



Gibbons Capitol Report
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Doing the Right Thing for Missouri Students, Parents and Citizens

The Senate announced its plan this past week to spend the proceeds from the proposed sale of some of the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority loans. Senate Bill 1256 creates a roadmap to initiate the discussion of how to invest the proceeds from the proposed partial sale. Our plan benefits Missouri students and their parents as well as helps make healthcare more available and affordable for all Missourians. We recognize that many questions about the partial sale of MoHELA remain, but a vital part of this process is the discussion and dialogue that we will have in the coming weeks.

Improving Colleges and Universities

Senate Bill 1256 maintains the university capital improvement projects proposed by the governor plus the Southeast Missouri State University River Campus project. It also includes matching funding for maintenance of community college campuses proposed by the House. The plan calls for more than \$300 million in capital improvements and \$18 million in maintenance for Missouri's community colleges.

More Available, Affordable Healthcare in Every County

The lack of available and affordable healthcare is the number one issue facing Missourians today. There are 92 designated health professional shortage areas in Missouri, including rural counties and inner city areas.* Between 88 and 90 Missouri counties are underserved by dental professionals. By investing in our students and technology, we will be giving Missourians the opportunity for healthier, longer lives.

The measure calls for expanding healthcare scholarships and technology across the state to bring available, affordable healthcare to everyone. The comprehensive plan invests in Missouri student scholarships, colleges and universities that will, in turn, lead to better healthcare in every county in the state.

Hometown Healthcare

Senate Bill 1256 designates a variety of scholarships to be used for Missouri students who graduate with healthcare related degrees including doctors, dentists, nurses or dental hygienists and then return to their hometowns to serve their communities.

The bill helps us fulfill our long-term goal of having a doctor and dentist that serves low-income Missourians in every county by creating the Healthcare Trust Fund for Underserved Areas, which this year would give \$2.4 million toward the PRIMO scholarship for dental and medical school students. This is an opportunity to give Missouri students a free education if they return to their hometowns to serve their communities. The plan would also give \$200,000 to community college dental hygienist scholarships this year.

One-Time Investment Doubles Availability

The bill calls for a one-time investment of \$65.9 million to upgrade and maintain federally qualified health centers that are currently in identified underserved areas. This one-time investment would double the number of health centers to serve low-income populations using a sliding scale fee based on income or accepting Medicaid patients when other doctors in the area refuse. Currently there are 19 federally qualified health centers through Missouri and this investment would build 20 more new and satellite clinics. Students who receive the medical and dental scholarships will work in these clinics in underserved areas in return for their education.

The bill will be heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee this week and we are eager to continue reforming healthcare in Missouri by making it more available and affordable to everyone.

*Visit http://www.dhss.mo.gov/PrimaryCareRuralHealth/Primary_Care_HPSA_Map.pdf to view if your county or city is currently designated as a medically underserved area.