

HOUSE No. 1056

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Paul W. Mark

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act providing loan forgiveness for health care professionals serving underserved rural communities.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Paul W. Mark</i>	<i>2nd Berkshire</i>
<i>Gailanne M. Cariddi</i>	<i>1st Berkshire</i>
<i>Tricia Farley-Bouvier</i>	<i>3rd Berkshire</i>
<i>Carlos Gonzalez</i>	<i>10th Hampden</i>
<i>Mary S. Keefe</i>	<i>15th Worcester</i>
<i>William Smitty Pignatelli</i>	<i>4th Berkshire</i>
<i>Benjamin Swan</i>	<i>11th Hampden</i>
<i>Chris Walsh</i>	<i>6th Middlesex</i>

HOUSE No. 1056

By Mr. Mark of Peru, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1056) of Paul W. Mark and others relative to providing loan forgiveness for health care professionals serving under-served rural communities. Higher Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court
(2015-2016)**

An Act providing loan forgiveness for health care professionals serving underserved rural communities.

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

1 Chapter 15A of the General Laws is hereby amended by inserting the following Section:

2 Section 19F. There shall be a student loan repayment program for the purpose of
3 attracting practicing health care professionals to rural communities in Massachusetts by
4 providing financial assistance for the repayment of qualified education loans, as defined below.

5 The program shall be administered by the department of higher education, in consultation
6 with the department of public health, in accordance with guidelines promulgated by the board of
7 higher education. The program shall be subject to appropriation.

8 The Term “practicing health care professional” shall mean a person licensed to practice
9 in Massachusetts as a Physician, Physician’s Assistant, or Nurse Practitioner.

10 The term “qualified education loan” shall mean any indebtedness including interest on
11 such indebtedness incurred to pay tuition or other direct expenses incurred in connection with the

12 pursuit of an undergraduate or graduate degree by an applicant, but shall not include loans made
13 by any person related to the applicant.

14 The council shall promulgate guidelines governing this program, which shall include the
15 following provisions,

16 eligibility for the program shall be limited to persons who will practice in an underserved
17 rural community. In defining an underserved rural community, the following shall be
18 considered:

19 Eligible communities shall be those with a population of fewer than seventy five hundred
20 (7,500) residents and located at least ten miles distant from a municipality of forty five thousand
21 (45,000) or more residents.

22 The age and number of practicing health care professionals currently engaged in the
23 practice of medicine in the community.

24 Programs of economic development within the community

25 Demographics of the community and surrounding communities

26 Geographical location and proximity to hospitals and related health care facilities

27 Evaluation of the practicing health care professional seeking assistance under this
28 program

29 (2) eligibility shall be limited to persons entering the medical profession not longer than
30 five years before the passage of this act. This program shall be limited to not more than twenty
31 participants per year.

32 (3) the commonwealth shall repay a participating health care professional's student loan
33 at a rate not to exceed one thousand dollars per month for a period not to exceed ten years; The
34 participating health care professional shall agree to practice medicine full time in the designated
35 community for a period of ten years.

36 (4) repayment shall be made to the participating health care professional annually upon
37 the presentation by the participating health care professional of satisfactory evidence of
38 payments under the loan.

39 If the health care professional has received payments pursuant to the act and subsequently
40 breeches the agreement, the health care professional shall repay all sums received under the
41 terms and conditions set by the board. Failure to make repayment is grounds for discipline by
42 the appropriate Massachusetts licensing authority.

43 (5) the program shall set forth an affirmative action policy and specific annual affirmative
44 action goals. The board shall annually publish a report detailing its efforts to publicize the loan
45 repayment program in order to advance the goals of this affirmative action policy and its success
46 in meeting those goals.

47 (6) An initial appropriation of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) shall be made to establish
48 the program. Expenses for administration of the program may be retained in an interest bearing
49 trust fund to be established by the board of higher education and expended for the costs of
50 administering the program without further appropriation, and any funds remaining in the trust
51 fund at the termination of the program shall be returned to the General Fund.