

By: The Entire Membership

To: Appropriations A

HOUSE BILL NO. 1210

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE "DR. ELTON MAC HUDDLESTON RURAL
2 VETERINARIANS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AT MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY"
3 FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING SCHOLARSHIPS TO QUALIFYING STUDENTS
4 PURSUING A DEGREE IN VETERINARY MEDICINE, WHO WILL THEN COMMIT TO
5 THE PRACTICE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE IN RURAL AREAS OF THE STATE;
6 TO PROVIDE THAT DEAN OF THE MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
7 OF VETERINARY MEDICINE SHALL ADMINISTER THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM;
8 TO CAP THE NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED ANNUALLY; TO LIMIT TO
9 FOUR YEARS DURATION FOR WHICH A STUDENT MAY RECEIVE SCHOLARSHIP
10 FUNDS; TO DEFINE TERMINOLOGY USED IN THE ACT; TO AUTHORIZE THE
11 DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE TO PROMULGATE RULES AND
12 REGULATIONS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM WITH THE ADVICE
13 AND CONSENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY AND
14 THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING; TO
15 PRESCRIBE THE MINIMUM CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBILITY FOR RECEIPT OF
16 SCHOLARSHIP, CONTINUED MAINTENANCE OF THE SCHOLARSHIP AND POST
17 PROGRAM COMPLETION OBLIGATIONS AND PENALTIES FOR FAILURE TO
18 PERFORM THE CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATION OF THE SCHOLARSHIP AGREEMENT;
19 TO CREATE A SPECIAL FUND IN THE STATE TREASURY TO BE KNOWN AS THE
20 "RURAL VETERINARY SCHOLARSHIP FUND"; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

21 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

22 **SECTION 1.** There is established, at Mississippi State
23 University, the "Dr. Elton Mac Huddleston Rural Veterinarians
24 Scholarship Program" for the purpose of identifying and providing
25 qualified Mississippi resident students with scholarships to
26 assist such students in pursuing degrees through matriculation in
27 veterinary medicine. The scholarship program shall:



28 (a) Be developed and implemented in order to provide
29 encouragement, opportunities and incentives for persons pursuing a
30 veterinary medicine degree at Mississippi State University to:

31 (i) Provide veterinary services in rural
32 Mississippi communities; and

33 (ii) Receive specialized training to meet the
34 needs of rural Mississippians and livestock producers in rural
35 Mississippi communities;

36 (b) Be administered by Dean of the Mississippi State
37 University College of Veterinary Medicine; and

38 (c) Annually award scholarships to a minimum average of
39 two (2) resident scholars, whose scholarship assistance may be
40 funded annually for a period not to exceed four (4) years.

41 **SECTION 2.** As used in this act, the following terms shall
42 have the meanings ascribed in this section unless context of use
43 clearly requires otherwise:

44 (1) "Veterinary student" means a student enrolled in
45 the Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

46 (2) "Food supply animal" includes cattle, hogs, sheep,
47 goats and poultry.

48 (3) "Food supply animal veterinarian" means a
49 veterinarian who is engaged in general or food supply animal
50 practice as his or her primary focus of practice and who has
51 thirty percent (30%) of his or her practice devoted to food supply
52 animal veterinary medicine.



53 (4) "Large animal veterinarians" means veterinarians
54 whose practice is focused primarily on the health and safety of
55 farm animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and horses, who
56 must spend sixty percent (60%) of their time providing care for
57 large animals.

58 (5) "Program" means the Dr. Elton Mac Huddleston Rural
59 Veterinarian Scholarship Program administered by the Mississippi
60 State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

61 (6) "Rural community" means an area of the state with a
62 population density less than five hundred (500) people per square
63 mile as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture.

64 (7) "Rural mixed animal veterinary practice" means
65 practice in a rural community with provision of care to both small
66 animals, i.e., dogs or cats, and large animals, i.e., cattle,
67 sheep, goats, pigs or horses, within which the veterinarian must
68 spend a minimum of thirty percent (30%) of his or her time
69 providing care to large animals.

70 **SECTION 3.** The Dean of the Mississippi State University
71 College of Veterinary Medicine shall have the following powers and
72 duties:

73 (a) Developing the administrative policy for the Dr.
74 Elton Mac Huddleston Rural Veterinarians Scholarship Program;

75 (b) Promulgating rules and regulations, with the advice
76 and consent of the President of Mississippi State University of
77 the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning,



78 pertaining to the implementation and operation of the Dr. Elton
79 Mac Huddleston Rural Veterinarians Scholarship Program;

80 (c) Annually establish a selection committee, composed
81 of faculty of Mississippi State University, rural mixed animal
82 veterinary practitioners and large animal veterinary
83 practitioners, which shall conduct a process, independent from the
84 university's Admissions Committee, to review applications, conduct
85 virtual or in-person interviews and select recipients;

86 (d) Establishing a budget, with the advice and consent
87 of the President of Mississippi State University of the Board of
88 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, to support the
89 activities of the program and periodically reviewing, and if
90 appropriate, revising the scholarship and other stipends offered
91 through the program;

92 (e) Reviewing scholarship recipients' progress in the
93 program and mentoring students and veterinarians participating in
94 the program; and

95 (f) Developing and participating in programs that
96 provide initial practice support in collaboration with other
97 interested professional organizations;

98 (h) Giving preference for approving communities for
99 purposes of Section 4(2)(d) to communities located in areas
100 designated by the American Veterinary Medical Association or the
101 United States Department of Agriculture as veterinary shortage
102 areas.



103 SECTION 4. (1) (a) Subject to the availability of funds,
104 the program may annually enter into agreements with up to a
105 minimum average of two (2) first-year veterinary students as
106 determined by the criteria established for the administration of
107 the Dr. Elton Mac Huddleston Rural Veterinarians Scholarship
108 Program.

109 (b) Each student entering into a program agreement
110 under this section shall receive annual assistance in an amount
111 not to exceed the amount of the in-state tuition rate assessed for
112 attending the Mississippi State University College of Veterinary
113 Medicine for a period not to exceed four (4) award years for
114 tuition and fees incurred by the student in pursuit of his or her
115 veterinary medicine degree. Upon satisfaction of all commitments
116 under the provisions of the agreement and the provisions of this
117 section, the financial obligations pursuant to this section shall
118 be deemed satisfied and forgiven.

119 (2) To be eligible for program scholarship funds, recipients
120 shall:

121 (a) Be a student of the Mississippi State University
122 College of Veterinary Medicine who is a resident of the State of
123 Mississippi;

124 (b) Agree to become licensed in the practice of
125 veterinary medicine in the State of Mississippi upon graduation;

126 (c) Complete all requirements in public health,
127 livestock biosecurity, foreign animal disease diagnosis,



128 regulatory veterinary medicine and zoonotic disease, and an
129 externship and mentoring requirement with a licensed, accredited
130 veterinarian in a rural area, as required by the veterinary
131 medical school;

132 (d) Enter into a contract with the program to provide
133 full-time veterinary medicine services as a food supply animal
134 veterinarian or in a rural mixed animal veterinary practice for a
135 minimum of four (4) years in one or more communities approved by
136 the program; and

137 (e) Commence the full-time practice of veterinary
138 medicine in a rural community within ninety (90) days after
139 completion of the person's degree program or, if the scholarship
140 recipient enters a post-degree training program, such as graduate
141 school, internship or residency program, within ninety (90) days
142 after completion of the post-degree training program; and

143 (f) Be accredited by the United States Department of
144 Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service,
145 Veterinary Services to provide services relating to food supply
146 animals within six (6) months of graduation or passage of
147 veterinary licensure examination.

148 (3) Priority shall be given to Mississippi residents. If
149 the number of Mississippi residents applying for scholarship funds
150 is less than the number of slots available, nonresident students
151 may be considered. Nonresident students shall only receive
152 scholarship funds sufficient to pay for in-state tuition rates,



153 and they must meet the same obligations as specified in subsection
154 (2) of this section for students who are residents of the State of
155 Mississippi.

156 (4) Recipients of the scholarship must remain in good
157 academic standing while in receipt of this scholarship, as
158 specified in the rules and regulations promulgated by the Dean of
159 the Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine
160 with the advice and consent of the President of Mississippi State
161 University of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of
162 Higher Learning. If a student is dismissed or withdraws from the
163 Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine, the
164 program shall assess the circumstances of the student's dismissal
165 or withdrawal and make a formal recommendation regarding whether
166 the student shall be liable for the repayment of all or a portion
167 of the financial assistance provided to the student through the
168 program, along with other penalties that may be prescribed in
169 accordance with the policies adopted by the program as prescribed
170 in Section 6.

171 (5) The program may adopt additional provisions,
172 requirements or conditions for participating in the program as are
173 practicable and appropriate to accomplish the provisions of the
174 program or which may be required for the implementation or
175 administration of the program, and which are not inconsistent with
176 the provisions of this section.



177 **SECTION 5.** (1) There is hereby created a special fund in
178 the State Treasury to be known as the "Rural Veterinary
179 Scholarship Fund." The fund shall consist of all monies
180 designated through appropriation by the Legislature for deposit
181 therein and any gift, donation, bequest, trust, grant, endowment,
182 transfer of money or securities, repayments or any other monies
183 from any source whatsoever, designated for deposit in the fund,
184 which shall be used for the purposes of administering the Dr.
185 Elton Mac Huddleston Rural Veterinarians Scholarship Program.

186 (2) The principal of the trust fund shall remain inviolate
187 and shall be invested by the State Treasurer in the same manner as
188 provided by Section 27-105-33, for the investment of excess state
189 funds. Interest and income derived from investment of the
190 principal of the trust fund shall be appropriated by the
191 Legislature for expenditure as provided in this act.

192 (3) (a) Any unexpended funds and those returned by graduate
193 veterinarians remaining in the fund at the end of a fiscal year
194 shall not lapse into the State General Fund, and all interest
195 earned on amounts in the fund shall be deposited to the credit of
196 the fund for appropriation in the immediately following fiscal
197 year. Based upon the amount of funds available, the legislative
198 appropriation shall be adjusted accordingly based on the request
199 of funds for the administration of the scholarship during the
200 approaching academic year.



201 (b) The appropriation request and program shall be
202 reduced if a saturation point is achieved and the shortage of
203 veterinary services in rural Mississippi is adequately addressed.

204 **SECTION 6.** (1) A veterinarian shall be released from the
205 program contract without penalty if:

206 (a) The veterinarian has completed the service
207 requirements of the contract;

208 (b) The veterinarian is unable to complete the service
209 requirements of the contract because of a permanent physical
210 disability;

211 (c) The veterinarian demonstrates extreme hardship or
212 shows other good cause justifying the release; or

213 (d) The veterinarian dies.

214 (2) An obligation to engage in the practice of veterinary
215 medicine in accordance with the provisions of Section 4 shall be
216 postponed during:

217 (a) Any period of temporary medical disability during
218 which the person obligated is unable to practice veterinary
219 medicine due to the disability; and

220 (b) Any other period of postponement agreed to or
221 determined in accordance with criteria agreed to in the practice
222 agreement.

223 (3) A veterinarian shall be released from further
224 performance of veterinary services under the program contract if
225 he or she is unable to perform his or her contractual obligations



226 to provide veterinary services due to the suspension or revocation
227 of his or her federal accreditation or denial, refusal of renewal,
228 limitation, suspension, revocation, or other disciplinary measure
229 taken against his or her license to practice in the State of
230 Mississippi pursuant to the Mississippi Veterinary Practice Act,
231 Chapter 39, Title 73, Mississippi Code of 1972, particularly,
232 Sections 73-39-75 and 73-39-77. If a veterinarian is released
233 from his or her contract pursuant to this subsection, the program
234 may recover a portion of or all of the payments made to such
235 veterinarian under Section 4 of this act. The program may use
236 appropriate remedies available to enforce this subdivision.

237 (4) Upon the failure of a person to satisfy the obligation
238 to engage in the full-time practice of veterinary medicine in a
239 rural community in accordance with the provisions of this section
240 with no just cause as outlined in subsection (1), that person
241 shall, within ninety (90) days of the failure, be liable for the
242 repayment of all financial assistance provided to such person
243 through the program prescribed in accordance with the policies
244 adopted by the program, less a prorated amount based on any
245 periods of veterinary medicine practice meeting the requirements
246 of this section, plus interest at the prime rate of two percent
247 (2%) from the date the assistance accrued. The interest on any
248 unpaid obligation for violations specified in this subsection
249 shall be compounded annually.



250 **SECTION 7.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
251 and after July 1, 2024.

