

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 50th Legislature (2005)

SENATE BILL 728

By: Eason McIntyre

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to higher education; creating a social worker employment incentive program; stating eligibility criteria for participation; authorizing Department of Human Services to make payments to persons who render certain service; requiring certain length of service in certain geographic location; stating maximum amount of payments; authorizing payments toward balance of student loans; authorizing direct payments to certain persons; directing Department of Human Services to execute certain contracts; providing for ineligibility for noncompliance; stating intent of Legislature that Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education cooperate with Department of Human Services to implement program; authorizing Department of Human Services to reduce payments if insufficient funds; providing for codification; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 698.4 of Title 70, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, the Department of Human Services shall establish a social worker employment incentive program for students enrolled in a major course of study in social work at the undergraduate level or graduate level who declare an intention to serve and who subsequently serve this state as a licensed social worker for a minimum of five (5) years in geographic shortage areas of this state. Students meeting the criteria provided in this section shall be given the opportunity to enter into participation in the program.

B. The Department of Human Services is authorized to make employment incentive payments pursuant to the provisions of this

section to persons who actually render a minimum of five (5) years of service as a social worker in a geographic shortage area in this state. The Department of Human Services shall determine locations in this state that qualify as a geographic shortage area. The total amount of the employment incentive payments for any qualified person shall not exceed an amount equal to three times the average annual cost of undergraduate resident tuition and fees for full-time enrollment at institutions which offer social work programs within The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education, as defined by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Any amount not necessary to repay the balance of a student's loan(s) shall be paid directly to any person otherwise eligible for employment incentive payments pursuant to this section.

C. The Department of Human Services shall require the execution of appropriate contracts with eligible persons. Persons failing to comply with the requirements of this section shall not be eligible for the employment incentive payments provided for in this section. It is the intent of the Legislature that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education cooperate with the Department of Human Services in providing information and assistance to implement the provisions of this section.

D. If insufficient funds are available for employment incentive payments to qualified persons during any fiscal year, the Department of Human Services may make reductions in the payments made to those qualifying.

SECTION 2. This act shall become effective November 1, 2005.

50-1-459

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