

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FIVE

H.P. 63 - L.D. 98

An Act to Include School Counselors in the Educators for Maine Program

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §12501-A, sub-§12, as amended by PL 2019, c. 303, §2, is further amended to read:

12. Return service. "Return service" means service in a public elementary or secondary school, publicly supported secondary school, special education facility as defined in section 7001, subsection 6 or private school in this State approved for tuition purposes for a full school year as a certified teacher or school counselor or a licensed speech pathologist, service as a Jobs for Maine's Graduates specialist with similar teacher certification or service for a 12-month period in a child care facility by an individual who has attained child care provider qualifications.

Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §12501-A, sub-§12-A is enacted to read:

12-A. School counselor. "School counselor" means a person who is employed as a school counselor in a school setting and who:

A. Is certified as a school counselor by the department; or

B. Possesses a minimum of a master's degree in an approved program in guidance and counseling.

Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §12501-A, sub-§13, as enacted by PL 2003, c. 427, §2, is amended to read:

13. Student pursuing postbaccalaureate certification. "Student pursuing postbaccalaureate certification" means a student who has earned a baccalaureate degree or its equivalent and is pursuing a program of study leading to certification as a teacher or school counselor or licensure as a speech pathologist or to the attainment of child care provider qualifications.

Sec. 4. 20-A MRSA §12501-A, sub-§14-A, as enacted by PL 2019, c. 303, §3, is amended to read:

14-A. Underserved geographic areas. "Underserved geographic areas" means those geographic areas of the State where there is an insufficient supply of teachers, school

counselors or speech pathologists as determined by the chief executive officer in consultation with the commissioner.

Sec. 5. 20-A MRSA §12502, as amended by PL 2019, c. 303, §4, is further amended to read:

§12502. Educators for Maine Program

There is established the Educators for Maine Program to provide financial assistance for postsecondary education to undergraduate students and students pursuing postbaccalaureate certification who demonstrate academic achievement and an interest in pursuing a career in teaching, school counseling, speech pathology or child care in this State. The chief executive officer shall administer the program and shall establish pursuant to rules of the authority the rates of interest or fees to be charged.

Under the program, the authority may annually award a certain number of loan repayments to selected educators and other school personnel under this section in underserved geographic areas as funds permit. A selected loan repayment recipient must enter into a loan repayment agreement with the authority and may receive payment from the authority on the recipient's outstanding student debt for each year of service as long as the recipient teaches is employed in a certified instructional or student support role, specifically as a teacher, school counselor or licensed speech pathologist, in a school in an underserved geographic area.

Sec. 6. 20-A MRSA §12505, sub-§3, as amended by PL 2003, c. 427, §8, is further amended to read:

3. Eligibility for postbaccalaureate certification. A loan to a student pursuing postbaccalaureate certification may be given only to a resident of the State who has shown academic achievement, who has a baccalaureate degree, who is pursuing a course of study that will lead to certification as a teacher or school counselor, to licensure as a speech pathologist or to attainment of child care provider qualifications and who has met other eligibility criteria established by rule of the authority.

Sec. 7. 20-A MRSA §12507, sub-§3, as amended by PL 2003, c. 427, §10, is further amended to read:

3. Deferment. A recipient of a loan may seek a deferment of the annual payments for a period or periods as established by rule of the authority. A request for deferment must be made to the chief executive officer who shall make a determination on a case-by-case basis. The chief executive officer may grant a deferment in the event that a recipient of a loan evidences intent to teach work as a teacher, school counselor or speech pathologist and inability to secure employment necessary to obtain forgiveness of the loan at the time the deferment is sought. The chief executive officer shall require certification of the intent annually and grant a deferment for each successful request for deferment for a period not to exceed one year. The chief executive officer may establish limits to the number of deferments that may be granted to any recipient by rule of the authority.