

HOUSE BILL 1133

M4, F2

3lr1154

By: **Delegates Lehman, Bartlett, Foley, Kaiser, R. Lewis, McComas, Ruth, and Terrasa**

Introduced and read first time: February 10, 2023

Assigned to: Appropriations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Agriculture – Veterinary Practitioners – Student Loan Forgiveness Program**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Veterinary Practitioner Student Loan Forgiveness
4 Program to be administered by the Secretary of Agriculture; establishing eligibility
5 requirements for the Program, including requiring participants to complete a service
6 obligation to practice in the State for at least a certain number of years; requiring
7 the Secretary to make an annual disbursement of a certain sum to a veterinary
8 practitioner who meets the service obligation, up to a maximum number of years;
9 and generally relating to the establishment of the Veterinary Practitioner Student
10 Loan Forgiveness Program.

11 BY adding to
12 Article – Agriculture
13 Section 2–306.1
14 Annotated Code of Maryland
15 (2016 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

16 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
17 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

18 **Article – Agriculture**

19 **2–306.1.**

20 **(A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS**
21 **INDICATED.**

22 **(2) “PROGRAM” MEANS THE VETERINARY PRACTITIONER STUDENT**
23 **LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM.**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



(3) "QUALIFIED EDUCATIONAL LOAN" MEANS A GOVERNMENT, COMMERCIAL, OR FOUNDATION LOAN FOR ACTUAL COSTS PAID FOR TUITION, REASONABLE EDUCATION EXPENSES, AND REASONABLE LIVING EXPENSES RELATED TO THE POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION OF A VETERINARIAN.

(4) "VETERINARIAN" HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 2-301 OF THIS SUBTITLE.

(5) "VETERINARY PRACTITIONER" HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 2-301 OF THIS SUBTITLE.

(B) (1) THERE IS A VETERINARY PRACTITIONER STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM.

(2) THE SECRETARY SHALL ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM.

(C) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO PROVIDE QUALIFIED EDUCATIONAL LOAN FORGIVENESS FOR VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS IN THE STATE.

(D) TO BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM, AN INDIVIDUAL SHALL:

(1) BE A VETERINARY PRACTITIONER WHO HAS AT LEAST \$40,000 IN OUTSTANDING EDUCATIONAL LOANS FROM VETERINARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS SECTION; AND

(2) SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO THE SECRETARY IN THE FORM AND MANNER PRESCRIBED BY THE SECRETARY.

(E) AN APPLICANT SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM SHALL SIGN A CONTRACT AGREEING TO COMPLETE A SERVICE OBLIGATION TO PRACTICE AS A VETERINARIAN IN THE STATE FOR AT LEAST 2 YEARS.

(F) (1) EACH FISCAL YEAR, THE SECRETARY MAY SELECT ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE LIMITS OF AVAILABLE FUNDING.

(2) THE SECRETARY SHALL SELECT PARTICIPANTS BASED ON:

(I) EXPERIENCE;

1 **(II) TRAINING; AND**

2 **(III) AVAILABILITY TO PRACTICE IN HIGH-NEED AREAS,**
3 **INCLUDING:**

4 1. **RURAL AREAS;**

5 2. **LOW-INCOME AREAS;**

6 3. **EMERGENCY PRACTICES;**

7 4. **NONPROFIT SHELTERS;**

8 5. **MUNICIPAL SHELTERS; AND**

9 6. **OTHER UNDERSERVED AREAS AS DETERMINED BY**
10 **THE SECRETARY.**

11 **(3) THE SECRETARY SHALL PRIORITIZE ADMINISTERING GRANTS TO**
12 **APPLICANTS SERVING THE AREAS LISTED UNDER PARAGRAPH (2)(III) OF THIS**
13 **SUBSECTION.**

14 **(G) (1) FOR EACH YEAR THAT A PARTICIPATING VETERINARY**
15 **PRACTITIONER MEETS THE SERVICE OBLIGATION REQUIRED UNDER SUBSECTION**
16 **(E) OF THIS SECTION, THE SECRETARY SHALL MAKE AN ANNUAL DISBURSEMENT**
17 **DIRECTLY TO THE PRACTITIONER OF \$20,000 OR THE BALANCE OF THE**
18 **PARTICIPANT'S QUALIFIED EDUCATIONAL LOANS, WHICHEVER IS LESS.**

19 **(2) DISBURSEMENTS UNDER THE PROGRAM:**

20 **(I) MAY BE PAID TO A PARTICIPANT FOR A MAXIMUM OF 5**
21 **YEARS; AND**

22 **(II) ARE SUBJECT TO APPLICABLE LAWS ON LOCAL, STATE, AND**
23 **FEDERAL TAXATION.**

24 **(H) (1) THE SECRETARY MAY WAIVE A VETERINARY PRACTITIONER'S**
25 **SERVICE OBLIGATION UNDER THE PROGRAM IF EMERGENCY CIRCUMSTANCES**
26 **PREVENT THE PRACTITIONER'S FULFILLMENT OF THE SERVICE OBLIGATION,**
27 **INCLUDING DEATH, TOTAL AND PERMANENT DISABILITY, OR TEMPORARY**
28 **DISABILITY LASTING MORE THAN 2 YEARS.**

1 **(2) IF A VETERINARY PRACTITIONER PARTICIPATING IN THE**
2 **PROGRAM FAILS TO COMPLETE A FULL YEAR OF THE SERVICE OBLIGATION, THE**
3 **SECRETARY MAY PRORATE THE LOAN FORGIVENESS PAYMENT FOR THAT SERVICE**
4 **YEAR.**

5 **(I) (1) FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND EACH FISCAL YEAR THEREAFTER,**
6 **THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION**
7 **OF \$2,000,000 TO THE PROGRAM.**

8 **(2) THE APPROPRIATION REQUIRED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS**
9 **SUBSECTION SHALL BE USED ONLY FOR:**

10 **(I) PROVIDING LOAN FORGIVENESS UNDER THE PROGRAM;**
11 **AND**

12 **(II) ADMINISTERING THE PROGRAM.**

13 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
14 1, 2023.