



# 130th MAINE LEGISLATURE

## SECOND REGULAR SESSION-2022

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Legislative Document

No. 1885

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H.P. 1395

House of Representatives, January 5, 2022

### **An Act To Increase Maine's Veterinary Workforce**

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Approved for introduction by a majority of the Legislative Council pursuant to Joint Rule 203.

Reference to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Hunt".

ROBERT B. HUNT  
Clerk

Presented by Representative FAY of Raymond.

Cosponsored by Representatives: CLOUTIER of Lewiston, CRAFTS of Newcastle, KINNEY of Knox, McCREA of Fort Fairfield, PERRY of Calais, TUELL of East Machias, ZEIGLER of Montville, Senator: BAILEY of York.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §12121, sub-§3**, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 488, §14 and  
3 amended by PL 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §6, is further amended to read:

4 **3. Insufficient veterinary services.** "Insufficient veterinary services" means an  
5 insufficient number of practitioners of veterinary medicine in a veterinary specialty related  
6 to livestock or emergency and critical care, as determined by the Commissioner of  
7 Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

8 **Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §12121, sub-§6** is enacted to read:

9 **6. Underserved geographic region.** "Underserved geographic region" means a  
10 geographic region of the State in which there is an insufficient number of practitioners of  
11 veterinary medicine, as determined by the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and  
12 Forestry.

13 **Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §12122, sub-§1**, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 488, §14, is  
14 amended to read:

15 **1. Establishment.** The Maine Veterinary Medicine Loan Program is established. The  
16 authority shall administer the program. Beginning January 1, 2011 and until December 31,  
17 2022, the chief executive officer shall, as resources allow, award up to 2 loans annually up  
18 to an aggregate of 8. Beginning January 1, 2023, the chief executive officer shall, as  
19 resources allow, award up to 10 loans annually up to an aggregate of 40. Loans are  
20 available to Maine residents enrolled in a school of veterinary medicine.

21 **Sec. 4. 20-A MRSA §12122, sub-§3, ¶C**, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 488, §14, is  
22 amended to read:

23 C. Demonstrates an interest in practicing in an area of the State with insufficient  
24 veterinary services or in an underserved geographic region.

25 **Sec. 5. 20-A MRSA §12122, sub-§4**, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 488, §14, is  
26 amended to read:

27 **4. Maximum amount.** The maximum loan amount available under the program to  
28 each participant is ~~\$25,000~~ \$50,000 per year for a period of up to 4 years.

29 **Sec. 6. 20-A MRSA §12122, sub-§5, ¶A**, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 488, §14, is  
30 amended by amending subparagraph (2) to read:

31 (2) A loan recipient who, upon conclusion of the loan recipient's professional  
32 education, including any fellowships, elects to serve as a veterinarian in an area of  
33 the State with insufficient veterinary services or in an underserved geographic  
34 region is forgiven 25% of the original outstanding indebtedness for each year of  
35 that practice. A loan recipient who practices in an area of the State with insufficient  
36 veterinary services or in an underserved geographic region less than full time may  
37 receive prorated loan forgiveness. A loan recipient who is not practicing in an  
38 underserved geographic region and who devotes less than 50% of the recipient's  
39 practice to the care of livestock or to emergency and critical care may receive  
40 prorated loan forgiveness.

1           **Sec. 7. 20-A MRSA §12122, sub-§5, ¶A**, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 488, §14, is  
2 amended by amending subparagraph (3) to read:

3           (3) A loan recipient must make a commitment to undertake specific training,  
4 including clinical experiences in livestock medicine or emergency and critical care  
5 medicine.

6           **Sec. 8. 20-A MRSA §12122, sub-§5, ¶C**, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 488, §14 and  
7 amended by PL 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §5, is further amended to read:

8           C. A veterinarian requesting forgiveness or an interest rate benefit under this section  
9 shall report annually to the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry on  
10 the portion of the veterinarian's practice dedicated to livestock or emergency and  
11 critical care and the geographic region served by the veterinarian's practice.

12           **Sec. 9. 20-A MRSA §12122, sub-§6**, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 488, §14, is  
13 amended to read:

14           **6. Default.** A loan recipient under the program who agrees to practice in an area of  
15 the State with insufficient veterinary services or in an underserved geographic region and  
16 who fails to complete the period of service required to pay off the loan is liable to the  
17 authority for an amount equal to the sum of the total amount paid by or on behalf of the  
18 authority to or on behalf of the recipient under the agreement plus interest at a rate  
19 determined by the authority. Credit for practicing in an area with insufficient veterinary  
20 services or in an underserved geographic region is awarded for each consecutive 12-month  
21 period served. Exceptions may be made by the authority in accordance with subsection 7.

22           **Sec. 10. 20-A MRSA §12123**, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 488, §14, is amended to  
23 read:

24           **§12123. Selection committee for students of veterinary medicine**

25           The chief executive officer shall annually convene a selection committee of not fewer  
26 than 3 members to advise the authority in developing application materials designed to  
27 identify students likely to practice livestock veterinary medicine, emergency and critical  
28 care veterinary medicine or in an underserved geographic region in the State and to make  
29 recommendations to the authority regarding the priority of applicants for loans to students  
30 of veterinary medicine. The selection committee must include the state veterinarian and a  
31 representative of a statewide association of veterinarians.

32           **Sec. 11. 20-A MRSA §12124**, as enacted by PL 2009, c. 488, §14 and amended by  
33 PL 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §6, is further amended to read:

34           **§12124. Rules**

35           The authority shall establish rules necessary to implement this chapter. The  
36 Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry shall adopt rules to establish  
37 criteria for determining areas of insufficient veterinary services for livestock or emergency  
38 and critical care, a definition definitions of "livestock" and "emergency and critical care,"  
39 criteria for determining underserved geographic regions and a method for determining the  
40 percent percentage of a practice that is devoted to livestock or emergency and critical care.  
41 Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5,  
42 chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

1 **SUMMARY**

2 This bill amends the Maine Veterinary Medicine Loan Program in the following ways.

3 1. It amends the definition of "insufficient veterinary services" to include an  
4 insufficient number of practitioners of emergency and critical care services.

5 2. It adds the option for veterinary students to qualify for the program by demonstrating  
6 an interest in working in underserved geographic regions of the State, as determined by the  
7 Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry by rule.

8 3. It increases the maximum number of annual loan awards from 2 to 10.

9 4. It increases the maximum loan amount from \$25,000 to \$50,000 per year for a period  
10 of up to 4 years.