

**DRAFT ONLY
NOT APPROVED FOR
INTRODUCTION**

HOUSE BILL NO. [BILL NUMBER]

Wyoming's investment in veteran's mental health.

Sponsored by: Joint Transportation, Highways & Military
Affairs Interim Committee

A BILL

for

1 AN ACT relating to education; establishing the Wyoming
2 veteran loan repayment program; specifying eligibility;
3 providing for loan repayment for veterans who provide
4 mental health services within this state to veterans;
5 providing a definition; requiring reporting; providing an
6 appropriation; and providing for an effective date.

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8 *Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Wyoming:*

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10 **Section 1.** W.S. 21-16-2001 is created to read:

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ARTICLE 20

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WYOMING VETERAN LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM

21-16-2001. Wyoming veteran loan repayment program; eligibility criteria; procedures; reporting.

(a) The Wyoming veteran loan repayment program is created to be administered by the University of Wyoming.

(b) To qualify for a loan under this section, the applicant shall:

(i) Be a United States citizen or a permanent resident alien who meets the definition of an eligible noncitizen under federal Title IV requirements or requirements of a subsequent similar federal enactment;

(ii) Be a veteran;

(iii) Be enrolled in good standing in a social work program, a counseling program or a psychology program at the University of Wyoming leading to a:

(A) Baccalaureate degree; or

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(B) Masters degree.

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STAFF COMMENT
The Committee may wish to consider whether to extend the
qualifying programs to programs at Wyoming community
colleges.

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(c) Subject to the availability of funds appropriated
 for this program, loans under this section may be granted
 to qualified applicants to pay the cost of attendance for
 the academic programs listed in paragraph (b)(iii) of this
 section.

(d) A loan provided under this section shall not
 exceed the cost of attendance for a qualifying program,
 reduced by the amount of any federal grant and any employer
 based financial assistance received by the applicant.

STAFF COMMENT
The Committee may wish to consider the following:
 • How this loan repayment program may interact with any
 GI Bill benefits.

- 1 • Whether to reduce the loan by the amount of any other
2 state grants.

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7 (e) A recipient of a loan under this section may repay
8 the loan without monetary payment by working at least XX
9 (XX%) of his working hours providing mental health services
10 within this state to veterans. To qualify for repayment
11 under this subsection, work shall be performed within the
12 minimum amount of time necessary to repay the loan, plus XX
13 (XX) years, which shall begin with the calendar month
14 following the month in which the student completed the
15 academic program.

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20 **STAFF COMMENT**

21 The Committee will need to determine the following:

- 22 • The percentage of the working hours that a recipient
23 must provide mental health services within this state
24 to veterans.
- 25 • The additional number of years a recipient of a loan
26 is required to work for loan repayment.

27 Under W.S. 21-7-601, the Wyoming teacher shortage loan
28 repayment program, requires a recipient of a loan to teach
29 at least fifty percent (50%) of his working hours as a
30 teacher in special education, math, science, world
31 language, reading or English as a second language as a
32 certified teacher. The teacher shortage program also
33 requires an additional two (2) years for loan repayment.

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The Committee may wish to consider changing the work requirement.

Under W.S. 9-2-123, the Wyoming investment in nursing loan and grant program, requires the work to be performed within the following time periods:

(i) If the loan can be repaid with work of two (2) years or less, within three (3) years;

(ii) If the loan can be repaid with work of greater than two (2) years, but no more than four (4) years, within five (5) years;

(iii) If the loan can be repaid with work of greater than four (4) years, within the amount of time the loan could be repaid, plus two (2) years.

(f) Any recipient of a loan under this section who fails:

(i) To complete the academic program for which the loan was provided shall commence monetary repayment of the loan not later than forty-five (45) days after the recipient leaves the academic program;

STAFF COMMENT

The Committee may wish to consider allowing a recipient of a loan who starts an academic program, takes some time off,

1 and then returns to the academic program to defer loan
2 repayment for a period of time.

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7 (ii) To obtain employment that provides mental
8 health services within this state to veterans within two
9 hundred forty (240) days after successfully completing the
10 academic program, shall commence monetary repayment of the
11 loan within two hundred eighty-five (285) days after
12 completion of the academic program.

14 (g) Loan repayment options under this section may be
15 deferred for a period not to exceed five (5) years while a
16 loan recipient is serving on full-time active duty in the
17 armed forces as defined by W.S. 8-1-102(a)(xxi), the army
18 national guard or the air national guard.

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22 **STAFF COMMENT**
23 **The Committee may wish to consider whether to include the**
24 **uniformed services as defined by W.S. 8-1-102(a)(xxii) to**
25 **the loan deferment option.**

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1 (h) The University of Wyoming shall have the powers
2 and duties to implement this section and shall establish
3 terms and conditions of loans issued under this section,
4 including:

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6 (i) Interest rates and loan terms;

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8 (ii) The form and process for loan application,
9 review and award;

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11 (iii) Criteria under which students may be
12 relieved from having to repay loans and interest thereon,
13 in whole or in part, where the requirement to repay would
14 cause undue hardship;

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16 (iv) Criteria for determining the cost of
17 attendance as used in establishing the loan amount for the
18 academic programs listed in paragraph (b)(iii) of this
19 section, based upon each semester or summer school session
20 of full or part-time program attendance.

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22 (j) Funding of the loan program established under
23 this section shall be by appropriation of the legislature.

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2 (k) Repayment of loans and interest thereon shall be
3 credited to the school foundation program account.

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5 (m) The University of Wyoming shall annually review
6 the loan program established under this section and report
7 to the governor and the legislature in accordance with W.S.
8 9-2-1014 regarding program results, funds received and
9 loans issued during the preceding academic year, together
10 with the status of all outstanding loan commitments and
11 repayments under the program.

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15 STAFF COMMENT
16 The Committee may wish to consider whether to add a sunset
17 date to the loan repayment program under this section.
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21 (n) As used in this section "veteran" means any
22 person who served in the United States armed forces as
23 defined by W.S. 8-1-102(a)(xxi), the army national guard or
24 air national guard and who was discharged or released under
25 conditions other than dishonorable.

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3 STAFF COMMENT

4 The Committee may wish to consider whether to include a
5 person who served in the uniformed services as defined by
6 W.S. 8-1-102(a)(xxii) to the definition of veteran. The
7 definition of uniformed services is provided for reference.

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9 8-1-102. Definitions.

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11 (a) As used in the statutes unless the legislature
12 clearly specifies a different meaning or interpretation or
13 the context clearly requires a different meaning:

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15 (xxii) "Uniformed services" means all of the
16 following:

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18 (A) The armed forces;

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20 (B) The commissioned corps of the national
21 oceanic and atmospheric administration;

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23 (C) The commissioned corps of the public
24 health service;

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26 (D) Any other category of persons
27 designated by the president of the United States in time of
28 war or emergency.

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32 Section 2.

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34 (a) There is appropriated XX (\$XX) dollars from the XX
35 to the University of Wyoming for the period beginning July
36 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026. This appropriation shall
37 be used for the loan program established by section 1 of
38 this act and as authorized by subsection (b) of this

1 section. This appropriation shall not be transferred or
 2 expended for any other purpose and any unexpended,
 3 unobligated funds remaining from this appropriation shall
 4 revert as provided by law on June 30, 2026. It is the
 5 intent of the legislature that this appropriation be
 6 included in the standard budget request for the University
 7 of Wyoming for the immediately succeeding fiscal biennium.

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9 (b) Not more than **XX** percent of the amount
 10 appropriated under this section shall be used by the
 11 University of Wyoming for the administration costs of this
 12 program, including expenses of the University of Wyoming,
 13 loan administration fees and marketing costs to advertise
 14 availability of the program.

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STAFF COMMENT

19 **The Committee will need to determine the following:**

- 20 • **The appropriation amount.**
- 21 • **How to fund the appropriation amount (general fund,**
 22 **school foundation program account etc.)**
- 23 • **The percentage amount for administrative expenses.**

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1 **Section 3.** This act is effective immediately upon
2 completion of all acts necessary for a bill to become law
3 as provided by Article 4, Section 8 of the Wyoming
4 Constitution.

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(END)