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Joseph Baxter
Commissioner
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services



July 15, 2020

Arkansas Legislative Council
Honorable Senator Cecile Bledsoe, Chair
Honorable Representative Jeff Wardlaw, Chair
State Capitol, Room 315
Little Rock, AR 72201

Re: Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
Forgiveness of Student Loan Program - 2020 Update

Dear Senator Bledsoe and Representative Wardlaw,

This letter is in fulfillment of Section 10 of Act 121 of 2019 requiring Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) to report to the Arkansas Legislative Council regarding vocation rehabilitation counselors employed by ARS who are eligible for, and have enrolled in the agency's Forgiveness of Student Loan program incentive. The program has been very successful in enhancing the agency's ability to recruit and retain vocational rehabilitation counselors. You may recall that eligible ARS vocational rehabilitation counselors may elect to enroll each calendar year in the student loan forgiveness benefit for a total of five years and \$10,000 in loan payback assistance. As part of the benefit's program obligation, a VR counselor agrees to stay employed at ARS for two years for every year that a student loan payment is made on their behalf.

On June 25, 2020, notification of the program's benefit was sent out to every ARS counselor and district manager throughout the state.

Currently, there are nine counselors taking advantage of this benefit.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this status report to the Legislative Council and for your generous support of this program. If you have any questions, please contact me at joseph.baxter@arkansas.gov or at 501-296-1614.

Sincerely,

Joseph Baxter
Commissioner

Cc: Lynn Franquemont, Director of Community Service Programs