

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE
FIRST SESSION

LEGISLATIVE BILL 503

Introduced by Aguilar, 35.

Read first time January 17, 2023

Committee: Health and Human Services

1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to nursing; to adopt the Rural Nebraska

2 Nursing Workforce Act.

3 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 Section 1. Sections 1 to 7 of this act shall be known and may be
2 cited as the Rural Nebraska Nursing Workforce Act.

3 Sec. 2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

4 (1) There is a nursing shortage in Nebraska. Nebraska will
5 experience a shortage of more than five thousand nurses by 2025. Seventy-
6 three of Nebraska's ninety-three counties have less than the national
7 average ratio of registered nurses to patients. Sixty-six counties in
8 Nebraska have been deemed medically underserved. Nine counties in
9 Nebraska have no registered nurses and four counties have one registered
10 nurse;

11 (2) The nursing shortage affects both Nebraska residents' physical
12 health and the state's economic health. Lack of care impedes the ability
13 of communities throughout the state to attract and retain residents and
14 the businesses that employ them. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this
15 issue more critical;

16 (3) Rapid production of professional nurses is vital to Nebraska.
17 Research has shown that patient outcomes are improved when nurses are
18 prepared at the bachelor's degree level; and

19 (4) Proper education and training of health care providers depends
20 on robust clinical learning opportunities. Nursing clinical and learning
21 environments need to be enhanced for the efficient preparation of the
22 nursing workforce in Nebraska.

23 Sec. 3. For purposes of the Rural Nebraska Nursing Workforce Act:

24 (1) Approved clinical and learning environment means a clinical and
25 learning environment for the education of nurses at a university and
26 hospital system with multiple state locations that accommodates a minimum
27 of sixteen nursing applicants per cycle with no fewer than two admission
28 cycles per year;

29 (2) Approved nursing program means a program offered by a public or
30 private postsecondary institution in Nebraska which consists of a twelve-
31 month accelerated nursing program where priority admission is offered to

1 partnering dual-degree programs with public or private postsecondary
2 institutions offering a three-plus-one degree completion opportunity; and
3 (3) Department means the Department of Health and Human Services.

4 Sec. 4. The department shall administer a scholarship program under
5 the Rural Nebraska Nursing Workforce Act and shall award scholarships to
6 students who qualify under section 5 of this act. The department shall
7 administer funds for the approved clinical and learning education of
8 nursing students under the act.

9 Sec. 5. To qualify for a scholarship under the Rural Nebraska
10 Nursing Workforce Act, a student shall:

11 (1) Intend to enroll in an accelerated bachelor of science in
12 nursing program;

13 (2) Intend to practice as a licensed registered nurse upon
14 completion of the approved nursing program; and

15 (3) Agree in writing to work for three years in Nebraska as a
16 licensed registered nurse upon completion of the approved nursing
17 program.

18 Sec. 6. The scholarship shall be used for: (1) Forty percent of the
19 total amount of tuition and fees; and (2) remission in an amount equal to
20 twenty percent of the tuition and fees for each of the three years of
21 service requirement in Nebraska.

22 Sec. 7. It is the intent of the Legislature to appropriate one
23 million dollars in fiscal year 2023-24 and two million dollars in fiscal
24 year 2024-25 from the XXX Fund to the department to carry out the Rural
25 Nebraska Nursing Workforce Act. It is the intent of the Legislature to
26 appropriate an additional one million dollars in fiscal year 2023-24 from
27 the XXX Fund to the department for the expansion of approved clinical and
28 learning environments to accommodate additional students pursuant to the
29 Rural Nebraska Nursing Workforce Act.