



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Testimony of Rep. Tiffany Roberts presenting

LD 1225, An Act to Amend the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program Before the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Good morning, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. I am Tiffany Roberts, and I represent House District 149, which includes parts of North and South Berwick. I am pleased to sponsor this bill on behalf of the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), **LD 1225, An Act to Amend the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program.**

This bill would amend the Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program, which is administered by FAME, by adding outstanding education loans relating to **an associate or bachelor's degree of any kind** to the list of debts that qualify for repayment under the program. This change would not cost any money and would broaden the program's use for participants. Under the bill, FAME would repay the loan for an associate or bachelor's degree up to \$20,000 for a qualifying full-time nurse and up to \$10,000 for a qualifying part-time nurse.

The Nursing Education Loan Repayment Program was created by the Legislature for the purpose of increasing the number of nursing faculty in nursing education programs in the state. The program was first funded through federal pandemic relief dollars, and then later through state appropriations. So far, FAME has conducted five application cycles, resulting in the selection of 58 recipients. This has helped to address the state's need for nursing educators.

Currently, program participants must be a nurse; be currently enrolled in a master's or doctoral degree program in nursing or have completed a master's or doctoral degree in nursing; **possess an outstanding education loan relating to the master's or doctoral nursing degree**; and agree to work as full-time nursing faculty in a nursing education program in the state for a minimum of three years after acceptance to the program.

FAME repays the loan of eligible nurse educators in the amount of up to \$20,000 over three years for a master's degree and up to \$40,000 over three years for a doctoral degree. Part-time faculty may receive up to \$10,000 over three years (master's degree) or up to \$20,000 over three years (doctoral degree).

We would like to make the program more flexible by allowing participants to have their undergraduate student loan debt repaid in addition to their graduate debt depending upon their choice and needs. FAME has been approached over the years by numerous participants and interested applicants asking for this option. As you can imagine, many professionals at this level often have a mix of undergraduate and graduate debt they would like to pay off.

I hope you will support this change to make this program more broadly available to its participants. A representative from FAME is here today and able to answer any questions you might have.

Thank you for your consideration.