

# Health Workforce Council 2023 Recommendations

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# Educational debt recommendations

*Reissued in 2023*

**Recommendation 1:** The Council recommends policymakers appropriate additional funds to support both behavioral health and other health professional loan repayment awards through the Washington Health Corps to address immediate retention challenges within a variety of healthcare settings.



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## Recent General Fund – State Appropriations for Washington Health Corps\*

Program	19-21 Biennium	21-23 Biennium	24-25 Biennium
State Health Program	\$7.65M	\$7.65M	\$17.6M
Behavioral Health Program	\$2M	\$12.25M	\$12M
Nurse Educator Program	-	\$3M	\$6M

\*This does not include the Federal Health Program. For the FHP, \$2M federal dollars are matched with \$1.1M GFS. Due to grant requirements, this program has less flexibility than the state-only funded programs.  
Source: Washington Student Achievement Council

***WSAC estimates that fully funding the annual applicant pool would require \$24M, \$48M for the biennium (ongoing)***



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**Recommendation 2:** As part of supporting investments made in loan repayment programs in Washington, the Council recommends policymakers appropriate funds for an evaluation of program outcomes.



# Educational debt recommendations

## **Included in Recommendation 2 Narrative:**

Budget proviso for WSAC to fund a third-party evaluation of the WHC, including all programs. This proviso should include directives to relevant agencies with employment, education, and licensure information to share (with appropriate agreements) the data needed to track the progress of WHC applicants and awardees if needed for the purposes of the evaluation. The evaluation report should include policy recommendations for program improvements as supported by the findings.

**Additionally, given the record appropriation in loan repayment programs during the 2024-2025 biennium, now is a key time to start collecting prospective data on WHC awardees entering service obligations in 2024.** This will allow for ongoing program outcome monitoring for years into the future.



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**Recommendation 3:** The Council recommends policymakers require eligible healthcare employers provide Public Service Loan Forgiveness educational materials and information about the Office of the Student Loan Advocate when hiring new employees, annually after hiring, and at the time of employee separation. The Office of the Student Loan Advocate should conduct outreach to eligible healthcare employers and assess if additional staff members are needed to serve demand.



# Educational debt recommendations

**Included in Recommendation 3 Narrative:** According to the Office of Financial Management, many people in Washington who qualify for PSLF are not currently participating in the program, which is why it's important to continue to raise awareness and provide technical assistance to eligible employers and workers.

Fall 2023 is a particularly tenuous time for those with educational debt as federal student loan repayments have resumed after being paused since March 2020. The restoration of this cost to the health workforce may influence additional workers to seek out higher paying opportunities in the private sector or in other fields.

The Office of the Student Loan Advocate reported that complaints to the office from borrowers more than doubled from September (53) to October (113) in 2023. The Office has 2.0 FTEs, and it is currently taking six weeks to respond to new requests for assistance due to staffing limitations.



# Community resources recommendation

*Updated and Reissued in 2023*

**Recommendation 4:** The Council affirms that access to high-quality, reliable child care, affordable housing, and transportation are key community resources for the current and future healthcare workforce. Having access to these resources in their communities allows the state's healthcare workers to accept and maintain employment. Additionally, child care, housing, and transportation are vital to developing future workforce efforts. Students and educators in the health professions are also highly impacted by lack of access to these community resources. The Council recommends that the Governor and Legislature continue to take action to address the need for dramatically increased access to affordable child care, housing, and transportation services in Washington.

The Council also encourages healthcare employers to consider innovative approaches to help support their workers needs for these community resources.



# Questions

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