

HB 2351 -- STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM

SPONSOR: Frederick

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Health and Mental Health Policy by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill adds individuals licensed and registered to practice psychiatry to the definition of "primary care physician" for the purposes of the Health Professional Student Loan Repayment Program.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the need for psychiatric services in Missouri is so great that the legislature needs to assist in getting more providers to practice in Missouri. The bill adds psychiatrists to the current loan repayment program and also updates the statutory terminology to match current usages. The average debt coming out of medical school is \$160,000 but that is skewed significantly by those who are able to pay for medical school without taking out loans. In Missouri, 104 counties are short on psychiatric treatment providers and there is an even greater need for child psychiatry providers. Medical school is very expensive and that debt prevents individuals from taking lower paying jobs in areas that need providers the most. Under the current loan repayment program, individuals commit to serving two years in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) and then get some loans forgiven up to \$50,000. The program is funded through donations thus there is no fiscal note.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Frederick; Laine Young-Walker M.D.; Missouri Department Of Health And Senior Services; and the Missouri Psychiatric Society.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.