AN ACT

To enact Chapter 31 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be comprised of R.S. 17:3721 through 3726, relative to increasing the number of certified athletic trainers in rural areas; to establish the Athletic Trainer Professional Development Program; to provide with respect to the powers and duties of the state Department of Education; to provide funding for the program; to provide qualifications and restrictions for the program; to provide for an effective date; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. Chapter 31 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, comprised of R.S. 17:3721 through 3726, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

CHAPTER 31. ATHLETIC TRAINER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

§3721. Athletic Trainer Professional Development Program

The Athletic Trainer Professional Development Program is hereby created in the state Department of Education. The program is established to meet the projected shortage of certified athletic trainers employed at high schools in rural areas of the state by increasing the number of certified athletic trainers through a loan repayment program.
§3722. Definitions

For the purpose of this Chapter, the following terms have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

(1) "Athletic trainer" means an individual possessing a master's degree in athletic training from an institution accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education and licensed by the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners.

(2) "Department" means the Department of Education.

(3) "Rural area" means a parish with a population of fewer than one hundred ten thousand persons according to the latest federal decennial census.

(4) "Superintendent" means the state superintendent of education.

§3723. Retention and recruitment

A. The department shall develop and administer a plan for recruitment and retention of athletic trainers at high schools in rural areas. The plan shall provide for identification of shortage areas, prioritization of long-term and short-term goals, strategies for recruiting athletic trainers to rural areas, and public input.

B. The department shall implement the retention and recruitment plan, directly or through contract. Implementation may include advertising and promotion, professional recruitment services, travel, and all other necessary tasks. Total implementation costs shall not exceed seventy-five thousand dollars.

§3724. Loan repayment program

A. The department shall administer a loan repayment program.

B. To be eligible for the loan repayment program, an applicant shall be an athletic trainer, be willing to work for a high school in a rural area, and meet any other requirements which may be established by the department.

C. Educational loans obtained by an eligible applicant for attending an accredited athletic trainer program shall be repaid retroactively after each term of service employed at a high school in a rural area for up to five years depending upon
the applicant's length of service. Loans shall be repaid pursuant to the provisions of this Section at the following rates:

(1) Six thousand dollars per year of service if the applicant obtained his degree from a school or program in Louisiana.

(2) Four thousand dollars per year of service if the applicant obtained his degree from a school or program outside of Louisiana.

D. Within three months of the effective date of this Section, the department shall establish an implementation schedule for loan repayments.

§3725. Rules

The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education shall promulgate rules and regulations in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act as necessary to carry out the provisions of this Chapter.

§3726. Athletic Trainer Professional Development Fund

There is hereby created as a special fund in the state treasury the Athletic Trainer Professional Development Fund, referred to in this Section as the "fund". The treasurer is hereby authorized to transfer and deposit one and one-half million dollars of state general fund monies into the fund after compliance with the requirements of Article VII, Section 9(B) of the Constitution of Louisiana relative to the Bond Security and Redemption Fund. Monies in the fund shall be used for the programs established in this Chapter. Monies in the fund shall be invested by the treasurer in the same manner as monies in the state general fund and all interest earned shall be deposited in and credited to the fund. All unexpended or unencumbered monies in the fund at the end of the fiscal year shall remain in the fund.

Section 2. The provisions of Section 1 of this Act shall become effective when an Act of the Louisiana Legislature containing a specific appropriation of monies for the implementation of the provisions of this Act becomes effective.

Section 3. The provisions of Sections 2 and 3 of this Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time
for bills to become law without signature by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, the provisions of Sections 2 and 3 of this Act shall become effective on the day following such approval.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: ___________________