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Suber

To: Universities and
Colleges; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2561

1 AN ACT TO CREATE NEW SECTION 37-113-55, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF
2 1972, TO ESTABLISH THE DR. ELTON MAC HUDDLESTON RURAL VETERINARIAN
3 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AT MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY TO PROVIDE
4 SCHOLARSHIPS TO ASSIST RESIDENTS OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI IN
5 PURSUING DEGREES IN VETERINARY MEDICINE; TO CREATE NEW SECTION
6 37-113-56, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE DEFINITIONS FOR
7 THE PROGRAM; TO CREATE NEW SECTION 37-113-57, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF
8 1972, TO SET APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY AND PROGRAM PREFERENCE; TO
9 PROVIDE FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE PROGRAM'S SCHOLARSHIP SELECTION
10 COMMITTEE; TO REQUIRE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS TO ENTER INTO A
11 CONTRACT WITH THE PROGRAM TO PROVIDE FULL-TIME VETERINARY MEDICINE
12 SERVICES AS A FOOD SUPPLY ANIMAL VETERINARIAN OR IN A RURAL MIXED
13 ANIMAL VETERINARY PRACTICE FOR FOUR YEARS IN ONE OR MORE
14 COMMUNITIES APPROVED BY THE PROGRAM; TO REQUIRE SCHOLARSHIP
15 RECIPIENTS TO REMAIN IN GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING TO CONTINUE TO
16 RECEIVE A SCHOLARSHIP; TO PROVIDE THAT SCHOLARSHIP PRIORITY SHALL
17 BE GIVEN TO RESIDENTS OF THE STATE; TO AUTHORIZE THE PROGRAM TO
18 ADOPT ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS, REQUIREMENTS OR CONDITIONS TO
19 PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM AS ARE PRACTICABLE AND APPROPRIATE TO
20 ACCOMPLISH THE PROVISIONS OF THE ACT; TO CREATE NEW SECTION
21 37-113-58, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE THAT SUBJECT TO
22 THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS, EACH STUDENT ENTERING INTO A PROGRAM
23 AGREEMENT MAY RECEIVE ASSISTANCE IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED THE
24 AMOUNT OF IN-STATE TUITION CHARGED AT THE MISSISSIPPI STATE
25 UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE PER YEAR FOR NOT MORE
26 THAN FOUR YEARS FOR TUITION AND FEES INCURRED BY THE STUDENT IN
27 PURSUING A VETERINARY MEDICINE DEGREE; TO CREATE NEW SECTION
28 37-113-59, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE REASONS FOR WHEN A
29 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT MAY BE RELEASED FROM THE PROGRAM; TO PROVIDE
30 THAT IF A VETERINARIAN IS RELEASED FROM HIS OR HER CONTRACT, THE
31 PROGRAM MAY RECOVER A PORTION OF OR ALL OF THE PAYMENTS MADE TO
32 SUCH VETERINARIAN; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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



34 **SECTION 1.** The following shall be codified as Section
35 37-113-55, Mississippi Code of 1972:

36 37-113-55. (1) The Dr. Elton Mac Huddleston Rural
37 Veterinarian Scholarship Program is hereby established by
38 Mississippi State University to provide scholarships to assist
39 residents of the state of Mississippi in pursuing degrees in
40 veterinary medicine.

41 (2) The program shall be developed and implemented in order
42 to provide encouragement, opportunities and incentives for persons
43 pursuing a veterinary medicine degree at Mississippi State
44 University to provide veterinary services in rural Mississippi
45 communities and receive specialized training to meet the needs of
46 rural Mississippians and livestock producers in rural Mississippi
47 communities.

48 (3) The dean of the Mississippi State University College of
49 Veterinary Medicine shall establish and administer the Dr. Elton
50 Mac Huddleston Rural Veterinarian Scholarship Program to support
51 the veterinary medicine education of two veterinary students on
52 average per academic year. Each student may be funded for a
53 four-year period.

54 **SECTION 2.** The following shall be codified as Section
55 37-113-56, Mississippi Code of 1972:

56 37-113-56. For purposes of this chapter, the following terms
57 shall have the meanings ascribed herein:



58 (a) "Veterinary student" means a student enrolled in
59 the Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

60 (b) "Food supply animal" includes cattle, hogs, sheep,
61 goats and poultry.

62 (c) "Food supply animal veterinarian" means a
63 veterinarian who is engaged in general or food supply animal
64 practice as his or her primary focus of practice and who has
65 thirty percent (30%) of his or her practice devoted to food supply
66 animal veterinary medicine.

67 (d) "Large animal veterinarians" means veterinarians
68 whose practice is focused primarily on the health and safety of
69 farm animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and horses; a
70 large animal veterinarian must spend sixty percent (60%) of their
71 time providing care for large animals.

72 (e) "Program" means the Dr. Elton Mac Huddleston Rural
73 Veterinarian Scholarship Program as managed by the Mississippi
74 State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

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

78 (g) "Rural mixed animal veterinary practice" means
79 practice in a rural community with provision of care to both small
80 animals (dogs or cats) and large animals (cattle, sheep, goats,
81 pigs, or horses); the veterinarian must spend a minimum of thirty
82 percent (30%) of their time providing care to large animals.



83 **SECTION 3.** The following shall be codified as Section
84 37-113-57, Mississippi Code of 1972:

85 37-113-57. (1) Subject to the availability of funds, the
86 Program may enter into agreements with up to four first-year
87 veterinary students each year as determined by the Program.

88 (2) To be eligible for funds under the Program, recipients
89 shall:

90 (a) Be a student of the Mississippi State University
91 College of Veterinary Medicine;

92 (b) Agree to become licensed to practice veterinary
93 medicine in Mississippi upon graduation;

94 (c) Complete all requirements in public health,
95 livestock biosecurity, foreign animal disease diagnosis,
96 regulatory veterinary medicine and zoonotic disease, and an
97 externship and mentoring requirement with a licensed, accredited
98 veterinarian in a rural area, as required by the veterinary
99 medical school;

100 (d) Enter into a contract with the Program to provide
101 full-time veterinary medicine services as a food supply animal
102 veterinarian or in a rural mixed animal veterinary practice for
103 four years in one or more communities approved by the Program;

104 (e) Commence the full-time practice of veterinary
105 medicine in a rural community within ninety (90) days after
106 completion of the person's degree program, or if the person enters
107 a post-degree training program, such as a graduate school or



108 internship or residency program, within ninety (90) days after
109 completion of the post-degree training program; and

110 (f) Be accredited by the United States Department of
111 Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service,
112 Veterinary Services to provide services relating to food supply
113 animals within six (6) months of graduation or passage of
114 veterinary medical boards.

115 (3) A selection committee made up of faculty and rural
116 mixed/large animal practitioners shall be assembled by the
117 Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine. The
118 committee shall conduct a process that is independent from the
119 Admissions Committee. The committee shall review applications,
120 conduct virtual or in-person interviews and select recipients.

121 (4) Priority shall be given to Mississippi residents. If
122 the number of Mississippi residents applying for funds is less
123 than the number of slots available, nonresident students may be
124 considered. Nonresident students may only receive funds
125 sufficient to pay for in-state tuition, and they must meet the
126 same obligations as in-state students.

127 (5) Scholarship recipients must remain in good academic
128 standing to continue to receive a scholarship from the program.
129 If a student is dismissed or withdraws from the Mississippi State
130 University College of Veterinary Medicine, the Program will assess
131 the circumstances and make a recommendation on whether the student
132 must reimburse the tuition program.



133 (6) The Program shall give preference for approving
134 communities for purposes of subsection (2)(d) of this section to
135 communities located in areas designated by the American Veterinary
136 Medical Association and/or the United States Department of
137 Agriculture as veterinary shortage areas.

138 (7) The Program may adopt additional provisions,
139 requirements or conditions to participate in this program as are
140 practicable and appropriate to accomplish the provisions of the
141 program or may be required for the implementation or
142 administration of the program and are not inconsistent with the
143 provisions of this section.

144 **SECTION 4.** The following shall be codified as Section
145 37-113-58, Mississippi Code of 1972:

146 37-113-58. (1) Subject to the availability of funds, each
147 student entering into a program agreement under this section may
148 receive assistance in an amount not to exceed the amount of
149 in-state tuition charged at the Mississippi State University
150 College of Veterinary Medicine per year for not more than four (4)
151 years for tuition and fees incurred by the student in pursuing a
152 veterinary medicine degree. Upon satisfaction of all commitments
153 under the provisions of the agreement and the provisions of this
154 section, the financial obligations of a student receiving such
155 tuition assistance shall be deemed satisfied and forgiven.

156 (2) If funds go unused, or funds are returned by graduate
157 veterinarians, such funds shall roll over into the next year. The



158 appropriation request for the Program for the following year may
159 be adjusted accordingly. The appropriation request and Program
160 may be scaled back if a saturation point is reached and the
161 shortage of veterinary services in rural Mississippi is addressed.

162 **SECTION 5.** The following shall be codified as Section
163 37-113-59, Mississippi Code of 1972:

164 37-113-59. (1) A veterinarian shall be released from the
165 Program contract without penalty if:

166 (a) The veterinarian has completed the service
167 requirements of the contract;

168 (b) The veterinarian is unable to complete the service
169 requirements of the contract because of a permanent physical
170 disability;

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

173 (d) The veterinarian dies.

174 (2) An obligation to engage in the practice of veterinary
175 medicine in accordance with the provisions of this section shall
176 be postponed during:

177 (a) Any period of temporary medical disability during
178 which the person obligated is unable to practice veterinary
179 medicine due to the disability; and

180 (b) Any other period of postponement agreed to or
181 determined in accordance with criteria agreed to in the practice
182 agreement.



183 (3) A veterinarian shall be released from further
184 performance of veterinary services under the Program contract if
185 he or she is unable to perform his or her contractual obligations
186 to provide veterinary services due to the suspension or revocation
187 of his or her federal accreditation or denial, refusal of renewal,
188 limitation, suspension, revocation, or other disciplinary measure
189 taken against his or her license to practice in Mississippi as
190 provided in the Mississippi Veterinary Practice Act. If a
191 veterinarian is released from his or her contract pursuant to this
192 subsection, the Program may recover a portion of or all of the
193 payments made to such veterinarian under 37-113-58. The Program
194 may use appropriate remedies available to enforce this subsection.

195 (4) Upon the failure of a person to satisfy the obligation
196 to engage in the full-time practice of veterinary medicine in a
197 rural community in accordance with the provisions of this section
198 with no just cause as outlined in subsection (1), that person
199 shall repay to the Program, within ninety (90) days of such
200 failure to pay, the amount equal to the assistance provided to the
201 person less a prorated amount based on any periods of practice of
202 veterinary medicine meeting the requirements of this section, plus
203 interest at the prime rate of interest plus two percent (2%) from
204 the date the assistance accrued. Such interest shall be
205 compounded annually.

206 **SECTION 6.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
207 and after July 1, 2024.

