



October 1, 2024

Hon. Joseph M. Baldacci, Senate Chair
Hon. Michele Meyer, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04332

Re: FAME report-back on HHS letter requesting update on Maine Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Pilot Program

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

This letter serves as a report-back regarding your letter dated April 9, 2024 (attached) requesting an update by December 1, 2024 on the FAME-administered Maine Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Pilot Program.

As you may recall, in March of 2023 we provided the committee with an update on Round 1 of awards. I've included that info again with minor updates, as well as the newer information on Round 2 of awards.

First, we want to provide a background on the program and its funding so far:

Maine Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Pilot Program

- Geared toward certain health care professionals to address critical workforce shortages exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, including, but not limited to, the behavioral health and oral care sectors. [Maine Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Pilot Program - FAME Maine](#)
- FAME will pay up to \$25,000 per year and, in aggregate, the lesser of \$75,000 and 50% of the recipient's outstanding loan balance.
- During the 130th Maine Legislature, this program was begun with \$1 million in Federal Expenditures Fund-ARP State Fiscal Recovery monies.
- Selection of 18 eligible recipients from a pool of 1,021 applications occurred in October 2022 during the First Round of funding using the \$1 million in federal ARPA/MJRP funds.
- Program was to terminate when the funds allocated by Legislature were fully expended or by December 31, 2024, whichever occurs first.

- However, additional funds (\$2 million) were approved by the 131st Legislature during the First Session via LD 258 as amended, the biennial budget. We then opened a new application cycle in Feb of 2024. Second Round apps due March 31, 2024.
- Also, in January of 2024 we received an additional \$2,602,115.96 from the state via a provision in the enacted biennial budget stipulating that any unused money from a certain account at DPFR would be sent to FAME for use with this program. (Public Law 2023, c.3, Part C included language directing that any remaining available balance from the Small Business Health Insurance Premium Support Program be transferred to the Maine Health Care Provider Loan Repayment Fund at FAME).
- We plan on continuing the program so long as funding permits. Note: the third year of student loan repayment disbursements will be paid from state appropriations since federal funds will have been full spent by December 31, 2026.
- Prioritization of professions awarded is based on the following:
 - Access to health care for the population where the applicant practices or intends to practice; such as number of vacancies within a local provider system; timeliness of appointments; and whether they or their employer accepts Medicaid;
 - Monthly student debt obligation payment as a percentage of gross monthly income;
 - Need for specific health care practitioners in a given employment region;
 - Workforce needs of Maine health care providers, with special emphasis on the following occupations:
 - Nurses
 - Occupational Therapists
 - Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants
 - Physical Therapists
 - Speech Therapists
 - Behavioral Health Care Workers
 - Licensed Clinical Social Workers including, but not limited to, applied Behavioral Analysts and Board Certified Behavior Analysts, and Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors
 - Dental Hygienists
 - Dental Therapists
 - Medical Assistants
 - Pharmacists

- Health Care Technicians, including, but not limited to, Respiratory Therapists, Surgical Technicians, and Imaging Technicians such as MRI Technicians and Ultra Sonographers

Below is information on the two separate rounds of awards thus far:

HP-LRP Round 1:

- Application cycle opened on 6/1/22
- 18 individuals selected
- Total anticipated awards of \$933,253 over 3 years
- December 2023: first distributions to 17 professionals totaling \$301,398 (1 person did not fulfill their commitment)
- December 2024: second distribution anticipated for 16 professionals totaling \$276,398 (2 awards have been canceled: 1 due to job change, 1 did not fulfill requirements for 1st distribution)

243 applications from social workers & behavioral health professionals – avg indebtedness \$80,337

Occupation % of all applicants:

Pharmacist	27.78%
Registered Nurse	22.22%
Occupational Therapist	11.11%
Physical Therapist	5.56%
Behavioral Health	16.67%
Physician	5.56%
Physician Assistant	5.56%
Dentist	5.56%

HP-LRP Round 2:

Application cycle opened 2/1/24; closed 3/31/24

- Total # of applications received: 454
 - 138 also applied in 2022
 - o 159 Nursing

- 46 Behavioral Health
- 42 LCSW
- 40 Occupational Therapist
- 30 Dental Hygienist
- 28 Physician Assistant
- 27 Physical Therapist
- 22 Pharmacist
- 15 Health Care Tech
- 11 Physician
- 9 Medical Assistant
- 6 Speech Therapist
- 4 Dentist
- 4 Chiropractic
- 3 Respiratory Therapist
- 1 Athletic Trainer
- 1 Dietitian
- 1 Optometrist
- 5 Blank
- 78 individuals selected
 - 32 also applied in 2022
 - 15 counties represented (0 Sagadahoc)
 - Total anticipated awards of \$3,748,230 over 3 years
- 25 Nursing
- 11 Behavioral Health
- 5 LCSW
- 12 Occupational Therapist
- 8 Physical Therapist
- 7 Pharmacist

- 5 Dental Hygienist
- 2 Physician Assistant
- 1 Cardiac Sonographer
- 1 Respiratory Therapist
- 1 Ultrasound Technician

I hope this information is helpful and please let me know if you have further questions.

Very truly yours,

/s/ William S. Norbert

William S. Norbert
Governmental Affairs and Communications Mgr.

Encl: HHS letter dated April 9, 2024