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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO VETERINARIANS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that there is a critical  
2 need for more licensed veterinarians in the State. In 2020,  
3 there were three hundred twenty veterinarians working in Hawaii.  
4 However, the existing growth rate will not be sustainable to  
5 meet the current and future demand of veterinary services in the  
6 State, as the number of veterinarians is expected to grow only  
7 by approximately 1.6 per cent each year through 2030.

8           Presently, there are a myriad of issues that limit the  
9 potential to increase the number of licensed veterinarians in  
10 the State. For one, the State does not have a veterinary  
11 school, requiring individuals interested in pursuing a career in  
12 veterinary medicine to advance their education out-of-state,  
13 where many often remain after graduation. Without an  
14 educational option in Hawaii, veterinary graduates who do return  
15 to the State encounter financial barriers such as higher  
16 out-of-state tuition and relocation costs, higher costs of



1 living due to geographical isolation, and considerable student  
2 loan debt.

3 The legislature further finds that, in the United States,  
4 the pursuit of a doctor of veterinary medicine degree is a  
5 costly undertaking, with total program costs ranging from  
6 \$150,000 to \$400,000 for private out-of-state programs. Average  
7 program costs in the United States range from \$200,000 to  
8 \$275,000. The average graduates accumulates anywhere from  
9 \$150,000 to \$200,000 in student loan debt, with certain  
10 graduates accumulating more debt based on their chosen program.  
11 Therefore, it is imperative to incentivize practicing and future  
12 veterinarians to practice in the State by offering benefits to  
13 help lessen tuition burdens.

14 The legislature additionally finds that the university of  
15 Hawaii John A. Burns school of medicine administers the Hawaii  
16 state loan repayment program that provides debt repayment  
17 assistance to health care professionals who commit to working in  
18 certain rural and underserved parts of the State. There are  
19 also a number of scholarship programs available for qualifying  
20 medical students. These options have successfully incentivized  
21 more physicians to remain in Hawaii to practice medicine,



1 closing health care gaps through wider availability of health  
2 care services. Offering prospective students and current  
3 veterinarians a similar opportunity will catalyze growth and  
4 expansion of the field of veterinary medicine, enhance the  
5 agricultural industry, address the shortage of veterinarians in  
6 the State, incentivize the interests of individuals seeking  
7 entry into the profession, and assist qualified individuals who  
8 hold student debt.

9 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 10 (1) Establish the veterinary workforce development special  
11 fund;
- 12 (2) Establish a fee to be assessed on individuals renewing  
13 a veterinary license to be deposited into the fund;  
14 and
- 15 (3) Establish the veterinary workforce development loan  
16 repayment and scholarship program to assist  
17 veterinarians in the State with loan repayments and  
18 completion of veterinary medicine education.

19 SECTION 2. Chapter 471, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
20 amended by adding three new sections to be appropriately  
21 designated and to read as follows:



1           "§471-A Veterinary workforce development special fund.

2           (a) There is established the veterinary workforce development  
3           special fund, to be administered and expended by the board.

4           (b) The following shall be deposited into the special  
5           fund:

6           (1) Appropriations by the legislature;

7           (2) Veterinary workforce development license fees  
8           established pursuant to section 471-B;

9           (3) Grants, donations, gifts, or other income received for  
10           the purposes of the special fund; and

11           (4) Interest earned or accrued on moneys in the special  
12           fund.

13           (c) Moneys in the special fund shall be used to support  
14           the veterinary workforce development loan repayment and  
15           scholarship program established pursuant to section 471-C;  
16           provided that the veterinary workforce development fee shall be  
17           used for purposes identified by the board to support veterinary  
18           workforce assessment and planning efforts, including the  
19           recruitment and retention of veterinarians in the State. This  
20           shall include but not be limited to:



- 1        (1) Maintaining accurate veterinarian workforce assessment  
2        information and providing or updating personal and  
3        professional information, which shall be maintained in  
4        a secure database; provided that the board may  
5        disclose information specific to any veterinarian only  
6        with the express written consent of the veterinarian;
- 7        (2) Providing loan repayment to veterinarians who commit  
8        to working in shortage areas of the State as part of  
9        the veterinarian workforce loan repayment and  
10       scholarship program administered by the board; and
- 11       (3) Providing scholarships to qualifying veterinarians to  
12       be determined by the board.

13       **§471-B Veterinary workforce development; license fee.**

14       Beginning July 1, 2025, when a license is renewed pursuant to  
15       section 471-9, each veterinarian shall be assessed a fee of \$60  
16       that shall be transferred and deposited into the veterinary  
17       workforce development special fund established under section  
18       471-A to support ongoing assessment and planning of the  
19       veterinarian workforce in the State, consistent with the  
20       purposes established in section 471-A. Payment of the



1 veterinarian workforce development fee shall be required for  
2 license renewal.

3 **§471-C Veterinary workforce development loan repayment and**  
4 **scholarship program.** (a) There is established a veterinary

5 workforce development loan repayment and scholarship program to  
6 be administered by the board to provide financial support to  
7 veterinary students and practicing veterinarians who agree to  
8 work as a full-time veterinarian in shortage areas of the State  
9 for a period of time to be determined by the board.

10 (b) The veterinary workforce development loan repayment  
11 and scholarship program shall offer:

12 (1) Loan repayments to veterinarians who commit to working  
13 in shortage areas of the State for a minimum period of  
14 time determined by the board; and

15 (2) Scholarships to veterinary students attending  
16 veterinary colleges that meet standards established by  
17 the board; provided that the scholarship recipients  
18 commit to work in the State after graduation for a  
19 minimum period of time determined by the board.

20 (c) An individual who receives a loan repayment or  
21 scholarship pursuant to this section and does not work in the



1 State for the minimum time period specified by the board shall  
2 repay the total amount of the loan or scholarship received to  
3 the veterinarian workforce development special fund; provided  
4 that the board may waive this requirement upon good cause shown.

5 (d) The board shall adopt rules in accordance with  
6 chapter 91 necessary to implement and administer the  
7 veterinarian workforce development loan repayment and  
8 scholarship program, including eligibility requirements and  
9 procedures."

10 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
11 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                    or so  
12 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and  
13 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
14 year 2026-2027 to be deposited into the veterinary workforce  
15 development special fund.

16 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the veterinary  
17 workforce development special fund the sum of \$                    or so  
18 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and  
19 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
20 year 2026-2027 for scholarships and loan repayments to qualified



1 individuals working as veterinarians in the State pursuant to  
2 the requirements of section 471-A, Hawaii Revised Statutes.

3 The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
4 of commerce and consumer affairs for the purposes of this Act.

5 SECTION 5. In codifying the new sections added by  
6 section 2 of this Act, the revisor of statutes shall substitute  
7 appropriate section numbers for the letters used in designating  
8 the new sections in this Act.

9 SECTION 6. New statutory material is underscored.

10 SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2050.





**Report Title:**

Board of Veterinary Medicine; Veterinarian Workforce Development Special Fund; Scholarships; Loan Repayment; Appropriations

**Description:**

Establishes the Veterinarian Workforce Development Special Fund. Establishes the Veterinarian Workforce Development Fee to support recruitment and retention of veterinarians in the State. Establishes the Veterinarian Workforce Development Loan Repayment and Scholarship Program to support qualified veterinarians committed to or currently working in veterinary medicine in the State. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/2050. (SD1)

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

