HOUSE . . . . . No. 3804

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Eleven

An Act establishing an education loan repayment program for social workers in areas of need and certain direct care human services workers.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. To provide for certain unanticipated obligations of the commonwealth, to provide for an alteration of purpose for current appropriations, and to meet certain requirements of law, the sum set forth in this section is hereby appropriated from the General Fund unless specifically designated otherwise in this section, for the several purposes and subject to the conditions specified in this section, and subject to the laws regulating the disbursement of public funds for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012. This sum shall be in addition to any amounts previously appropriated and made available for the purposes of this item.

XXXX – XXXX For the Licensed Certified Social Worker and Direct Care Human Services Worker Student Education Loan Repayment Pilot Program Trust Fund established in section 2 of this act ……. $2,400,000

SECTION 2. (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of any general or special law to the contrary, there shall be a licensed certified social worker and direct care human services worker student education loan repayment pilot program, hereinafter referred to as the pilot program, for the purpose of increasing and retaining access to child welfare services, social services, and direct care human services in the commonwealth. The pilot program shall provide financial assistance to eligible program participants to assist them in repaying student education loans, as defined in this section; provided, that the pilot program shall be limited to a total of 100 licensed certified social workers, and 100 direct care human services workers who are employed by the department of developmental services or providers under contract with the department.

The pilot program shall be administered by the board of higher education. The board, in collaboration with the executive office of health and human services, shall promulgate guidelines governing the pilot program. The guidelines shall include, but need not be limited to, the following provisions: (1) eligibility shall be limited to persons with incomes that do not

24 exceed 500% of the federal poverty level; (2) eligibility shall be limited to persons entering the
25 field of social work or direct care human services after July 1, 2011; (3) eligibility shall be
26 limited to social workers who are licensed certified social workers as defined in section 130 of
27 chapter 112 of the General Laws and who are employed in child welfare, or in a geographic or
28 programmatic setting defined as high need under the guidelines governing the pilot program, or
29 to direct care human services workers employed by the department of developmental services or
30 providers under contract with the department; (4) the commonwealth shall repay a student
31 education loan at a rate not to exceed $250 per month for a period not to exceed 48 months; (5)
32 payments by the commonwealth shall be made directly to the lender on behalf of a pilot program
33 participant, and shall cover only loan payments owed by the participant in the months during
34 which the participant works in the commonwealth as a licensed certified social worker in child
35 welfare, or in a geographic or programmatic setting defined as high need under pilot programs
36 guidelines, or as a direct care human services worker employed by the department of
37 developmental services or providers under contract with the department; (6) procedures for
38 selecting 200 pilot program participants among eligible applicants; and (7) measures to deal with
39 situations in which a pilot program participant ceases to comply with program requirements.

40 For the purposes of this section, the term student education loan shall mean any
41 indebtedness, including interest on such indebtedness, incurred to pay tuition, fees or other direct
42 expenses incurred in connection with the pursuit of an undergraduate or graduate degree by an
43 applicant, but shall not include loans made by any person related to the applicant, or loans paid
44 by credit card.

45 (b) There is hereby established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a separate
46 fund to be known as the Licensed Certified Social Worker and Direct Care Human Services
47 Worker Student Education Loan Repayment Pilot Program Trust Fund, hereinafter referred to as
48 the Education Loan Repayment Fund, to which shall be credited any appropriations or other
49 monies authorized by the general court and designated to be credited thereto. The board of
50 higher education shall hold the Education Loan Repayment Fund in an account separate from
51 other funds or accounts. Amounts credited to the Education Loan Repayment Fund shall be
52 used, without further appropriation, by the commissioner of higher education or his designee, to
53 carry out the licensed certified social worker and direct care human services worker student
54 education loan repayment pilot program established in this section.

55 (c) The licensed certified social worker and direct care human services worker education
56 loan repayment pilot program shall expire once the final payment is made under this section by
57 the board of higher education on behalf of all pilot program participants. The board of higher
58 education shall evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot program and its benefits and costs to the
59 commonwealth and shall submit a report, together with its recommendations on whether a
60 permanent program should be established and if so how such program should be structured, to
61 the general court by filing the report with the house and senate committees on ways and means

62 and the joint committee on higher education, not less than one year prior to the expiration of the
63 pilot program.