BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that many Hawaii residents are unable to obtain timely and appropriate health care due to shortages of primary health care providers in the State. These shortages not only threaten individual health but also cumulatively affect the State's health care costs. Rural areas of Hawaii, which have been designated by the federal government as medically underserved areas, have been most significantly affected by shortages of primary and behavioral health care providers. Social workers, marriage and family therapists, and nurses are also urgently needed.

In many cases, the increasingly high cost of education for health care professionals binds graduates to a career path that provides sufficient income to repay often exorbitant student loans. These career paths most frequently lead to professional practice in highly specialized areas of care in urban areas rather than in general practice on the neighbor islands or in rural areas, where the need is greatest. The legislature further finds that counties in the United States with robust
primary health care systems have lower costs and improved
patient outcomes. Recognizing this correlation, many states
have made the policy decision to dedicate public funds to the
development of a strong primary health care workforce.

The only loan repayment program currently available in the
State is administered by the John A. Burns school of medicine at
the University of Hawaii at Manoa. This program leverages
private donations to access matching federal funds through the
State Loan Repayment Program of the National Health Service
Corps of the Department of Health and Human Services. Since
September 1, 2012, the loan repayment program has supported
forty-two recipients in exchange for work in underserved
geographic and practice areas in Hawaii. Currently, health care
professionals who have benefited from the loan repayment program
serve the communities of Waianae, Hilo, and Wailuku; at health
clinics in Kalihi-Palama Health Center, Queen Emma Clinic, and
Waikiki Health Center; and in public institutional settings at
the Federal Detention Center in Honolulu and the Halawa
correctional facility.

The legislature recognizes the considerable public outcomes
achieved from the general funds allocated in each year of the
2017-2019 biennium to educate, train, and facilitate health care professionals to work in underserved areas. At this time, the loan repayment program supports twenty-four providers in Hawaii.

The purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds to the department of health to fund the health care provider loan repayment program administered through the John A. Burns school of medicine to provide loan repayment for physicians, physician assistants, psychologists, nurse practitioners, social workers, marriage and family therapists, and nurses who agree to work in a federally-designated health professional shortage area or in a geographic area of Hawaii found to be underserved.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of $150,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2019-2020 for the health care provider loan repayment program; provided that no funds shall be released unless matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis by funds from a private or another public source.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of health in coordination with the John A. Burns school of medicine at the University of Hawaii at Manoa for the purposes of this Act.
SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2019.
Report Title:
Loan Repayment; Health Care Professionals; Matching Funds; Appropriation

Description:
Appropriates funds for the Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Program administered through the John A. Burns School of Medicine of the University of Hawaii at Manoa; provided that the funds are matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis by a private or another public source. (CD1)

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.