LEGISLATIVE BILL 1066

Introduced by Stinner, 48.
Read first time January 18, 2022
Committee: Appropriations

1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to appropriations; to appropriate federal funds to the Department of Health and Human Services and the University of Nebraska; and to declare an emergency.

4 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,
Section 1. (1) The Nebraska Legislature hereby finds and declares that the following are needed to address behavioral health care service and behavioral health workforce shortages that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health emergency:

(a) An immediate infusion of funds to provide additional access to acute care services in rural areas;

(b) An increase in existing programming conducted by the Behavioral Health Education Center;

(c) An expansion of educational and training opportunities in order to increase the number of behavioral health professionals available to improve access to behavioral health care services;

(d) Additional education and interprofessional, outreach, and training opportunities for postsecondary students, interns, residents, and fellows from public and private postsecondary institutions in Nebraska that offer certificates, baccalaureate degrees, or graduate degrees;

(e) Instruction for behavioral health providers and facilities on how to increase access to behavioral health care services by placing well-trained behavioral health providers into primary care practices, behavioral health care practices, and rural hospitals in order to integrate behavioral health care into primary care practice and licensed health care facilities;

(f) Implementing technology, training, and supervision to support the expansion of telebehavioral health services in rural areas of the state for the purpose of providing proximal patient care; and

(g) Support for education, training, and retention programs that expand existing behavioral health professional programs or create program opportunities in fields, including, but not limited to, psychiatry, psychology, physician assistants, nursing, social work, counseling, marriage and family therapy, and certification programs, that address acute behavioral health workforce shortages.
(2) There is hereby appropriated $5,000,000 from Federal Funds for FY2022-23 to the Department of Health and Human Services for purposes of providing grants of up to two hundred fifty thousand dollars for capital costs of expanding access to behavioral health acute care beds in rural areas where beds are not currently available or a shortage exists. The Federal Funds appropriated in this section are from the funds allocated to the State of Nebraska from the federal Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund pursuant to the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Public Law 117-2, Subtitle M, Sec. 9901.

(3) There is hereby appropriated $28,000,000 from Federal Funds for FY2022-23 to the University of Nebraska for the purposes described in subsection (4) of this section. The Federal Funds appropriated in this section are from the funds allocated to the State of Nebraska from the federal Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund pursuant to the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Public Law 117-2, Subtitle M, Sec. 9901.

(4) It is the intent of the Legislature that the funds appropriated in subsection (3) of this section be distributed to the Behavioral Health Education Center by the University of Nebraska for the purposes described in section 71-830. It is the intent of the Legislature that the funds appropriated in subsection (3) of this section be spent by the Behavioral Health Education Center in the following manner:

(a) $13,000,000 for graduate and postgraduate training opportunities such as internships, practicums, and fellowships;

(b) $10,000,000 for the expansion of telebehavioral health services in rural areas;

(c) $3,000,000 for education and training opportunities for students and behavioral health professionals related to behavioral health issues caused or exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health emergency; and

(d) $2,000,000 for stipends for provisionally licensed behavioral health professionals employed in the field of behavioral health.
(5) The funds appropriated in this section shall be obligated and expended in compliance with the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Sec. 2. Since an emergency exists, this act takes effect when passed and approved according to law.