

Joint Committee on Health Care Financing 2025-2026 (194th) Bill Summary

- Bill Number:** House, No. H1410
- Title:** AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE PRIMARY CARE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND LOAN REPAYMENT GRANT PROGRAM AT COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS
- Sponsor:** Representative Thomas M. Stanley
- Hearing Date:** May 12, 2025
- Reporting Deadline:** July 11, 2025
- Prior History:**
- 2023-2024** (H1245 & S0781) Refiles of matters, H1245 & S0781 referred to referred to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing. Public hearing on May 16, 2023. H1245 reported Ought to Pass, accompanied by S0781 and referred to House Ways & Means on July 11, 2024. No further action taken.
- 2021-2022** (H1316 & S0744) Refiles of matters, H1316 & S0744 referred to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing. Public hearing on October 19, 2021. H1316 reported Ought to Pass, accompanied by S0744, and referred to House Ways & Means on May 5, 2022. No further action taken.
- 2019-2020** (H1196 & S0664) Refiles of matters, H1196 & S0664 referred to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing. Public hearing on May 7, 2019. Reporting deadline extended to Friday, May 1, 2020. Reporting deadline extended to Friday, June 19, 2020. On June 22, 2020, House extended reporting deadline until Thursday, December 31, 2020. On H1194, Senate non-concurred on June 25, 2020. No further action taken. On S0664, Senate non-concurred on June 25, 2020. Read Ought Not to Pass (JR10) in the Senate, rules suspended, and placed in the Orders of the Day for the next session on July 23, 2020. No further action taken.
- Similar Matters:** S891 – Miranda (Identical, Health Care Financing)
- Current Law:**
- M.G.L. Ch. 6A § 2** establishes the executive offices under the office of the governor, including the executive office of health and human services (EOHHS).
- M.G.L. Ch. 23H § 1** establishes within the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) a Department of Career Services (DCS), which itself oversees the following state agencies and funds: the One Stop Career Centers, the State Workforce Development Board, the Commonwealth Corporation, and the Workforce Training Fund.
- M.G.L. Ch. 29 § 2RR** establishes the Workforce Training Fund and authorizes the director of the DCS to contract with the Commonwealth Corporation to administer the fund.
- M.G.L. Ch. 29 § 2FFFF** establishes the Health Care Workforce Transformation Fund administered by EOLWD.
- Summary Prepared By the House Staff of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

M.G.L. Ch. 111 § 25L establishes a Health Care Workforce Center (Center) within the Department of Public Health (DPH) to coordinate the department's primary care workforce activities with other state agencies and public and private entities, including those of the Health Care Workforce Transformation Fund. In consultation with the Health Care Workforce Advisory Council, the Center is charged with monitoring workforce trends and promoting systemic solutions to shortages and access issues, with a particular emphasis primary care and behavioral, substance use disorder and mental health care services. The Center is also tasked with administration of the health care workforce loan repayment program established by section 25N and with the regulation of the primary care residency grant program established by section 25N ½. The Center is supported by the Health Workforce Transformation Fund through an inter-state-agreement with the EOLWD. The Center is also supported by grant funding from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

M.G.L. Ch. 111 § 25M established a 19 member Health care Workforce Advisory Council (Council) within, but not subject to, the Center. The Council consists of representatives of various disciplines and affiliations appointed by the Governor, each serving a three-year terms.

M.G.L. Ch. 111 § 25N establishes the health care workforce loan repayment program administered by the Center. The program provides repayment assistance for graduate and medical school loans to participants who are graduates of medical, nursing, or physician assistant schools or accredited graduate schools and who specialize in family health or medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics/gynecology, psychiatry, behavioral health, mental health or substance use disorder treatment. To be eligible for the program, applicants must enter into a contract with the commonwealth which shall obligate the recipient to perform a term of service of not less than 2 years in medically underserved areas as determined by the Center.

M.G.L. Chapter 111 § 25N ½ establishes a primary care residency grant program, governed by regulations promulgated by the Center, for the purpose of financing the training of primary care providers at teaching community health centers. To be eligible for funds, applicant community health centers must demonstrate that at least 50% of their graduates practice in primary care within 2 years of graduation. The Health Care Workforce Transformation Fund established by section 2FFFF of Chapter 29 is designated as the source of funding for the grant program.

M.G.L. Chapter 111 § 25N ¾ establishes a community health center primary care workforce development and loan forgiveness grant program administered by DPH for the purpose of enhancing recruitment and retention of primary care physicians and other clinicians at community health centers. DPH is authorized to contract with an organization to administer the grant program. Funds designated for the program may be matched by other public and private funds.

M.G.L. Ch. 118E § 1 designates EOHHS as the single state agency responsible for the administration of any programs of medical assistance and medical benefits established pursuant to Chapter 118E. The secretary of EOHHS is authorized to take actions, through the division of medical assistance and the secretary of aging and independence, as appropriate, in this capacity, in accordance with section 2 of Chapter 118E.

M.G.L. Ch. 118E § 8A defines certain terms as understood within the context of sections 13C to 13K, inclusive, and sections 64 to 70, inclusive, of chapter 118E, governing the Division of Medical Assistance and the MassHealth program.

M.G.L. Ch. 118E § 9A authorizes the Division of Medical Assistance to implement the state Medicaid program (MassHealth) in accordance with the terms and conditions of a demonstration project approved by the Secretary pursuant to section 1115(a) of the Social Security Act, 42 USC Section 1315(a) or any other federal waiver or demonstration authority and lists beneficiary categories for whom MassHealth may provider medical benefits.

- On September 28, 2022, CMS approved the Commonwealth’s request to extend the MassHealth demonstration (Project Number 11-W-00030/1 and 21-W00071/1), in accordance with section 1115(a) of the Social Security Act (the Act), effective October 1, 2022, through December 31, 2027.
- CMS approval for the current demonstration period includes authorization to continue 3 primary care and behavioral health workforce initiatives from the previous demonstration period. CMS approved expenditures not to exceed \$43.24M in total over the 5-year waiver period, including 15% administrative costs, for the following:
 - *Behavioral Health Student Loan Repayment*
 - Up to \$300,000, per practitioner, for psychiatrists and nurse practitioners with prescribing privileges who make a 4-year full-time commitment to maintaining a personal practice panel, or working at an organization with a panel, that includes at least 40% MassHealth and/or uninsured members
 - Up to \$50,000, per practitioner, for licensed behavioral health clinicians or masters prepared clinicians (clinicians who have completed masters-level training but do not yet have the necessary licensure to practice independently) intending to obtain behavioral health practitioner licensure within one year of the award who make a 4 year commitment to practice full-time in a community-based setting serving at least 40% MassHealth and/or uninsured patients
 - Total authorized expenditures over 5 years not to exceed \$20M.
 - *Primary Care Student Loan Repayment*
 - Up to \$100,000 for primary care physicians who make a four-year full-time service commitment in a community-based setting serving at least 40 percent MassHealth and/or uninsured patients
 - Up to \$50,000 for advanced practice registered nurses, pediatric clinical nurse specialists, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants, per practitioner, who make a four-year full-time service commitment in a community-based setting serving at least 40 percent MassHealth and/or uninsured patients.
 - Total authorized expenditures over 5 years not to exceed \$18.4M.
 - *Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) Residency Grant Program.*
 - Up to \$105,000 per residency slot to allow Community Health Centers (CHCs) to support up to 10 FNP residency slots per year for four years.
 - Awards may be made only to CHCs whose patient populations are at least 40% of MassHealth beneficiaries.
 - Eligible recipient organizations must demonstrate significant residency training experience and infrastructure and must align programs with established standards for FNP residency training programs to meet a baseline of quality and standardization.
 - Total authorized expenditures over 5 years not to exceed \$4.84M.

M.G.L. Ch. 118E § 12 authorizes MassHealth to enter into any type of contracts with providers of medical services and establish or negotiate rates with providers of care and manufacturers of medical services, equipment and supplies for the provision of such services to its enrollees, as governed by sections 13 through 13L, inclusive, and sections 64 through 70, inclusive.

M.G.L. Ch. 118E §§ 13, 13A, 13B, 13C, 13D, 13D½, 13E, 13E½, 13F, 13J provide for the review of MassHealth reimbursement rates or rate methodologies and requires rates to be established by contract and contingent upon performance and quality standards developed by EOHHS.

Chapter 140 of the Acts of 2024, the Fiscal Year 2025 General Appropriations Act, in Section 2, in line item 4000-0700, included the following earmarked funds:

- \$900,000 equally distributed to the teaching community health centers with family medicine residency programs in the cities of Worcester and Lawrence and in the South Boston section of the city of Boston, under the to be administration of the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers.
- \$250,000 to the community health center in Greenfield to support its family medicine residency program.
- \$100,000 shall be made available to the family medicine program at Franklin medical center.

Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021, *An Act Relative to Immediate COVID-19 Recovery Needs [H4269]*, in Section 2A:

- Line item 1599-2026, expended funds for:
 - A loan repayment assistance program administered by EOHHS or a contracted organization, funded up to \$110,000,000, that shall prioritize the recruitment and retention of a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse workforce and shall be offered to eligible professionals working in a community health center, a community mental health center, a psychiatric unit in an acute care hospital or an in-patient psychiatric hospital as follows:
 - (i) not less than \$21,000,000 for psychiatrists to provide assistance of up to \$300,000 per individual;
 - (ii) not less than \$12,000,000 for psychologists and primary care physicians to provide assistance of up to \$150,000 per individual;
 - (iii) not less than \$35,000,000 for master’s degree-level mental health and primary care professionals including, but not limited to, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, advance practice registered nurses, pediatric clinical nurse specialist, and licensed behavioral health providers to provide assistance of up to \$50,000 per individual;
 - (iv) not less than \$20,000,000 for bachelor’s degree-level mental health and primary care professionals including, but not limited to, community health workers, recovery coaches and family partners to provide assistance of up to \$30,000 per individual;
 - (v) not less than \$14,000,000 for in-patient psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners to provide assistance of up to \$100,000 per individual; and
 - (vi) not less than \$8,000,000 for in-patient mental health workers to provide assistance of up to \$40,000 per individual.
 - Programs that promote primary care workforce development, recruitment and retention at community health centers, funded up to \$15,000,000.
 - A psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner fellowship program, funded up to \$11,600,000, to recruit and retain psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners at community health centers.
- Line item 1599-2027, expended funds for loan repayment, retention and recruitment programs for human service workers in the Commonwealth, including in programs operated by the department of early education and care:
 - \$16,500,000 for a loan repayment assistance program for human service workers and home health workers.
 - \$13,500,000 for a grant program for human service organizations and home-based health service agencies to support the retention and recruitment of human service workers and home health workers.

Chapter 24 of the Acts of 2021, the Fiscal Year 2022 General Appropriations Act, in Section 2, in line item 4513-2020 funded behavioral health outreach, access and support. Programs funded under this line item include:

- \$500,000 for a mental health workforce pipeline program to encourage a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse behavioral health workforce through collaboration between colleges and behavioral health providers.
- \$5,000,000 for a loan forgiveness program for mental health professionals.
- 3,000,000 for a loan repayment assistance program for child and adolescent psychiatrists at community mental health centers and community health centers, with awards up to \$300,000 per eligible individual and pro-rated for individuals in part-time psychiatry practice.

101 CMR 31.00 governs the EOHHS administration and enforcement of the loan repayment assistance program, which includes

- Chapter 24 of the Acts of 2021, in line item 4513-2020, a loan repayment initiative funded by \$5,000,000.
- Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021, in line item 1599-2026, a loan repayment initiative funded by \$110,500,000; and in line item 1599-2027, a loan repayment initiative funded by \$16,500,000.
- And other loan repayment initiatives authorized by the Massachusetts legislature, federal government, or other entity, and administered by EOHHS, other than MassHealth initiatives eligible for federal financial participation.

Summary:

SECTION 1 of the proposed legislation inserts into Chapter 6A a new Section 16GG, consisting of the following 3 subsections:

- Subsection (a) requires EOHHS to establish and administer a primary care workforce development and loan forgiveness grant program for employees of community health centers, including but not limited to, primary care physicians, other clinicians, bachelor’s degree-level mental health and primary care professionals, community health workers, recovery coaches and family partners, and non-clinician staff, although the language requires grants awarded under the authority of this new section to prioritize clinicians and bachelor’s degree-level mental health and primary care professionals. This subsection states that the grant program established under this subsection is intended to continue existing state-level loan repayment programs, including those authorized by Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021, “*An Act Relative to Immediate COVID-19 Recovery Needs*”. This subsection also authorizes EOHHS to enter into a contract with another organization to administer the grant program.
- Subsection (b) states that the grant program established under this section shall prioritize the recruitment and retention of a culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse workforce. Under criteria established in this subsection, community health center employees with outstanding educational debt who are not already participating in a loan repayment program are eligible to receive assistance contingent upon signing a minimum 4-year contract with the Commonwealth. Grant awards shall be pro-rated for part-time employees. This subsection also directs the EOHHS to promulgate regulations for the administration of the program that shall include penalties for failure to comply with repayment procedures and other program requirements.
- Subsection (c) authorizes funding of the grant program established under this section through expenditures from the Behavioral Health and Community-Based Primary Care Reserve established by Chapter 102 of the Acts of 2021, “*An Act Relative to Immediate COVID-19 Recovery Needs*”.