

AB 2543 (Berg)

California Geriatric and Gerontology Workforce Expansion Act of 2008

Background

The aging of California will increase the demand for professionals with expertise in the aging process. At present, California faces a severe shortage of professionals and paraprofessionals needed to operate programs and provide services for older adults.

The shortage covers a variety of professions, with the greatest gaps in workforce coverage shown in the medical and social work fields. For example, there are approximately 890 board-certified geriatricians in the state, only one geriatrician for every 4,000 Californians over the age of 65. California also has a deficit in the number of social workers needed. While 62 percent of licensed social workers have or have had care management responsibilities, only 5 percent have received any social work training in gerontology or geriatrics. Policymakers need to develop policies that recruit and train professionals and paraprofessionals to care for our growing aging population.

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AB 2543, The California Geriatric and Gerontology Workforce Expansion Act of 2008, will attempt to fill the growing workforce gaps in geriatric services by establishing a loan assistance program for social workers and marriage and family therapists. The program would be administered by the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development through the Health Professions Education Foundation with funding dependent upon fee contributions paid by current providers during the licensing process.

Guidelines for the program would prioritize consideration for applicants that can meet the cultural and linguistic needs and demands of the diverse population of older Californians, and will seek to place applicants in the areas of greatest need.

As part of the program each recipient of loan assistance would have to commit to a minimum of three years of service in a geriatric care setting.

In addition, AB 2543 requires the existing Steve Thompson Fund which provides loan repayment assistance to physicians, to prioritize funding for physicians who have training in geriatric medicine.

Support:

Aging Services of California
California Assisted Living Association
CA Council on Gerontology and Geriatrics
National Association of Social Workers
California Chapter
CA Society for Clinical Social Work
AARP
American Federation of State, County and
Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO
(AFSCME)
Alzheimer's Association, California Council
Board of Behavioral Sciences
California Alliance for Retired Americans
CA Association for Adult Day Services
California Association of Marriage and
Family Therapists
California Commission on Aging
California Geriatric Education Center
California Geriatrics Society
California Hospital Association
CA Mental Health Planning Council
California Senior Legislature
Congress of California Seniors
Gray Panthers California
Health Projects Center
Latino Coalition for a Healthy California
UCLA Department of Social Welfare –
School of Public Affairs
Yolo County Department of Employment
and Social Services

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