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# Wisconsin Legislative Council

## ACT MEMO

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December 9, 2019

**2019 Wisconsin Act 58**  
[2019 Senate Bill 166]

**Health Care Provider  
Educational Loan Assistance  
Programs**

### BACKGROUND

Under state law, physicians, dentists, and other health care providers<sup>1</sup> who meet certain criteria are eligible to participate in a loan assistance program administered by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. One of the criteria is that a physician or dentist must practice in an “eligible practice area,” defined as a primary care shortage area, a mental health shortage area, an American Indian reservation, or trust lands of an American Indian tribe.

### 2019 WISCONSIN ACT 58

The act amends the definition of “eligible practice area” to include a free or charitable clinic, thus permitting physicians, dentists, and other health care providers who practice in free or charitable clinics and meet the remaining requirements of the program to receive loan assistance. A “free or charitable clinic” is defined by the act as a safety-net health care organization that satisfies all of the following:

1. The organization uses volunteers and staff to provide a range of medical, dental, pharmacy, vision, or behavioral health services to economically disadvantaged individuals who are uninsured, underinsured, or have limited or no access to primary, specialty, or prescription health care.
2. The organization is exempt from taxation under section 501 (c) of the Internal Revenue Code or operates as a program component or affiliate of such an organization.
3. The organization provides services without regard to a patient’s ability to pay.
4. The organization charges patients no fee for services or charges a nominal or sliding fee.
5. The organization does not provide abortion services and is not an affiliate of an organization, other than a hospital, that provides abortion services.

In addition to altering the definition to include providers who practice in free and charitable clinics, the act requires the Board of Regents to ensure that such providers are not disadvantaged under the prioritization procedure used to select candidates if the number of candidates seeking loan assistance exceeds the appropriation provided for the program.<sup>2</sup>

**Effective date:** November 27, 2019

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<sup>1</sup> Other health care providers eligible for the loan assistance program include dental hygienists, physician assistants, nurse-midwives, and nurse practitioners.

<sup>2</sup> See s. 36.60 (5) (b), Stats.