SENATE DOCKET, NO. 318 FILED ON: 1/11/2019

SENATE . . . . . No. 1120

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Dean A. Tran

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 relative to the repayment of student loans for mental and behavioral healthcare workers.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
Dean A. Tran	*Worcester and Middlesex*	
David Paul Linsky	*5th Middlesex*	*1/31/2019*
Donald F. Humason, Jr.	*Second Hampden and Hampshire*	*2/2/2019*

SENATE DOCKET, NO. 318 FILED ON: 1/11/2019

SENATE . . . . . No. 1120

By Mr. Tran, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1120) of Dean A. Tran, David Paul Linsky and Donald F. Humason, Jr. for legislation relative to the repayment of student loans for mental and behavioral healthcare workers. Labor and Workforce Development.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-First General Court
(2019-2020)

An Act relative to the repayment of student loans for mental and behavioral healthcare 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. Section 16E of chapter 6A of the general laws is hereby amended by inserting the following new section: -

Section 16E. (a) For the purposes of this section the following words shall have the following meanings:

"Qualified education loan", any indebtedness, including interest on such indebtedness, incurred to pay tuition or other direct expenses incurred in connection with the pursuit of a certificate, undergraduate or graduate degree by an applicant, but not including loans made by any person related to the applicant.

"Mental/behavioral health worker", an individual employed by a mental or behavioral health organization who provides services by supporting individuals' mental well-being in settings including but not limited to clinics; hospitals; centers for mental and behavioral counseling; correctional or community health centers; at family, child and youth service

agencies; and at programs that help individuals affected by addiction, family violence, sexual violence and other traumatic life events.

(b) There shall be a student loan repayment program for mental/behavioral health workers for the purpose of encouraging individuals to enter and continue to work in mental/behavioral service programs. The Executive Office of Health and Human Services shall administer the program in accordance with guidelines promulgated by the Department of Education.

To be eligible for this program, an applicant must be working a minimum of 35 hours per week as a mental/behavioral service worker and have an individual income of no more than $45,000 per year. Further, individuals must have maintained 12 consecutive months of employment at a minimum of 35 hours per week to be eligible for this program. This program will help defray costs from previously incurred student loans for graduates holding certificate, undergraduate or graduate degrees.

Eligible participants in this program may be reimbursed up to $1,800 per year based on the amount of loan payments made by the participant towards their qualified education loan. The Commonwealth shall repay the eligible participant’s student loan at a rate not to exceed $150 per month for a period not to exceed 48 months. Payments by the Commonwealth shall cover loan payments by the eligible participant only during the months in which the mental/behavioral service workers provides services in the Commonwealth.