The U.S. state with the nation’s lowest unemployment rate (2.3 percent as of March) will try to attract more skilled workers with $6 million worth of new scholarships and loan repayments. North Dakota’s HB 1171 [2] seeks to address what many policymakers have said is the state’s No. 1 economic issue — workforce shortages.

Under the new law, a student could receive a loan repayment of up to $17,000 if he or she is employed in a “high demand” occupation (based on an annual state analysis of workforce trends and needs). The Skilled Workforce Scholarship Fund, meanwhile, will award individual students up to $17,000. To be eligible, students must be pursuing credentials in a high-demand profession, maintain a certain grade-point average, and, upon graduation, work in the state for a minimum of three years. Money for these new programs in North Dakota will come from a mix of state dollars and private-sector fundraising.

Along with North Dakota, four other Midwestern states had jobless rates [3] in March of below 3 percent: Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin.