

RALPH DLG. TORRES  
Governor



COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

October 26, 2022

The Honorable Jude U. Hofschneider  
President of the Senate  
Twenty-Second Northern Marianas  
Commonwealth Legislature  
Saipan, MP 96950

The Honorable Edmund S. Villagomez  
Speaker, House of Representatives  
Twenty-Second Northern Marianas  
Commonwealth Legislature  
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Mr. President and Mr. Speaker:

This is to inform you that I have signed into law **Senate Bill No. 22-05, SS1, HD1** entitled, "To establish a Behavioral Health Professional Scholarship"; and for other purposes," which was passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

This bill becomes **Public Law No. 22-24**. Copies bearing my signature are forwarded for your reference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ralph DLG. Torres".

**RALPH DLG. TORRES**  
Governor

cc: Acting Press Secretary; Attorney General's Office; Commissioner of Education; CHCC; Department of Corrections; CNMI Scholarship; Substance Abuse & Rehabilitation; Commonwealth Law Revision Commission; Public Auditor; Special Assistant for Administration; Special Assistant for Programs and Legislative Review



THE SENATE  
Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature  
P. O. Box 500129  
Saipan, MP 96950

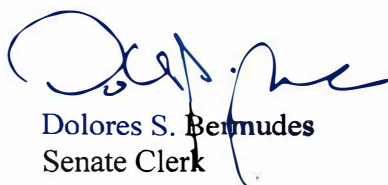
September 26, 2022

The Honorable Ralph DLG. Torres  
Governor  
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands  
Capital Hill  
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Governor Torres:

I have the honor of transmitting herewith for your action Senate Bill No. 22-05, SS1, HD1, entitled: "To establish a Behavioral Health Professional Scholarship; and for other purposes," which was passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Twenty-Second Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature.

Sincerely,



Dolores S. Bermudes  
Senate Clerk

Attachments

PROGRAMS & LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

RECEIVED BY: SAPLR

DATE & TIME: 9/26/2024 3:50 pm

11104/22



**THE SENATE**  
**TWENTY-SECOND NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE**

**SENATE BILL NO. 22-05, SS1, HD1**

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**AN ACT**

To establish a Behavioral Health Professional Scholarship; and for other purposes.

***SENATE ACTION***

**Offered by Senator(s):** Jude U. Hofschneider

**Date:** January 26, 2021

**Referred to:** Committee on Health, Education, and Welfare

**Standing Committee Report No.:** 22-35 Adopted on 8/12/22

**Final Reading:** Accepted and passed SS1, HD1 on September 23, 2022

***HOUSE ACTION***

**Referred to:** Education Committee

**Standing Committee Report No.:** 22-52 adopted on 8/29/22

**First and Final Reading:** August 29, 2022

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**DOLORES S. BERMUDES**  
**SENATE CLERK**



THE SENATE  
TWENTY-SECOND NORTHERN MARIANAS COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION, 2021

S. B. NO. 22-05, SS1, HD1

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AN ACT

To establish a Behavioral Health Professional Scholarship; and  
for other purposes.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE TWENTY-SECOND NORTHERN MARIANAS  
COMMONWEALTH LEGISLATURE:**

1           **Section 1. Findings and Purpose.** The Legislature finds that since the  
2 Commonwealth's inception, there has been a shortage of qualified U.S. citizen or  
3 permanent resident behavioral health professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists,  
4 therapists, counselors, social workers and substance use professionals. The Commonwealth  
5 has always struggled to fill these critical employment positions in most, if not all,  
6 government sectors including the hospital, the Community Guidance Center and all public  
7 health clinics. Notwithstanding the shortage of behavioral health professionals, there's an  
8 increasing requirement for such professionals throughout the United States and the  
9 Commonwealth.

10           The Legislature further finds that there's an opioid and drug crisis throughout the  
11 United States and the Commonwealth. Many individuals struggling with substance  
12 use/misuse are suffering from behavioral disorders and require long term substance use  
13 treatment. Moreover, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration and the U.S.  
14 Center for Disease Control and Prevention report that suicide has become the second-  
15 leading cause of death for children ages 10 to 14 years old and that young children are  
16 increasingly at risk for suicide. Many adults and children that do commit suicide are also  
17 suffering from an untreated behavioral disorder.

**SENATE BILL NO. 22-05, SS1, HD1**

1           The Legislature finds that one of the solutions to combat the drug crisis and  
2 substance use, and to prevent or reduce suicide rates is to increase the number behavioral  
3 health and substance use professionals available to assist the people in our communities.  
4 Another recommendation is to increase the behavioral health or substance use treatment of  
5 persons incarcerated at the Department of Corrections to reduce the risk of recidivism  
6 among prisoners. Yet another movement is to establish behavioral health treatment  
7 program at the K to 12 level at the CNMI Public School System. The intent is to provide  
8 the required behavioral health treatment to persons at a young age or when needed to  
9 prevent or reduce suicide rates, prevent future criminal activities by affected persons, and  
10 ultimately improve life outcomes for these persons. All these recommendations and  
11 solutions require additional behavioral health professionals throughout the agencies  
12 providing such services in order to properly address and treat children and adults with  
13 behavioral health and substance use issues.

14           The Legislature further finds that in order to promote the behavioral health  
15 profession and to quickly produce such professionals, it is necessary to provide incentives  
16 in the form of scholarships to students to assist them in obtaining graduate degrees in a  
17 behavioral health field. Accordingly, the purpose of this legislation is to establish a  
18 behavioral health professional scholarship for 5 eligible students that aspire to obtain a  
19 graduate degree in a behavioral health field. In exchange, the scholarship recipient must  
20 either return to the Commonwealth and work as a behavioral health professional or provide  
21 tele-health services as a CNMI-licensed professional for a period of two years for each  
22 year of scholarship assistance. CNMI Scholarship Office shall administer the behavioral  
23 health professional scholarship consistent with the provisions of this legislation.

24           **Section 2. Amendment.** Chapter 6 of Division 1 of Title 3 of the Commonwealth  
25 Code is hereby amended by adding a new article 3 to read as follows:

26                           **“Article 3. Behavioral Health Professional Scholarship.**

27                           **§ 1621. Behavioral Health Professional Scholarship.**

28                           (a) There is hereby established a Behavioral Health Professional  
29                           Scholarship for the purpose of providing graduate scholarships or financial

**SENATE BILL NO. 22-05, SS1, HD1**

1 assistance to five (5) students a year who are pursuing a graduate degree in a  
2 behavioral health field at an accredited college or university in the Commonwealth  
3 or the United States or its territories to pay for costs directly related to the student's  
4 educational needs, including but not limited to tuition, textbooks and school  
5 supplies, transportation, health insurance and housing. For purposes of this article,  
6 behavioral health fields included, but are not limited to, psychiatry, fields of  
7 psychological practice (clinical, school, counseling), public health, social work  
8 with emphasis in clinical practice, school counseling, psychiatric advanced practice  
9 nursing, physician assistant – psychiatric, addiction/substance use treatment,  
10 applied behavior analysis, and marriage and family therapy. In the event that fewer  
11 than five master's program students apply for the scholarship in a given year,  
12 remaining funds may be allocated to doctoral or other graduate students, subject to  
13 availability and need.

14 (b) The amount allocated for each master's degree scholarship shall be  
15 \$10,000 per annum for students enrolled in a graduate program at a college or  
16 university in the United States or its territories or at any WICHE partner institution  
17 for a period of up to two years for a master's degree. If funds are allocated to  
18 doctoral or other graduate students, such students shall declare all other sources of  
19 funding they receive and any funds distributed may be adjusted accordingly and for  
20 cost of living.

21 (c) Criteria and Requirements. To be eligible for this scholarship program  
22 an individual shall:

23 (1) Be a United States citizen, CNMI or U.S. permanent resident.

24 (2) Be a CNMI resident for at least one year prior to enrollment in a college  
25 or university.

26 (3) Furnish a letter of acceptance from a U.S. accredited college or  
27 university.

28 (4) Agree to remain in or return to the CNMI after graduation and licensure  
29 to work as a behavioral health professional for a period of two years for each year

SENATE BILL NO. 22-05, SS1, HD1

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1 of scholarship assistance.

2 (5) Agree to reimburse the CNMI all moneys received if the student  
3 chooses to switch course of studies to a major other than behavioral health.

4 (6) Sign a fully executed Behavioral Health Professional Scholarship  
5 Contract, or successor agreement.

6 (d) As a condition of continuing scholarship assistance, a scholarship  
7 recipient shall do the following:

8 (1) Maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0  
9 scale per term.

10 (2) Enroll in what the institution deems to be full-time status in an  
11 accredited behavioral health program at a college or university. These courses must  
12 not be repeated courses.

13 (3) Submit a certified copy (official transcript) of the student's grades for  
14 each term to the CNMI Scholarship Office and a class schedule for the subsequent  
15 term.

16 **§ 1622. Conditions of Scholarship Award.**

17 (a) If recipients enroll in a behavioral health program that does not provide  
18 concurrent clinical supervision and licensure, they shall have up to three (3) years  
19 immediately post-graduation to become certified in a behavioral health field  
20 provided that the recipients shall do the following:

21 (1) Provide the CNMI Scholarship Office a copy of the contract or  
22 agreement between the scholarship recipient and the clinical supervisor.

23 (2) Submit a certified copy of clinical supervision activity to the CNMI  
24 Scholarship Office on a quarterly basis.

25 During this post-graduation period, a recipient shall not receive additional  
26 scholarship award from the CNMI under this program.

27 (b) The recipients of the Behavioral Health Professional Scholarship under  
28 this article agree to reimburse the CNMI Scholarship Office for all scholarship  
29 funds received with six percent interest if the student fails to return to, or remain in

**SENATE BILL NO. 22-05, SS1, HD1**

1 the CNMI after graduation to work as a behavioral health professional for a period  
2 of two years for each year of scholarship assistance.

3 (c) The recipients of the Behavioral Health Professional Scholarship under  
4 this article shall obtain a business license in the CNMI in addition to any other local  
5 requirements if they choose to practice tele-health medicine from outside the  
6 CNMI.

7 (d) The recipients of the Behavioral Health Professional Scholarship under  
8 this article shall be approved and awarded scholarships only in the first four years  
9 of this program consistent with the five-year sunset clause.

10 **§ 1623. Behavioral Health Professional Scholarship Funding.**

11 Scholarship awards will be funded from CNMI scholarship  
12 educational/assistance funds. The scholarship administrator shall set aside  
13 sufficient funds to meet the needs of participants in the Behavioral Health  
14 Professional Scholarship program.

15 **§ 1624. Program Administration.**

16 The CNMI Scholarship Office shall administer the Behavioral Health  
17 Professional Scholarship. The CNMI Scholarship Office shall promulgate rules and  
18 regulations to effectively implement this article.

19 **§ 1625. Reporting.**

20 The CNMI Scholarship Office shall submit an annual report to the presiding  
21 officers of the Legislature, the Governor, the Commonwealth Healthcare  
22 Corporation, and the CNMI Public School System reporting, among other things,  
23 the number of students participating in the program, the number of students who  
24 have successfully completed their behavioral health master's or other graduate  
25 degree at a college or university, the number of participated students who have  
26 returned to the Commonwealth to work in the private sector, the Commonwealth  
27 Healthcare Corporation, the CNMI Public School System or any CNMI  
28 government agency that requires the services of a behavioral health professional.

29 **§ 1626. Sunset.**



SENATE BILL NO. 22-05, SS1, HD1

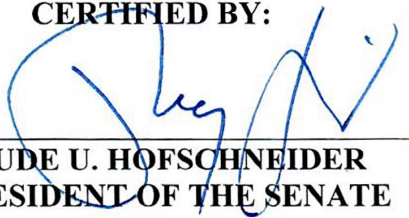
1 The provisions of this article shall expire five years after the effective date  
2 of this article.”

3 **Section 3. Severability.** If any provision of this Act or the application of any such  
4 provision to any person or circumstance should be held invalid by a court of competent  
5 jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act or the application of its provisions to persons or  
6 circumstances other than those to which it is held invalid shall not be affected thereby.


7 **Section 4. Savings Clause.** This Act and any repealer contained herein shall not be  
8 construed as affecting any existing right acquired under contract or acquired under statutes  
9 repealed or under any rule, regulation, or order adopted under the statutes. Repealers  
10 contained in this Act shall not affect any proceeding instituted under or pursuant to prior  
11 law. The enactment of the Act shall not have the effect of terminating, or in any way  
12 modifying, any liability, civil or criminal, which shall already be in existence on the date  
13 this Act becomes effective.

14 **Section 5. Effective Date.** This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the  
15 Governor or becoming law without such approval.

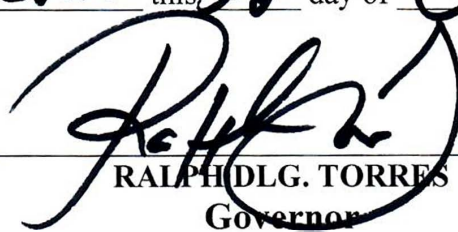
CERTIFIED BY:

  
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JUDE U. HOFSCHEIDER  
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ATTESTED BY:

  
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VICTOR B. HOCOG  
SENATE LEGISLATIVE SECRETARY

Approved this 26<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2022

  
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RALPH DLG. TORRES  
Governor

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands