

By: Representatives Dedeaux, Cummings

To: Public Health and Welfare; Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 758

1 AN ACT TO ENACT THE MISSISSIPPI CRITICAL SOCIAL WORKER
 2 SHORTAGE ACT OF 2003, THE PURPOSE OF WHICH IS TO ATTRACT QUALIFIED
 3 SOCIAL WORKERS TO THOSE GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS OF THE STATE WHERE
 4 THERE EXISTS A CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF SOCIAL WORKERS; TO PROVIDE
 5 GRANTS TO ELIGIBLE SOCIAL WORKERS FOR THE REPAYMENT OF STUDENT
 6 LOANS; TO SET FORTH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ELIGIBILITY AND
 7 EMPLOYMENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES; TO PROVIDE FOR
 8 THE INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL WORKER'S LIABILITY FOR FAILURE TO COMPLETE
 9 HIS COMMITMENT TO THE PROGRAM; TO PROVIDE THAT THE GOVERNOR SHALL
 10 MAKE THE DETERMINATION OF THOSE GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS IN WHICH THERE
 11 EXISTS A CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF SOCIAL WORKERS; TO PROVIDE THAT THE
 12 PROGRAM SHALL BE FUNDED WITH ANY FUNDS AVAILABLE TO THE DEPARTMENT
 13 OF HUMAN SERVICES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

14 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

15 **SECTION 1.** This act shall be known and may be cited as the
 16 "Mississippi Critical Social Worker Shortage Act of 2003."

17 **SECTION 2.** (1) There is established the "Social Worker
 18 Student Loan Subsidy Program," the purpose of which is to attract
 19 qualified social workers to those geographical areas of the state
 20 where there exists a critical shortage of social workers by
 21 awarding a grant toward the repayment of student loans to persons
 22 who declare an intention to serve as social workers in such
 23 geographical areas and who actually render service to the state
 24 while employed by the Department of Human Services while
 25 possessing an appropriate social work license.

26 (2) Any individual who has graduated after January 1, 2003,
 27 from a baccalaureate degree-granting institution of higher
 28 learning, or from an accredited, nonprofit community or junior
 29 college in the State of Mississippi, and become an employee of the
 30 Department of Human Services in the position of a state-licensed
 31 social worker, and who expresses in writing an intention to serve
 32 in the department as a social worker in a geographical area of the



33 state in which there exists a critical shortage of social workers,
34 as designated by the Governor, shall be eligible for a grant to be
35 applied toward the repayment of the individual's student loan.
36 The annual amount of the grant shall not exceed Two Thousand Four
37 Hundred Dollars (\$2,400.00), and shall be limited to the annual
38 amount required to be repaid under the terms of the individual's
39 student loan debt instrument. Grants made to nonresidents of the
40 state shall not include any amount assessed by the college or
41 university for out-of-state tuition costs.

42 (3) Grants made under the Social Worker Student Loan Subsidy
43 Program shall be paid directly by the Department of Human Services
44 to the financial institution or entity which is the payee of the
45 student loan debt instrument. Any person failing to pay the
46 remainder, after the payment by the department, of any annual
47 payments due for such student loan shall become liable immediately
48 to the department for the amount of the annual payment made on
49 behalf of the person during the calendar year in which the person
50 fails to pay the remainder due on the student loan. Any person
51 who terminates his employment status with the department shall
52 become liable immediately to the department for the amount of the
53 annual payment made on behalf of the person during the calendar
54 year in which the person terminates employment.

55 (4) The Governor shall make the determination of those
56 geographical areas of the state in which there exists a critical
57 shortage of social workers, and he shall designate how many
58 positions are necessary in each geographical area before the
59 shortage in that area is alleviated. The Governor and the
60 Department of Human Services shall jointly promulgate rules and
61 regulations necessary for the proper administration of the Social
62 Worker Student Loan Subsidy Program. The Department of Human
63 Services shall be the administering agency of the program.

64 (5) The source of funding for the program shall be from any
65 funds available to the department. If insufficient funds are



66 available to fully fund grant awards to all eligible social
67 workers, the department shall make the awards to individuals on a
68 first-come, first-served basis.

69 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
70 and after July 1, 2003.

