

**As Introduced**

**136th General Assembly  
Regular Session  
2025-2026**

**H. B. No. 797**

**Representatives Salvo, Brownlee**

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To establish the Social Work Apprenticeship 1  
Retention and Training (SMART) Internship 2  
Program, to name this act the Ohio Students and 3  
Families Workforce Strengthening Act, and to 4  
make an appropriation. 5

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO:**

**Section 1.** (A) As used in this section: 6

(1) "Eligible student" means a student who is both of the 7  
following: 8

(a) Enrolled in, and in good standing at, a master's 9  
degree program at one of the following: 10

(i) Bowling Green State University; 11

(ii) Miami University; 12

(iii) Ohio University; 13

(iv) Wright State University; 14

(v) Youngstown State University. 15

(b) Working towards obtaining an independent social worker 16  
or social worker license under section 4757.26 of the Revised 17  
Code. 18

(2) "Qualifying school" means any of the following public schools in which at least fifty per cent of the students are eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch and that agrees to employ an eligible student under the program:

(a) A school district;

(b) An educational service center;

(c) A community school established under Chapter 3314. of the Revised Code;

(d) A STEM school established under Chapter 3326. of the Revised Code.

(3) "Supervisor" means the assigned supervisor, field instructor, or task instructor that supervises an eligible student, as assigned by the eligible student's university.

(B) Not later than ninety days after the effective date of this section, the Chancellor of Higher Education shall establish the Social Work Apprenticeship Retention and Training (SMART) internship program to support students and families and to help address nonacademic barriers to student success. The chancellor shall establish the program as a three-year pilot program to test strategies for strengthening the school-based social work workforce in underserved and high-need schools. Beginning with the academic year that begins after the effective date of this section, the Chancellor shall award grants to eligible students to provide a paid and educationally meaningful internship experience at a qualifying school.

The pilot program shall be evaluative in nature and is not intended to establish a permanent program without further action by the General Assembly.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to require or expand the provision of clinical mental health treatment in schools.

(C) Eligible students shall apply to participate in the pilot program in a form and manner prescribed by the Chancellor.

(D) Each eligible student awarded a grant under this section shall work at an internship for up to twenty hours per week for not more than thirty weeks.

(E) Each grant shall be awarded for three academic years and shall not exceed fifteen thousand dollars for each school year. The Chancellor shall distribute the grant through either of the following methods:

(1) At a rate of twenty-five dollars per hour that is paid on the same pay schedule offered to other licensed educators at the qualifying school where the eligible student is working;

(2) Through a lump sum payment of up to fifteen thousand dollars that shall be paid at the end of the internship period for the corresponding school year.

(F) (1) If the grant program or a student's internship is permanently terminated, and the student does not satisfy the requirements of an eligible student under this section, the following applies:

(a) For a student who receives a grant under division (E) (1) of this section, no further grant payments shall be made to that individual as of the day the student no longer meets the requirements.

(b) For a student who receives a grant under division (E) (2) of this section, the student may receive a prorated amount

of the lump sum that reflects the number of hours the student 75  
worked during the student's internship at a qualifying school 76  
while meeting the requirements of an eligible student. 77

(2) If a student temporarily does not satisfy the 78  
requirements of an eligible student under this section, due to 79  
relocating to another qualifying school or due to a leave of 80  
absence, the following applies: 81

(a) For a student who receives a grant under division (E) 82  
(1) of this section, no payments shall be made during the period 83  
in which the student does not meet the requirements. Payments 84  
shall resume once the student again meets the requirements of an 85  
eligible student but shall not extend beyond thirty weeks from 86  
the date the student began the internship. 87

(b) For a student who receives a grant under division (E) 88  
(2) of this section, the student remains eligible to receive the 89  
full grant amount if the student completes all of the 90  
requirements of the program prescribed under this section. 91

(G) Each university at which an eligible student is 92  
enrolled may continue implementing any existing evaluation 93  
processes required as part of any certification, licensing, or 94  
approval requirements associated with serving as a school-based 95  
social worker or student support professional. 96

(H) Each eligible student that receives a grant under this 97  
section shall submit any evaluations the student receives, 98  
including evaluations under division (G) of this section, while 99  
completing an internship at a qualifying school to the 100  
Chancellor. The Chancellor shall use any evaluation received 101  
under this section to determine an eligible student's continued 102  
eligibility for a grant under this section and shall notify the 103

student if the Chancellor disqualifies a student for a grant	104
based on evaluations under this division.	105
(I) The Chancellor shall provide grants to supervisors of	106
up to two hundred fifty dollars for each eligible student the	107
individual supervises.	108
(J) The Chancellor shall adopt rules to administer the	109
pilot program.	110
(K) The Chancellor shall submit the following reports to	111
the standing committees of the House of Representatives and the	112
Senate that consider higher education legislation:	113
(1) An interim report following completion of the second	114
academic year of the pilot program's operation that focuses on	115
the following:	116
(a) Program participation;	117
(b) Internship placements;	118
(c) Early completion and retention trends;	119
(d) Implementation challenges;	120
(e) Recommended program adjustments.	121
(2) A final report upon the completion of the pilot	122
program that evaluates overall program effectiveness and	123
includes recommendations regarding the continuation, expansion,	124
modification, or future funding of the program.	125
(L) Any reporting required under this section shall be	126
limited to aggregate data only and to information that is	127
reasonably available through program administration,	128
participating universities, and qualifying schools. No new or	129
duplicate data collection shall be created to fulfill the	130

reporting requirements under this section. To the extent	131
practicable, each report should include all of the following:	132
(1) The number of students who applied to and participated	133
in the program, disaggregated by university;	134
(2) The number of students who successfully completed	135
internships;	136
(3) The number, type, and geographic distribution of	137
qualifying schools served;	138
(4) A high-level, aggregate comparison of where	139
participating students were enrolled versus the schools or	140
regions in which internships were completed;	141
(5) Early and post-program workforce placement outcomes,	142
to the extent available;	143
(6) General categories of nonacademic supports provided to	144
students and families;	145
(7) Supervisor participation and feedback;	146
(8) Workforce gaps addressed in underserved and high-need	147
schools;	148
(9) Recommendations for program improvement or	149
scalability.	150
The Chancellor may include any additional information	151
related to the pilot program the Chancellor determines is	152
necessary to provide context in either the interim or final	153
report.	154
(M) Based on the amount of the appropriation made for the	155
program established under this section and the number of	156
applications the Chancellor receives, after the first year of	157

the program, the Chancellor may award grants to a new cohort of 158  
 eligible students for subsequent years of the program or, 159  
 instead of awarding grants to a new cohort, continue to award 160  
 grants to eligible students who are currently participating in 161  
 the program, until the students complete their internships. 162

(N) The Chancellor shall cease awarding any new grants 163  
 under this section after the third academic year that occurs 164  
 after the effective date of this section. 165

**Section 2.** All items in this act are hereby appropriated 166  
 as designated out of any moneys in the state treasury to the 167  
 credit of the designated fund. For all operating appropriations 168  
 made in this act, those in the first column are for fiscal year 169  
 2027 and those in the second column are for fiscal year 2028. 170  
 The operating appropriations made in this act are in addition to 171  
 any other operating appropriations made for these fiscal years. 172

**Section 3.** 173  
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	1	2	3	4	5	
A	MHA DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH					
B	General Revenue Fund					
C	GRF	336519	Community Projects	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	
D	General Revenue Fund Total			\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	
E	TOTAL ALL BUDGET FUND GROUPS			\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	
	COMMUNITY PROJECTS					175
	The foregoing appropriation item 336519, Community					176

Projects, shall be used, in collaboration with the Department of 177  
Higher Education, for the Social Work Apprenticeship Retention 178  
and Training (SMART) Internship Pilot Program established in 179  
Section 1 of this act. 180

**Section 4.** Within the limits set forth in this act, the 181  
Director of Budget and Management shall establish accounts 182  
indicating the source and amount of funds for each appropriation 183  
made in this act, and shall determine the manner in which 184  
appropriation accounts shall be maintained. 185

Expenditures from the FY 2027 operating appropriations 186  
contained in this act shall be accounted for as though made in, 187  
and are subject to all applicable provisions of, H.B. 96 of the 188  
136th General Assembly. Expenditures from the FY 2028 operating 189  
appropriations contained in this act shall be accounted for as 190  
though made in, and are subject to all applicable provisions of, 191  
the main operating appropriations act of the 137th General 192  
Assembly. 193

**Section 5.** This act shall be known as the Ohio Students 194  
and Families Workforce Strengthening Act. 195