

HOUSE BILL NO. 339

INTRODUCED BY F. MOORE, A. OLSZEWSKI

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A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CHILD PROTECTION SPECIALIST INCENTIVE PROGRAM; ESTABLISHING ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND REIMBURSEMENT AMOUNTS FOR LOAN ASSISTANCE; REQUIRING A REPORT; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE AND A TERMINATION DATE."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Child protection specialist incentive program -- purpose -- eligibility.**

(1) There is a loan reimbursement program for a person who is employed by the department as a child protection specialist to provide services in accordance with Title 41, chapter 3. The purpose of the program is to improve recruitment and retention of individuals who have the skills to work with vulnerable children and families.

(2) The loan assistance program is administered by the department. The program must provide for the direct repayment of educational loans of eligible child protection specialists in accordance with policies and procedures adopted by the department.

(3) A child protection specialist seeking loan reimbursement shall submit an application to the department. The application must include official verification or proof of the applicant's total unpaid accumulated educational loan debt and other documentation required by the department as necessary for verification of the applicant's eligibility.

(4) The department ~~may~~ SHALL require an applicant to provide documentation that the applicant has exhausted repayment assistance from other federal, state, or local loan forgiveness, discharge, or repayment incentive programs.

(5) A child protection specialist who has completed a bachelor's degree is eligible for reimbursement for each full, consecutive year of employment as a child protection specialist, up to a maximum of 3 years. The annual loan repayment may not exceed:

- (a) \$3,000 after the first full year of employment with the department as a child protection specialist;
- (b) \$4,000 after the second full year of consecutive employment with the department as a child protection specialist; and



1 (c) \$5,000 after the third full year of consecutive employment with the department as a child protection
2 specialist.

3 (6) The department may remit payment of the loan on behalf of the child protection specialist.

4 (7) If funding for the loan reimbursement program in any year is less than the total amount for which
5 eligible child protection specialists qualify, the department shall allocate the available funding to child protection
6 specialists as specified by rule.

7 (8) This section may not be construed to require the provision of loan repayment assistance without an
8 express appropriation for that purpose.

9 (9) BY SEPTEMBER 15 OF EACH YEAR PRECEDING A REGULAR LEGISLATIVE SESSION, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL
10 PROVIDE A REPORT TO THE CHILDREN, FAMILIES, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SERVICES INTERIM COMMITTEE, IN ACCORDANCE
11 WITH 5-11-210, ON WHETHER THE INCENTIVE PROGRAM PROVIDED FOR IN THIS SECTION HAS INCREASED RECRUITMENT
12 AND RETENTION OF CHILD PROTECTION SPECIALISTS.

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14 NEW SECTION. Section 2. Appropriation. (1) There is appropriated \$1 million from the general fund
15 to the department of public health and human services for the biennium beginning July 1, 2019, for the child
16 protection specialist incentive program provided for in [section 1].

17 (2) The legislature intends that the appropriation in this section be considered a part of the ongoing base
18 for the next legislative session.

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20 NEW SECTION. Section 3. Codification instruction. [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an
21 integral part of Title 52, chapter 2, part 1, and the provisions of Title 52, chapter 2, part 1, apply to [section 1].

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23 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Effective date. [This act] is effective July 1, 2019.

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25 NEW SECTION. SECTION 5. TERMINATION. [THIS ACT] TERMINATES JUNE 30, 2025.

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