



# NEWS RELEASE

**Arizona House of Representatives**

**Representative Walter Blackman (R-6)**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Representative Blackman to Introduce Legislation Creating Loan Repayment Program for Mental Health Professionals Working in AZ Prisons**

**STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX** – Representative Walter Blackman (R-6) today announced that he will sponsor legislation creating a loan repayment program for mental health professionals working at the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC) and Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections (ADJC).

The loan repayment program will attract qualified mental health professionals to practice within ADC and ADJC, which are experiencing a shortage of mental health professionals.

**“One of the major issues I’ve seen is a shortage of mental health care providers at ADC,”** said Rep. Blackman. **“We have to look for ways to attract mental health professionals and compete with other states and higher-paying organizations that actively recruit these professionals.”**

The program will award college loan repayment to mental health care providers, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, advanced practice nurses board-certified in psychiatric or mental health nursing, and licensed professional counselors, as well as licensed clinical social workers, licensed marriage and family therapists, and licensed chemical dependency counselors who have received an associate degree related to chemical dependency counseling or behavioral science.

**“Part of prison reform is looking at the problem holistically and coming up with solutions, such as this legislation which will help address problems inmates have that could contribute to their recidivism.”**

**“As part of the loan repayment program, these professionals will agree to work in our correctional facilities, probation, and community inmate reintegration programs in exchange for a commitment to serve at a site for a minimum of five years.”**

Representative Blackman is still drafting the legislation and will share further details when the legislation is finalized.

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