

Human Services and Home Health Workers Student Loan Repayment Board

Meeting Minutes
September 26, 2022
3:00 – 5:00pm

Date of meeting: Monday, September 26, 2022

Start time: 3:00 pm

End time: 5:00 pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Members participating remotely		Vote 1*	Vote 2*	Vote 3*
1	Tammy Mello (<i>chair</i>) – The Key Program, Inc.	X	X	X
2	Jule Gomes Noack – Horace Mann Educational Associates (HMEA)	X	X	X
3	Diane Gould – Advocates	X	X	X
4	Michael Weekes – Providers' Council	X	X	X
5	John Yazwinski – Father Bill's & MainSpring	X	X	X
6	Lisa Gurgone – Mystic Valley Elder Services	X	X	X
7	Lois Nesci – Gándara Center	X	X	X
8	Lisa Parent – Community Nurse Home Care	X	X	X
9	John Feehan – YWCA	-	-	-

* (X) Voted in favor; (O) Opposed; (A) Abstained from vote; (-) Absent from meeting or during vote

Proceedings

Diane Gould made a motion to accept the 9/12/2022 meeting minutes. Lois Nesci seconded the motion. All eight present board members voted in favor.

Tammy Mello began the discussion by raising the research on other state loan repayment programs, with a focus on income requirements of program participants. Tammy Mello also discussed if there should be any exclusions to avoid duplication of programs.

Lois Nesci stated that the program could have no income requirements and could focus on the hardest to retain staff.

Tammy Mello stated that, as a point of comparison, other loan repayment programs are limited to specific work settings.

John Yazwinski stated he would be able to move forward with no income requirement. Michael Weekes raised the challenge of large joint incomes. Jule Gomes Noack raised the idea of caps for different positions or groups. Diane Gould raised that direct care staff may have received other bonuses and incentives recently and that the program should consider those.

Diane Gould summarized that there was consensus around using the program funds for those who need it most.

Tammy Mello called a vote on whether there should be no income requirement for the program. All eight board members present voted in favor.

The conversation turned to the required work commitment of participants. Diane Gould recommended a two-year commitment for direct service workers. Lois Nesci brought up whether the program should track performance.

Leslie Darcy, Special Advisor to the Secretary, provided an overview of the work commitment requirement for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services' other loan programs.

John Yazwinski asked if the board should be focusing on certain industries and jobs, or certain employers.

Tammy Mello suggested a two-year commitment for direct service workers with a bachelor's degree or below, and a four-year commitment for master's level or above. Lisa Gurgone stated there would be a benefit to a separate commitment for these distinct groups.

The board discussed monitoring participants' performance. Diane Gould concluded that conversation and the consensus was that there are many circumstances that go into a participant's performance that the program may not want to interfere with.

Tammy Mello called a vote on structuring the program's work commitment to be four-years and above for a master's level degree and two years for those below a master's level degree. All eight present board members voted in favor.

The conversation moved to workplace settings of focus. The board discussed different setting definitions, such as congregate and residential settings. Jule Gomes Noack suggested that community-based human services capture a broad overview of the settings. Michael Weekes agreed the categorization should be broad.

Tammy Mello suggested a factor could be that the provider must have a contract with the state. Lisa Parent raised a challenge to this for VNAs. Lisa Gurgone suggested adding "health" to the settings.

John Yazwinski raised that the board should focus on positions that are not covered by other programs.

Tammy Mello suggested the board use a definition as a springboard to determine eligible settings and workers. The board then discussed a variety of settings and roles and if those would be eligible.

John Yazwinski suggested the board should focus on what is already covered by other programs and fill in any gaps. He stated the board should also establish what the priority of this funding is.

Leslie Darcy raised the federal loan relief program as a consideration.

At 4:30pm, Lois Nesci and Michael Weeks left the meeting.

Lisa Gurgone stated the largest worker gap is the frontline worker, specifically direct care.

The board agreed that for the next meeting, they will review a definition of workers and make recommended criteria.

At 4:40pm the meeting concluded.