forensic Sciences of the Georgia Bureau of
4 Investigation; to provide for definitions; to authorize the board to approve applications; to
5 provide for eligibility requirements; to provide for continued eligibility requirements; to
6 provide for student loan repayment agreements and conditions; to provide for rules and
7 regulations; to provide for appropriations contingency; to provide for related matters; to
8 repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

10 **SECTION 1.**

11 Chapter 10 of Title 49 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the Georgia
12 Board of Health Care Workforce, is amended by revising Code Section 49-10-2, relating to
13 purpose, as follows:

14 "49-10-2.

15 The purpose of the board shall be to address the health care workforce needs of Georgia
16 communities through the support and development of medical education programs and to

17 increase the number of physicians and health care practitioners practicing in underserved
18 rural areas and underserved medical fields."

19 **SECTION 2.**

20 Said chapter is further amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

21 "49-10-6.

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

23 (1) 'Eligible applicant' means a person who:

24 (A) Is a legal resident of the State of Georgia as established by rules and regulations
25 of the board;

26 (B) Is a physician duly licensed and authorized to practice medicine in this state under
27 Article 2 of Chapter 34 of Title 43; and

28 (C) Became employed as a full-time medical examiner by the Division of Forensic
29 Sciences of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation on or after January 1, 2023, is currently
30 employed as a full-time medical examiner by the Division of Forensic Sciences of the
31 Georgia Bureau of Investigation, and has been so employed for at least one year.

32 (2) 'Recipient' means an eligible applicant who applied for and was approved by the
33 board for student loan repayment under this Code section.

34 (3) 'Student loan' means debt incurred by an eligible applicant that is:

35 (A) Evidenced by a promissory note which required the funds received to be used to
36 pay for the cost of attendance for the undergraduate, graduate, or professional education
37 of the eligible applicant;

38 (B) Not in default at the time of application for repayment under this Code section; and

39 (C) Not subject to an existing service obligation or to repayment through another
40 student loan repayment or loan forgiveness program or as a condition of employment.

41 (b) The board shall have the authority to approve the applications of eligible applicants
42 submitted in accordance with rules and regulations established by the board governing the
43 student loan repayment application process.

44 (c) The board is authorized to provide for the repayment of student loans held by recipients
45 in consideration of the recipient performing services in the form of the practice of medicine
46 as a full-time medical examiner employed by the Division of Forensic Sciences of the
47 Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

48 (d)(1) Each recipient before being granted any student loan repayment shall enter into
49 a student loan repayment agreement with the board agreeing to the terms and conditions
50 upon which the student loan repayment is granted, including such terms and conditions
51 set forth in this Code section.

52 (2) The board shall have the power to terminate a student loan repayment agreement at
53 any time for any cause deemed sufficient by the board, provided that such power shall not
54 be arbitrarily or unreasonably exercised.

55 (e) Each student loan repayment agreement entered into under the authority granted in this
56 Code section shall:

57 (1) Provide for repayment of the recipient's student loans in a total amount to be
58 determined by the board, but not exceeding a maximum of \$100,000.00 or the total
59 student loan debt of the recipient, whichever is less, to be paid out in installments made
60 each 12 months over a term of not more than five years. A student loan repayment made
61 pursuant to this Code section shall be paid in such manner as the board shall establish by
62 rules and regulations;

63 (2) Provide that any payment made by the board under a student loan repayment
64 agreement shall be made in consideration of services rendered by the recipient practicing
65 medicine as a full-time medical examiner employed by the Division of Forensic Sciences
66 of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation;

67 (3) Provide that the board shall make a payment toward the recipient's student loans, in
68 an amount set forth in the agreement, for each 12 months the recipient is employed as a
69 full-time medical examiner by the Division of Forensic Sciences of the Georgia Bureau
70 of Investigation during the term of the agreement; and

71 (4) Require that the recipient shall remain a legal resident of the state as established by
72 rules and regulations of the board; maintain licensure as a physician authorized to
73 practice medicine in this state under Article 2 of Chapter 34 of Title 43; and be employed
74 as a full-time medical examiner by the Division of Forensic Sciences of the Georgia
75 Bureau of Investigation at all times during the term of the agreement.

76 (f) The board shall adopt such rules and regulations as are reasonable and necessary to
77 implement the provisions of this Code section.

78 (g) Student loan repayment for recipients having entered into a student loan repayment
79 agreement with the board pursuant to this Code section shall be contingent upon the
80 appropriation of funds by the General Assembly for the purposes of this Code section in
81 annual appropriations Acts of the General Assembly."

82 **SECTION 3.**

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