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that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

*Free and fair discussion
is the firmest friend of truth.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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University - Healthcare Partnership Plan Advances in the Senate

Spending Bill Focuses on Bringing Affordable Healthcare to Underserved Counties in Missouri

JEFFERSON CITY – The Missouri Senate approved a spending plan of \$472 million early Monday morning that benefits Missouri students as well as makes healthcare more available and affordable for all Missourians. House Bill 1022 is a comprehensive plan to invest in scholarships and capital projects on Missouri college campuses that will, in turn, lead to better healthcare throughout the state.

Senate Appropriations Chairman Chuck Gross, R-St. Charles, handled the bill that encompasses a range of suggestions on how to invest the state's proceeds provided by the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority.

“We want to do the right thing for Missouri students, parents and citizens,” Gross said. “The best way to do that is to expand healthcare scholarships and technology to bring available, affordable healthcare to everyone.”

The measure maintains \$309 million in university capital improvements proposed by the governor along with \$6 million in matching funding for maintenance of community college campuses. An additional \$1 million will be allocated to each of the 12 community college districts in the state which offer professional healthcare degrees like nursing, dental hygiene, occupational therapy and radiology technology.

It also creates a fund to provide continued scholarships in healthcare fields including medical, dental, nursing and dental hygienists. \$21.1 million is dedicated to the scholarship fund. \$2.4 million goes toward medical and dental school scholarships this year, joined by \$3.6 million in House Bill 1010 for these same scholarships.

Senate President Pro Tem Michael R. Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, said the lack of available, affordable healthcare is the number one issue facing Missourians.

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“This is an opportunity to give Missouri students a free education if they return to their hometowns to serve their communities,” Gibbons said. “By investing in our students and technology, we will be giving Missourians the opportunity for healthier, longer lives.”

There are 92 areas, ranging from rural counties to certain inner city areas, designated as underserved by medical professionals. Ninety counties are recognized for a shortage of dental professionals. The bill calls for a one-time investment of \$52.2 million to upgrade and maintain federally qualified health centers that are currently in identified underserved areas. Students who receive the medical and dental scholarships will work in these clinics in underserved areas in return for their education.

The bill now returns to the House. Differences in the House and Senate versions must be negotiated in a conference committee. All budget spending bills, including HB 1022, must be passed by 6 p.m., Friday, May 5, according to the state constitution.

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