

**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.

7

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

9

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

11

12

ARTICLE 20

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22

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 course of study leading to a masters degree in social work, counseling or psychology at the University of Wyoming.

1 (c) Subject to the availability of funds appropriated
2 for this program, loans under this section may be granted
3 to qualified applicants to pay the cost of attendance for
4 the masters degree programs listed in paragraph (b)(iii) of
5 this section. For purposes of this subsection, "cost of
6 attendance" means the sum cost of tuition, mandatory fees,
7 room and board, books and supplies, travel and personal
8 expenses to attend the University of Wyoming as determined
9 annually by the University of Wyoming.

10
11 (d) Any federal, state or other grants or funding,
12 other than loans received by the applicant for the cost of
13 attendance for a qualifying masters degree program shall be
14 prioritized by the University of Wyoming and applied before
15 a loan provided under this section. A loan provided under
16 this section shall not exceed the cost of attendance for a
17 qualifying masters program, reduced by the amounts of any
18 federal, state or other grants or funding received by the
19 applicant.

20
21 (e) A recipient of a loan under this section may repay
22 the loan without monetary payment by working not less than
23 XX (XX%) of his working hours providing mental health

1 services within this state to veterans. To qualify for
 2 repayment under this subsection, work shall be performed
 3 within the minimum amount of time necessary to repay the
 4 loan, plus **XX (XX)** years, which shall begin with the
 5 calendar month following the month in which the student
 6 completed the masters degree program.

7

8 *****
 9 *****

10 **STAFF COMMENT**

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

- 12 • **The percentage of the working hours that a recipient**
 13 **must provide mental health services within this state**
 14 **to veterans.**
- 15 • **The additional number of years a recipient of a loan**
 16 **is required to work for loan repayment.**

17

18 **The Committee may wish to consider amending the work**
 19 **requirement. Other loan repayment programs are provided**
 20 **below for the Committee's reference:**

- 21 • **Wyoming teacher shortage loan repayment program (W.S.**
 22 **21-7-601)**
 - 23 ○ **Requires a recipient of a loan to teach at least**
 24 **fifty percent (50%) of his working hours as a**
 25 **teacher in special education, math, science,**
 26 **world language, reading or English as a second**
 27 **language as a certified teacher. The teacher**
 28 **shortage program also requires an additional two**
 29 **(2) years for loan repayment.**
- 30 • **Wyoming investment in nursing loan and grant program**
 31 **(W.S. 9-2-123)**
 - 32 ○ **Requires to be working in Wyoming as a nurse or**
 33 **nurse educator with the following timelines:**
 - 34 ▪ **If the loan can be repaid with work of two**
 35 **(2) years or less, within three (3) years;**

- 1 ▪ If the loan can be repaid with work of
2 greater than two (2) years but no more than
3 four (4) years, within five (5) years;
4 ▪ If the loan can be repaid with work of
5 greater than four (4) years, within the
6 amount of time the loan could be repaid,
7 plus two (2) years.
- 8 • **WWAMI (W.S. 21-17-109)**
- 9 o The repayment period commences one (1) year after
10 the date on which the student ceases to be
11 enrolled in a fully accredited medical school or
12 residency program, whichever is the later as
13 determined by the University.
- 14 o In the first four (4) years of repayment, a
15 student may still return to Wyoming and their
16 payments will be suspended and repaid after the
17 completion of the work requirement.
- 18 o The statute requires graduates to work in Wyoming
19 for not more than three (3) years as the board
20 requires.
- 21 o WWAMI contracts provide:
- 22 ▪ Upon completion of the first year of full
23 time work in Wyoming, one third of the total
24 accrued balance at that point shall be
25 canceled.
- 26 ▪ Upon completion of the second year of full
27 time work in Wyoming, one half of the total
28 accrued balance at that point shall be
29 canceled.
- 30 ▪ Upon completion of the third year of full
31 time work in Wyoming, all remaining amounts
32 owed to the University under the contract,
33 plus interest, shall be canceled.
- 34 ▪ The cancellation shall apply first to
35 interest accrued and then to principal.
- 36 • **WICHE (W.S. 21-16-202)**
- 37 o The repayment period commences one (1) year after
38 the date on which the student ceases to be
39 enrolled in the eligible program.
- 40 o The statute requires graduates to work in Wyoming
41 for not less than three (3) years as the
42 commission requires.
- 43 o WICHE contracts provide that the total accrued
44 balance including interest shall be cancelled

1 repayment of the loan not later than forty-five (45) days
2 after the recipient leaves the masters degree program;

3

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

10

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

16

17 (h) The University of Wyoming shall have the powers
18 and duties to implement this section and shall establish
19 terms and conditions of loans issued under this section,
20 including:

21

22 (i) Interest rates and loan terms;

23

1 (ii) The form and process for loan application,
2 review and award;

3

4 (iii) Criteria under which students may be
5 relieved from having to repay loans and interest thereon,
6 in whole or in part, where the requirement to repay would
7 cause undue hardship;

8

9 (iv) Criteria for determining the cost of
10 attendance as used in establishing the loan amount for the
11 masters degree programs listed in paragraph (b)(iii) of
12 this section, based upon each semester or summer school
13 session of full or part-time program attendance.

14

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

17

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

20

21 (m) The University of Wyoming shall annually review
22 the loan program established under this section and report
23 to the governor and the legislature in accordance with W.S.

1 9-2-1014 regarding program results, funds received and
2 loans issued during the preceding academic year, together
3 with the status of all outstanding loan commitments and
4 repayments under the program.

5

6 (n) This program created by this section shall expire
7 effective June 30, 2035.

8

9 (o) As used in this section "veteran" means any
10 person who served in the United States armed forces as
11 defined by W.S. 8-1-102(a)(xxi), the army national guard or
12 air national guard and who was discharged or released under
13 conditions other than dishonorable.

14

15 **Section 2.**

16

17 (a) There is appropriated XX (\$XX) dollars from the XX
18 to the University of Wyoming for the period beginning July
19 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026. This appropriation shall
20 be used for the loan program established by section 1 of
21 this act and as authorized by subsection (b) of this
22 section. This appropriation shall not be transferred or
23 expended for any other purpose and any unexpended,

1 unobligated funds remaining from this appropriation shall
2 revert as provided by law on June 30, 2026. It is the
3 intent of the legislature that this appropriation be
4 included in the standard budget request for the University
5 of Wyoming for the immediately succeeding fiscal biennium.

6

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

13

14 *****
15 *****

16 STAFF COMMENT

17 The Committee will need to determine the following:

- 18 • The appropriation amount.
- 19 • How to fund the appropriation amount (general fund,
20 school foundation program account, University of
21 Wyoming Budget Bill amounts).
- 22 • The percentage amount for administrative expenses.

23

24 *****
25 *****

26

27 Section 3. This act is effective immediately upon
28 completion of all acts necessary for a bill to become law

1 as provided by Article 4, Section 8 of the Wyoming
2 Constitution.

3

4

(END)