

State of Arkansas
94th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2023

A Bill

SENATE BILL 476

By: Senators Hill, Irvin, G. Leding
By: Representative Vaught

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO CREATE THE RURAL VETERINARY STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; TO CREATE THE AGRI SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM TO BE ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE; AND TO CREATE THE AGRI SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FUND WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO CREATE THE RURAL VETERINARY STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; TO CREATE THE AGRI SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM TO BE ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE; AND TO CREATE THE AGRI SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FUND WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 2-16-203(b)(4), concerning sums collected under special revenue programs that are deposited into the Plant Board Fund under the Arkansas Plant Act of 1917, is amended to read as follows:

(4)(A) All sums paid or recovered under this section shall be deposited into the State Treasury.

(B)(i) ~~Sums~~ Except as provided under subsection (c) of this section, sums collected under special revenue programs shall be deposited into the Plant Board Fund.

(ii) Sums collected under general services programs



shall be deposited into the Miscellaneous Agencies Fund Account.

SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 2-16-203(c), concerning funds collected through a civil penalty assessed by the Arkansas Plant Board under the Arkansas Plant Act of 1917, is amended to read as follows:

(c) Moneys collected through a civil penalty assessed by the board shall be distributed as follows:

~~(1) For amounts up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000), as currently used, including funding for the Arkansas State Plant Board Scholarship program; and~~

~~(2) For amounts more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000):~~

~~(A) The first one thousand dollars (\$1,000) of the assessed penalty for scholarships through the Arkansas State Plant Board Scholarship program; and~~

~~(B) The remainder divided as follows:~~

~~(i) Sixty percent (60%) for scholarships through the Arkansas State Plant Board Scholarship program; and~~

~~(ii) Forty percent (40%) deposited into the University of Arkansas Fund to be used by the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service to the Agri Scholarship Program under § 25-38-212.~~

SECTION 3. Arkansas Code Title 2, Chapter 16, Subchapter 2, is amended to add an additional section to read as follows:

2-16-215. Scholarships – Degree programs related to agriculture – Post-graduate degree programs related to agriculture or veterinary medicine.

(a) The Department of Agriculture may award scholarships to Arkansas residents who are enrolled in or entering an institution of higher education that offers:

(1) An undergraduate degree program at an institution of higher education located in the State of Arkansas that is related to agriculture; or

(2) A post-graduate degree program at an institution of higher education located either in the State of Arkansas or outside of the State of Arkansas that is related to agriculture or veterinary medicine.

(b) The department may contract or otherwise cooperate with a state-supported institution of higher education, state agency, nonprofit

corporation, or other entity, as appropriate, to award scholarships under this section.

(c)(1) A recipient of a scholarship under this section shall enter into an agreement with the department that contains the following requirements:

(A) The receipt of scholarship funds shall be contingent upon the recipient's compliance with this section and with the agreement required under this subdivision;

(B)(i) For a scholarship awarded to an individual enrolled in a qualifying degree program under subdivision (a)(1) of this section, the degree shall be obtained from an institution of higher education located in the State of Arkansas within six (6) years of the receipt of a scholarship under this section.

(ii) For a scholarship awarded to an individual enrolled in a qualifying post-graduate degree program under subdivision (a)(2) of this section, the post-graduate degree shall be obtained from an institution of higher education located either in the State or Arkansas or outside of the State of Arkansas within six (6) years of the receipt of a scholarship under this section; and

(C) The scholarship recipient shall:

(i) Agree to work full time in the state for at least two (2) years after his or her graduation from a degree program under subsection (a) of this section; and

(ii) Begin in-state employment as required under subdivision (c)(1)(C)(i) of this section not later than one (1) year after his or her graduation from a degree program under subsection (a) of this section.

(2) The agreement under subdivision (c)(1) of this section shall include terms for repayment of the scholarship funds upon the breach of the agreement under § 17-101-205(d)(4).

(d) This section shall not be construed to require the department to endow or award any scholarship.

(e) Scholarships awarded under this section are contingent upon the availability of funds.

SECTION 4. Arkansas Code Title 17, Chapter 101, Subchapter 2, is

amended to add an additional section to read as follows:

17-101-205. Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program.

(a)(1) There is established the Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program for rural Arkansas to be funded by the Agri Scholarship Program Fund.

(2) The Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program shall be:

(A) Developed and implemented to provide encouragement, opportunities, and incentives to individuals pursuing a veterinary medicine degree to:

(i) Locate their veterinary practices in rural Arkansas communities; and

(ii) Receive specialized training targeted to meet the needs of livestock producers and rural communities in this state; and

(B) Administered by the Department of Agriculture.

(b) The department may:

(1) Enter into Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program agreements with veterinary students who have met the requirements of this subchapter;

(2) Prescribe forms for and regulate the submission of Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program applications;

(3) Determine the eligibility of applicants;

(4) Accept or reject Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program applications;

(5) Contract, increase, decrease, terminate, and otherwise regulate all Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program disbursements and receipts for the repayment of Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program disbursements;

(6) Manage, operate, and control all funds and property appropriated for or otherwise contributed to the Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program under this subchapter;

(7) Accept gifts, grants, bequests, or devises and apply them as a part of the Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program under this subchapter;

(8) Accept moneys from federal programs that may be used for purposes permitted under this subchapter; and

(9) Contract or otherwise cooperate with institutions of higher education, state agencies, nonprofit corporations, or other entities to award

scholarships.

(c) The department shall give preference to students who:

(1) Are residents of this state; and

(2) Agree to serve in a county that has been determined to be an underserved county for the practice of veterinary medicine, as determined by the department.

(d) Each Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program agreement shall require that a scholarship recipient:

(1) Complete:

(A) A veterinary medicine degree program;

(B) All required advanced training in public health, livestock biosecurity, foreign animal disease diagnosis, regulatory veterinary medicine, and zoonotic disease; and

(C) An externship and mentoring requirement with a licensed and accredited veterinarian in rural Arkansas;

(2) Engage in the full-time practice of veterinary medicine:

(A) In a:

(i) County in Arkansas that has a population of fewer than forty thousand (40,000) people; or

(ii) Registered veterinary premises under a licensed veterinarian if food-animal patients make up at least fifty percent (50%) of the veterinarian's practice at the time the person entered into the Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program agreement; and

(B) For a period of at least twelve (12) continuous months for each separate year a student receives an award under the Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program, unless the obligation is otherwise satisfied under this section;

(3) Commence a full-time practice of veterinary medicine within ninety (90) days of completing a veterinary medicine degree program, or if the person enters a post-degree training program, including a graduate school, internship, or residency program, within ninety (90) days of completing of the post-degree training program; and

(4)(A) Upon failure to satisfy the obligation to engage in the full-time practice of veterinary medicine as required by subdivision (d)(2) of this section, repay to the Veterinary Medical Examining Board, within ninety (90) days of the failure to satisfy the obligation to engage in the

full-time practice of veterinary medicine, the amount equal to the amount awarded to the person, less a prorated amount based on any periods of practice of veterinary medicine that meet the requirements of this section, plus interest calculated at the prime rate of interest plus two percent (2%) from the date the award was received.

(B) The interest under subdivision (d)(4)(A) of this section shall be compounded annually.

(e) If a person is engaging in the full-time practice of veterinary medicine under the Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program agreement in a county that no longer meets the population requirement after the date that the Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program agreement was entered into by the department and the recipient, both parties to the agreement shall continue to hold the terms of the agreement in full force and effect subject to the other requirements of this section that are able to be met.

(f) An obligation to engage in the practice of veterinary medicine in accordance with this section shall be postponed during:

(1) Any period of temporary medical disability during which an individual obligated under the Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program agreement is unable to practice veterinary medicine due to the temporary medical disability; and

(2) Any other period of postponement agreed to or determined in accordance with criteria agreed upon in the Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program agreement.

(g) An obligation to engage in the practice of veterinary medicine in accordance with the Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program agreement and this section shall be satisfied:

(1) If the obligation to engage in the practice of veterinary medicine in accordance with the Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program agreement has been completed;

(2) If, due to a permanent disability, an individual obligated under a Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program agreement is unable to practice veterinary medicine; or

(3) An individual obligated under a Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program agreement dies.

(h) This section does not require the department to endow or award any scholarship.

(i) Scholarship awards are contingent upon the availability of funds.

SECTION 5. Arkansas Code Title 19, Chapter 5, Subchapter 12, is amended to add an additional section to read as follows:

19-5-1277. Agri Scholarship Program Fund.

(a) There is created on the books of the Treasurer of State, the Auditor of State, and the Chief Fiscal Officer of the State a miscellaneous fund to be known as the "Agri Scholarship Program Fund".

(b) The fund shall consist of:

(1) Moneys obtained from private or public grants, gifts, or donations that are designated to be credited to the fund; and

(2) Any other funds authorized or provided by law.

(c) The fund shall be used by the Department of Agriculture to create and maintain the Agri Scholarship Program under § 25-38-212.

(d) Moneys remaining in the fund at the end of each fiscal year shall carry forward and be made available for the purposes stated in this section in the next fiscal year.

SECTION 6. Arkansas Code § 19-6-429 is amended to read as follows:

19-6-429. Veterinary Examiners Board Fund.

(a) The Veterinary Examiners Board Fund shall consist of those special revenues as specified in § 19-6-301(95)ᠮ.

(b) The fund shall ~~there to~~ be used:

(1) For ~~for~~ the operation, maintenance, and improvement of the Veterinary Medical Examining Board in exercising the powers, functions, and duties as set out in the Arkansas Veterinary Medical Practice Act, § 17-101-101 et seq.; and

(2) To fund:

(A) The Agri Scholarship Program created under § 25-38-212 and administered by the Department of Agriculture, with deposits to the Agri Scholarship Program Fund in the amount of up to thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000) per year; and

(B) The Rural Veterinary Student Scholarship Program, § 17-101-205.

SECTION 7. Arkansas Code Title 25, Chapter 38, Subchapter 2, is

amended to add an additional section to read as follows:

25-38-212. Agri Scholarship Program.

(a) There is created the Agri Scholarship Program.

(b) The Department of Agriculture may:

(1) Establish and administer scholarship programs for students seeking degrees in agriculture-related fields;

(2) Adopt rules as necessary to implement the Agri Scholarship Program, including without limitation eligibility requirements; and

(3) Accept gifts and apply for and receive federal funds for the Agri Scholarship Program.

APPROVED: 4/11/23