

STATE OF MAINE

—
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-TWO

—
H.P. 1395 - L.D. 1885

An Act To Increase Maine's Veterinary Workforce

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Establishment. The Maine Veterinary Medicine Loan Program is established. The authority shall administer the program. Beginning January 1, 2011 and until December 31, 2022, the chief executive officer shall, as resources allow, award up to 2 loans annually up to an aggregate of 8. Beginning January 1, 2023, the chief executive officer shall, as resources allow, award up to 8 loans annually up to an aggregate of 32. At least half, and no fewer than 2, of the annual loans awarded must be awarded to applicants who have demonstrated a likelihood to practice livestock veterinary medicine in the State unless the authority does not receive enough qualified applicants to meet this requirement, in which case the chief executive officer may award the remaining loans to other eligible applicants. Loans are available to Maine residents enrolled in a school of veterinary medicine.

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

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

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

4. Maximum amount. The maximum loan amount available under the program to each participant is ~~\$25,000~~ \$35,000 per year for a period of up to 4 years.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

§12123. Selection committee for students of veterinary medicine

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

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

§12124. Rules

The authority shall establish rules necessary to implement this chapter. The Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry shall adopt rules to establish criteria for determining areas of insufficient veterinary services for livestock or emergency and critical care, ~~a definition~~ definitions of "livestock" and "emergency and critical care," criteria for determining underserved geographic regions and a method for determining the percent ~~percentage~~ percentage of a practice that is devoted to livestock or emergency and critical care. In establishing criteria for determining areas of insufficient veterinary services for emergency and critical care and criteria for determining underserved geographic regions, the commissioner shall give priority consideration to regions within Aroostook County, Oxford County, Penobscot County, Piscataquis County, Somerset County and Washington County. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

Sec. 12. 20-A MRSA §12125 is enacted to read:

§12125. Report by the Finance Authority of Maine

1. Report. The authority shall include in its annual report under Title 10, section 974, subsection 1 the following information regarding the program:

- A. The number of applications received each year;
- B. The number of loans awarded each year;
- C. The total amount disbursed through the program;
- D. The total amount of loan forgiveness awarded through the program;
- E. The total number of veterinary students assisted by loans through the program;
- F. The total number of veterinarians awarded loan forgiveness through the program;
- G. The number of current program participants working in a veterinary specialty related to livestock;
- H. The number of current program participants working in a veterinary specialty related to emergency and critical care;
- I. The number of current program participants working in an underserved geographic region; and
- J. The location of each current program participant's veterinary practice.

Sec. 13. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

FINANCE AUTHORITY OF MAINE

Student Financial Assistance Programs 0653

Initiative: Provides additional ongoing funding for the Maine Veterinary Medicine Loan Program to increase the number of loans awarded annually from 2 to 3 and to increase the maximum loan amount available under the program to each participant from \$25,000 to \$35,000 per year for a period of 4 years.

| GENERAL FUND | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| All Other | \$0 | \$220,000 |
| GENERAL FUND TOTAL | <hr/> \$0 | <hr/> \$220,000 |