

Memorandum

TO: Economic Transformation and Stabilization, and Workforce Development
Advisory Commission

FROM: Budget Director Ryan Osmundson, Director Osterman, Director Esau

DATE: October 27, 2021

SUBJECT: Reallocation of Unused Return to Work Bonus Funds

Overview: At its May 4, 2021 meeting, the Advisory Commission Recommended and Governor Gianforte approved a \$15 million allocation to offer Montanans returning to the workforce a \$1,200 hiring bonus. The program was implemented and is in effect for individuals who attain employment through October 31, 2021. As of October 19, 2021, a total of \$2,125,200 has been distributed through the program. There have been 5,690 applications received, 1,038 applications denied, 1,771 applications approved, leaving 2,881 applications still in-process.

Although the exact amount of funds remaining is currently not determined, this proposal seeks to reallocate any remaining funds from the program for two purposes. There is \$4,350,000 proposed to address the shortage of health care workers in the state by targeting specific outreach to out-of-state health care workers and offering reimbursement for moving and relocation expenses for out-of-state health care workers who relocate to Montana and accept employment with a Montana health care facility. This proposal is recommended to the commission at this October 27th meeting. In addition, the remainder of the unused hiring bonus funds are recommended to be allocated to the Business Innovation program which will be presented for recommendation at the November advisory commission meeting.

Allocation Request and Deadlines: \$4,350,000 of unused Return-to-Work Bonus Funds to the Department of Commerce (\$350,000) and the Department of Labor and Industry (\$4,000,000) for the recruitment and employment of out-of-state health care workers. In addition, the remainder of unused Return-to-Work Bonus funds to the Business Innovation Program which will be presented at the November 2021 meeting of this advisory commission. The funds are proposed to be allocated from the amount appropriated under Section 12 of HB 632, to be obligated by December 31, 2024 and spent by December 31, 2026.

Structure: The Department of Commerce will use the funds to conduct a public outreach campaign targeted to out-of-state health care workers.

The Department of Labor and Industry will use the funds to reimburse local health care facilities for the moving and relocation costs paid to out-of-state health care workers employed by Montana health care facilities.

Eligibility: The Departments of Commerce and Labor and Industry will be the recipient of these funds for the purposes set forth in this project proposal. The Office of Budget and Program Planning plans to seek review and comment from the Legislative Finance Committee to categorize the funding as “revenue replacement funds” and the provision of services under this proposal fit under the eligibility category of “provision of government services.” The

Departments of Commerce and Labor and Industry certify that this program is an eligible use under the American Rescue Plan Act and all applicable guidance.

Application and Verification: On recommendation and approval of this program proposal, the Office of Budget and Program Planning will make these funds available to the Department of Commerce and Labor and Industry in the amounts set forth for each agency in this program proposal for funds spent or obligated through December 31, 2024.

Performance Metrics: The Department of Commerce and Labor and Industry will provide statistics regarding the number of health care workers recruited and retained as a result of this proposal

Recommendation:

Allocate \$4,350,000 for use by the Departments of Commerce and Labor and Industry to recruit out-of-state health care workers for employment at Montana Health Care Facilities. Allocate all remaining funds from the Return-to-Work Bonus Program to the Business Innovation Program. The allocations are recommended contingent on the funds be authorized under the eligibility framework of "Revenue Replacement Funds".