

Senate Bill 20

By: Senators Kirkpatrick of the 32nd, Summers of the 13th, Payne of the 54th, Anderson of the 24th and Parent of the 44th

**AS PASSED SENATE**

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1 To amend Article 7 of Chapter 3 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,  
2 relating to scholarships, loans, and grants, so as to provide for the purchase of loans made  
3 to students for educational purposes for veterinarians who practice shelter medicine and  
4 veterinarians who practice in nonprofit pet sterilization clinics; to provide for the  
5 appointment of additional members to the State Veterinary Education Board; to authorize the  
6 State Veterinary Education Board to establish committees; to provide for definitions; to  
7 require the State Veterinary Education Board to establish and maintain separate programs for  
8 loan purchases made under this part and loan purchases made under Part 6B of this article  
9 and account separately for the funding of each program; to provide requirements for  
10 participation in the loan repayment program; to provide for maximum total and annual  
11 repayment amounts; to provide for terms for repayment agreements; to provide for rules and  
12 regulations; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

13 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

14

**SECTION 1.**

15 Article 7 of Chapter 3 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to  
 16 scholarships, loans, and grants, is amended by revising Code Section 20-3-518.1, relating to  
 17 definitions relative to state veterinary education, as follows:

18 "20-3-518.1.

19 As used in this part, the term:

20 (1) 'Animal shelter,' 'nonprofit pet sterilization clinic,' 'pet sterilization services,' and  
 21 'shelter medicine' shall have the same meanings as set forth in Code Section 20-3-518.8.

22 (2) 'Board' means the State Veterinary Education Board created under Code  
 23 Section 20-3-518.2.

24 ~~(2)~~(3) 'Commissioner' means the Commissioner of Agriculture.

25 ~~(3)~~(4) 'Department' means the Department of Agriculture."

26

**SECTION 2.**

27 Said article is further amended by revising Code Section 20-3-518.2, relating to State  
 28 Veterinarian Education Board, as follows:

29 "20-3-518.2.

30 (a) There shall be a State Veterinary Education Board which shall consist of:

31 (1) The Commissioner of Agriculture or his or her designee;

32 (2) The dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Georgia or his  
 33 or her designee;

34 (3) The dean of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences of the  
 35 University of Georgia or his or her designee;

36 (4) A person actively engaged in the production of livestock in this state, to be appointed  
 37 by the Governor, who shall serve for a term of four years and until his or her successor  
 38 is qualified and appointed. The term of the initial member appointed under this  
 39 paragraph shall commence on July 1, 2011; and

40 (5) A person actively engaged in the private practice of veterinary medicine in this state,  
41 whose practice includes but is not necessarily limited to food animals, to be appointed by  
42 the State Board of Veterinary Medicine, who shall serve for a term of four years and until  
43 his or her successor is qualified and appointed. The term of the initial member appointed  
44 under this paragraph shall commence on July 1, 2011;

45 (6) A person employed as an executive director or equivalent of an animal shelter or a  
46 nonprofit pet sterilization clinic in this state, to be appointed by the Governor, who shall  
47 serve for a term of four years and until his or her successor is qualified and appointed.  
48 The term of the initial member appointed under this paragraph shall commence on  
49 January 1, 2026; and

50 (7) A veterinarian employed full time in the practice of shelter medicine or pet  
51 sterilization services in this state, to be appointed by the Governor, who shall serve for  
52 a term of four years and until his or her successor is qualified and appointed. The term  
53 of the initial member appointed under this paragraph shall commence on January 1, 2026.

54 (b) Any vacancies on the board shall be filled in the same manner as the original  
55 appointment.

56 (c)(1) The board shall elect annually a chairperson and a vice chairperson to serve in the  
57 absence or inability of the chairperson. The board shall meet at least once each year at  
58 such time and place as may be fixed by the board. Special meetings shall be held upon  
59 the call of the chairperson. ~~Three~~ A majority of the members of the board shall constitute  
60 a quorum for the transaction of business. ~~No~~ Except as otherwise provided in this  
61 subsection, no official action shall be taken by the board except upon the affirmative vote  
62 of at least ~~three~~ a majority of the members of the board.

63 (2)(A) The board shall be authorized to establish a committee, consisting of two or  
64 more members of the board, which, to the extent provided by the board, shall have and  
65 exercise the authority of the board in regard to the loan purchases provided for in this  
66 part.

67 (B) The board shall be authorized to establish a committee which, to the extent  
 68 provided by the board, shall have and exercise the authority of the board in regard to  
 69 the loan purchases provided for in Part 6B of this article.

70 (d) The board shall be attached to the Department of Agriculture for administrative  
 71 purposes only, pursuant to Code Section 50-4-3.

72 (e) The board shall establish and maintain separate programs for loan purchases made  
 73 under this part and loan purchases made under Part 6B of this article and shall account  
 74 separately for the funding of each program. Any state appropriation of funds shall  
 75 separately identify the amount of funds appropriated for each program."

76 **SECTION 3.**

77 Said article is further amended by adding a new part to read as follows:

78 "Part 6B

79 20-3-518.8.

80 As used in this part, the term:

81 (1) 'Animal shelter' shall have the same meaning as set forth in Code Section 4-11-2.

82 (2) 'Board' means the State Veterinary Education Board created under Code  
 83 Section 20-3-518.2.

84 (3) 'Nonprofit organization' means an organization which is exempt from taxation under  
 85 the provisions of Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code.

86 (4) 'Nonprofit pet sterilization clinic' means a veterinary facility that exclusively offers  
 87 pet sterilization services and which is a nonprofit organization.

88 (5) 'Pet sterilization services' means procedures that meet or exceed veterinary medical  
 89 standards of care in providing sterilization of dogs, cats, and pet rabbits.

90 (6) 'Shelter medicine' means veterinary practices used to manage the health of  
91 populations of animals handled by animal shelters.

92 (7) 'Veterinary facility' shall have the same meaning as set forth in Code  
93 Section 43-50-3.

94 20-3-518.9.

95 (a) Beginning January 1, 2026, the board may provide for the purchase of loans made to  
96 students for educational purposes who have completed a program of study in the field of  
97 doctor of veterinary medicine or its equivalent and are authorized to practice veterinary  
98 medicine in this state and are residents of this state, with services in the form of the practice  
99 of veterinary medicine while residing in this state to be rendered as consideration for such  
100 loan purchases.

101 (b) Only persons who have been practicing veterinary medicine for ten years or less shall  
102 be eligible for loan purchases under this part.

103 (c) Only persons who practice shelter medicine full time or who practice full time at a  
104 nonprofit pet sterilization clinic shall be eligible for loan purchases under this part.

105 (d) For eligible applicants who practice shelter medicine full time, the board shall give  
106 priority to applicants whose practices include pet sterilization services.

107 20-3-518.10.

108 (a)(1) Subject to appropriations, persons whose applications are approved and enter into  
109 a loan purchase agreement with the board, as provided by Code Section 20-3-518.9, shall  
110 receive a loan purchase in a total amount to be determined by the board, but not  
111 exceeding \$75,000.00 per person. The loan purchases shall be paid in such manner as the  
112 board shall determine.

113 (2) The loan purchases to be granted to each applicant shall be based upon the condition  
114 that the consideration for such loan purchases shall be services to be rendered by the

115 applicant after entering into a loan purchase agreement with the board by practicing his  
116 or her profession full time in a board approved animal shelter or nonprofit pet sterilization  
117 clinic.

118 (3) For time served after entering into a loan purchase agreement with the board in  
119 practicing his or her profession full time in an animal shelter or nonprofit pet sterilization  
120 clinic, the applicant shall receive a loan purchase at a rate equivalent to \$25,000.00 per 12  
121 months of service; provided, however, that the total purchase amount shall not exceed the  
122 maximum specified in paragraph (1) of this subsection.

123 (b) The board shall not enter into new loan purchase agreements with more than four  
124 persons per year for shelter medicine or nonprofit pet sterilization services; provided,  
125 however, that the total sum of loan purchases from state appropriations for which the board  
126 contractually obligates itself in any fiscal year shall not exceed the amount of funds for  
127 such loan purchase agreements specified in annual appropriations Acts. Funds in the loan  
128 purchase fund account that are not expended or contractually obligated by the board for  
129 loan purchases during any fiscal year shall lapse.

130 20-3-518.11.

131 (a) Before being granted a loan purchase, each applicant shall enter into a contract with  
132 the board for a term of three consecutive years agreeing to the terms and conditions upon  
133 which the loan purchase is granted, including such terms and provisions as will carry out  
134 the full purpose and intent of this part. No person shall be eligible to receive such loan  
135 purchase more than once during his or her lifetime. The form of such contract shall be  
136 prepared and approved by the Attorney General, and each contract shall be signed by the  
137 chairperson of the board and by the applicant.

138 (b) The board shall have the authority to cancel the loan purchase contract of any applicant  
139 at any time for any cause deemed sufficient by the board, provided that such authority shall  
140 not be arbitrarily or unreasonably exercised.

141 (c) The board shall adopt such rules and regulations as are reasonable and necessary to  
142 implement the provisions of this part."

143 **SECTION 4.**

144 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.