

The House Committee on Rules offers the following substitute to SB 20:

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 tuition grants to children and
3 spouses of certain public employees killed or permanently disabled in the line of duty; to
4 provide for charitable contributions to the Georgia Student Finance Authority for such grants;
5 to expand eligibility for the Public Safety Memorial Grant to provide for tuition grants to
6 children and spouses of emergency medical technicians, firefighters, highway emergency
7 response operators, law enforcement officers, and prison guards who are killed or
8 permanently disabled in the line of duty; to provide for tuition grants to children and spouses
9 of public school employees and public school teachers who are killed or permanently
10 disabled by an act of violence in the line of duty; to provide definitions; to provide for
11 maximum grant amounts; to provide for eligibility; to provide for an application process; to
12 provide for grant renewals; to provide for the purchase of loans made to students for
13 educational purposes for veterinarians who practice shelter medicine and veterinarians who
14 practice in nonprofit pet sterilization clinics; to provide for the appointment of additional
15 members to the State Veterinary Education Board; to authorize the State Veterinary
16 Education Board to establish committees; to provide for definitions; to require the State
17 Veterinary Education Board to establish and maintain separate programs for loan purchases
18 made under this part and loan purchases made under Part 6B of this article and account

19 separately for the funding of each program; to provide requirements for participation in the
 20 loan repayment program; to provide for maximum total and annual repayment amounts; to
 21 provide for terms for repayment agreements; to provide for rules and regulations; to provide
 22 for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

23 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

24 **PART I**
 25 **SECTION 1-1.**

26 Article 7 of Chapter 3 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
 27 scholarships, loans, and grants, is amended in Part 3, relating to the Georgia Student Finance
 28 Authority, by revising Code Section 20-3-316.2, relating to voluntary donations through state
 29 income tax returns and drivers' license fees benefitting children of certain public servants
 30 seeking postsecondary education, as follows:

31 "20-3-316.2.

32 (a)(1) Each Georgia income tax return form for taxable years beginning on or after
 33 January 1, ~~2017~~ 2026, shall contain appropriate language, to be determined by the state
 34 revenue commissioner, offering the taxpayer the opportunity to make a charitable
 35 contribution to the Georgia Student Finance Authority to provide financial assistance
 36 toward the postsecondary educational costs of the children and spouses of law
 37 enforcement officers, firefighters, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, and prison
 38 guards employed by the state or other public employer; and Highway Emergency
 39 Response Operators of the Department of Transportation who were permanently disabled
 40 or killed in the line of duty and the children and spouses of public school employees and
 41 public school teachers who were killed or permanently disabled by an act of violence in
 42 the line of duty by either donating all or any part of any tax refund due and authorizing

43 a reduction in the refund check otherwise payable or contributing any amount over and
44 above any amount of tax owed by adding that amount to the taxpayer's payment. The
45 instructions accompanying the income tax return shall include a description of the
46 intended use of the moneys received from the contributions. Each taxpayer required to
47 file a state income tax return who desires to make a charitable contribution to the Georgia
48 Student Finance Authority may designate such contribution as provided on the
49 appropriate income tax return form.

50 (2) The Department of Revenue shall determine annually the total amount so contributed
51 and shall transmit such amount to the Georgia Student Finance Authority.

52 (b) Beginning January 1, ~~2017~~ 2026, the Department of Driver Services shall, through
53 appropriate language on its forms for the issuance and renewal of drivers' licenses and
54 identification cards, offer individuals the opportunity to make a voluntary charitable
55 contribution of \$1.00, \$5.00, or \$10.00 to the Georgia Student Finance Authority to provide
56 financial assistance toward the postsecondary educational costs of the children and spouses
57 of law enforcement officers, firefighters, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, and
58 prison guards employed by the state or other public employer; and Highway Emergency
59 Response Operators of the Department of Transportation who were permanently disabled
60 or killed in the line of duty and the children and spouses of public school employees and
61 public school teachers who were killed or permanently disabled by an act of violence in the
62 line of duty. The form shall contain a description of the intended use of moneys received
63 from the contributions. Each individual who desires to make a charitable contribution may
64 designate such contribution on the appropriate form, and the Department of Driver Services
65 shall accept such contribution. The Department of Driver Services shall determine
66 annually the total amount so contributed, shall withhold therefrom a reasonable amount for
67 administering this voluntary charitable contribution program, and shall transmit the balance
68 to the Georgia Student Finance Authority for funding, in whole or in part, the
69 postsecondary educational costs of such students. If, in any tax year, the administrative

70 costs of the Department of Driver Services for collecting charitable contributions pursuant
71 to this subsection exceed the sum of such contributions, the administrative costs which the
72 Department of Driver Services is authorized to withhold from such contributions shall not
73 exceed the sum of such contributions."

74 **PART II**
75 **SECTION 2-1.**

76 Article 7 of Chapter 3 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
77 scholarships, loans, and grants, is amended in Subpart 7 of Part 3, relating to grants to
78 children of law enforcement officers, firefighters, and prison guards, by revising Code
79 Section 20-3-450, relating to legislative findings and purpose of subpart, as follows:

80 "20-3-450.

81 The General Assembly finds that certain citizens are called upon to enforce the criminal
82 laws of this state and to protect persons and properties within the state and that they
83 provide a valuable and vital public service to the state and to citizens and properties within
84 the state at a great personal sacrifice and risk to their own lives and well-being. The
85 purpose of the General Assembly, as provided for in this subpart, is to enable the authority
86 to provide educational grant assistance to the children and spouses of such persons who are
87 killed or permanently disabled in the line of duty."

88 **SECTION 2-2.**

89 Said article is further amended by revising Code Section 20-3-451, relating to definitions,
90 as follows:

91 "20-3-451.

92 As used in this subpart, the term:

93 (1) 'Academic year' means a period of time, typically nine months, in which a full-time
94 student is expected to complete the equivalent of at least ~~two semesters' or three quarters'~~
95 academic work nine or more credit hours per term or semester or in which a part-time
96 student is expected to complete the equivalent of eight or fewer credit hours per term or
97 semester.

98 (2) ~~'Approved school' means the same schools as enumerated in Code Section 20-3-391~~
99 ~~relative to the state student incentive grant program shall have the same meaning as the~~
100 term 'eligible postsecondary institution' as set forth in Code Section 20-3-519.

101 (3) 'Eligible student' means a person who qualifies for an educational grant under this
102 subpart.

103 (4) 'Emergency medical technician' means a person employed by the state or by a county,
104 municipality, or other political subdivision of the state who has been certified as an
105 emergency medical technician, cardiac technician, or paramedic pursuant to Chapter 11
106 of Title 31.

107 (5) 'Firefighter' means a person employed, appointed, or regularly enrolled by the state
108 or by any county or municipal fire department whose duties include extinguishing fires
109 or investigating cases of suspected arson.

110 (6) 'Highway emergency response operator' means an individual employed by the
111 Department of Transportation who operates a towing or recovery vehicle or highway
112 maintenance vehicle.

113 (7) 'In the line of duty' means:

114 (A) With respect to an emergency medical technician, when performing services for
115 and receiving compensation from the public agency which employs such emergency
116 medical technician or when performing emergency medical services;

117 (B) With respect to a firefighter, when responding to or returning from a fire or other
118 emergency, performing duties during any fire or other emergency, or performing duties

119 intended to protect life and property, including, without limitation, actual participation
 120 in a training exercise;

121 (C) With respect to a highway emergency response operator, when performing services
 122 for and receiving compensation from the Department of Transportation;

123 (D) With respect to a law enforcement officer, when performing services for the law
 124 enforcement agency which employs such officer, responding to any situation which
 125 would save a life or preserve the peace, or preventing or attempting to prevent the
 126 commission of a crime; or

127 (E) With respect to a prison guard, when performing services for and receiving
 128 compensation from the public agency which employs such prison guard.

129 ~~(4)~~(8) 'Law enforcement officer' means a sheriff, deputy sheriff, police officer,
 130 ~~policeman~~, peace officer, officer or member of the Department of Public Safety, or other
 131 officer or official who has the power of arrest and who is responsible for enforcing the
 132 criminal laws of the state or its political subdivisions.

133 ~~(5)~~(9) 'Permanent disability' or 'permanently disabled' means physical incapacity to
 134 perform the duties of a law enforcement officer, firefighter, ~~or~~ prison guard, emergency
 135 medical technician, or highway emergency response operator as determined by the public
 136 employer designated in paragraph (3) of Code Section 20-3-453, provided that such
 137 incapacity is likely to be permanent based upon current medical standards.

138 ~~(6)~~(10) 'Prison guard' means a person employed by the state or by a county, municipality,
 139 or other political subdivision of the state whose principal duties relate to supervision and
 140 incarceration of persons accused or convicted of violation of the criminal laws of the state
 141 or any county, municipality, or other political subdivision thereof."

142 **SECTION 2-3.**

143 Said article is further amended by revising Code Section 20-3-452, relating to amount of
 144 grants to each eligible student, as follows:

145 "20-3-452.

146 There is granted to each eligible student attending an approved school the sum of ~~\$2,000.00~~
 147 no more than \$18,000.00 per academic year. No person shall be eligible to receive grant
 148 assistance provided under this subpart in excess of ~~\$8,000.00~~ \$72,000.00. Grant assistance
 149 to eligible students under this subpart shall be payable during the period of a summer
 150 school quarter or semester. The payment of grants to eligible students under this subpart
 151 shall be contingent upon the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly for the
 152 purposes of this subpart in annual appropriations Acts of the General Assembly."

153 **SECTION 2-4.**

154 Said article is further amended by revising Code Section 20-3-453, relating to eligibility of
 155 students, as follows:

156 "20-3-453.

157 No grants shall be payable to any person under this subpart who fails to meet any of the
 158 following qualifications or restrictions:

159 (1) Such person ~~must~~ shall be the child, either natural or adopted, or the spouse of a law
 160 enforcement officer, firefighter, ~~or~~ prison guard, emergency medical technician, or
 161 highway emergency response operator who has been permanently disabled or killed in
 162 the line of duty or while performing the duties to which he or she was assigned ~~in the~~
 163 ~~normal course of employment~~. If such person is the adopted child of any such law
 164 enforcement officer, firefighter, ~~or~~ prison guard, emergency medical technician, or
 165 highway emergency response operator, such person ~~must~~ shall have been adopted and
 166 any final order of adoption issued prior to the date of the accident or event causing the
 167 death or permanent disability of such parent;

168 (2) Such person ~~must~~ shall have been a citizen of this state for a period of at least 12
 169 months immediately prior to the date of registration in an approved school and ~~must~~ shall
 170 remain a citizen of ~~the~~ this state while receiving funds under this subpart;

- 171 (3) The ~~deceased or disabled law enforcement officer, firefighter, or prison guard~~ parent
172 or spouse of such person ~~must~~ shall have been an ~~employee, either full-time or part-time,~~
173 ~~or an officer or official, whether elected or appointed,~~ of employed, appointed, or
174 regularly enrolled by this state or any county, municipality, department, board, bureau,
175 branch, agency, commission, authority, or political subdivision of the state on the date
176 of the accident or event from which death or permanent disability resulted; and
177 (4) Any person otherwise meeting the conditions of this subpart shall be eligible to
178 receive a grant even though the accident or the event causing the death or disability of
179 such person's parent or spouse occurred prior to July 1, ~~1980~~ 2025."

180 **SECTION 2-5.**

181 Said article is further amended by revising Code Section 20-3-455, relating to administration
182 of program and physical examinations, as follows:

183 "20-3-455.

184 The authority is authorized to prescribe such rules and regulations as may be necessary or
185 convenient for administration of this program and to establish procedures for determination
186 of eligibility of applicants. The authority is also authorized to establish standards and
187 procedures for verifying the death or permanent disability of the applicant's parent or
188 spouse and for such purpose is authorized to require a physical examination and to pay for
189 the cost of such examination from funds appropriated for use by the authority for the
190 purposes of this subpart."

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PART III
SECTION 3-1.

Article 7 of Chapter 3 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to scholarships, loans, and grants, is amended in Part 3, relating to the Georgia Student Finance Authority, by adding a new subpart to read as follows:

"Subpart 7C

20-3-466.

(a) As used in this Code section, the term:

(1) 'Academic year' means a period of time, typically nine months, in which a full-time student is expected to complete the equivalent of at least nine or more credit hours per term or semester or in which a part-time student is expected to complete the equivalent of eight or fewer credit hours per term or semester.

(2) 'Act of violence' means a willful act of violence.

(3) 'Approved school' shall have the same meaning as the term 'eligible postsecondary institution' as set forth in Code Section 20-3-519.

(4) 'Authority' means the Georgia Student Finance Authority.

(5) 'Eligible student' means a person who qualifies for an educational grant under this Code section.

(6) 'In the line of duty' means while on duty and performing services for and receiving compensation from the local education agency which employs such public school teacher or public school employee.

(7) 'Local education agency' shall have the same meaning as set forth in subsection (a) of Code Section 20-2-167.1.

(8) 'Permanent disability' means disability due to:

- 215 (A) Loss of both eyes or blindness in both eyes with only light perception;
216 (B) Loss or loss of use of both hands;
217 (C) Loss or loss of use of both legs;
218 (D) Loss of a lower extremity or residuals of organic disease or injury which so affect
219 the functions of balance or propulsion as to preclude locomotion without resort to a
220 wheelchair; or
221 (E) Organic brain damage resulting from direct physical trauma incurred after
222 July 1, 2001, which so affects the mental capacity as to preclude the ability to function
223 productively in any employment.
- 224 (9) 'Public school employee' shall have the same meaning as set forth in Code
225 Section 20-2-910.
- 226 (10) 'Public school teacher' shall have the same meaning as set forth in Code
227 Section 20-2-880.
- 228 (b) There is granted to each eligible student attending an approved school the sum of no
229 more than \$18,000.00 per academic year. No person shall be eligible to receive grant
230 assistance provided under this Code section in excess of \$72,000.00. Grant assistance to
231 eligible students under this Code section shall be payable during the period of a summer
232 school quarter or semester. The payment of grants to eligible students under this Code
233 section shall be contingent upon the appropriation of funds by the General Assembly for
234 the purposes of this Code section in annual appropriations Acts of the General Assembly.
- 235 (c) No grants shall be payable to any person under this Code section who fails to meet any
236 of the following qualifications or restrictions:
- 237 (1) Such person shall be the child, either natural or adopted, or the spouse of a public
238 school teacher or public school employee who has been killed by an act of violence in the
239 line of duty or who has a permanent disability due to an act of violence in the line of duty.
240 If such person is the adopted child of any such public school teacher or public school

241 employee, such person shall have been adopted and any final order of adoption issued
242 prior to the act of violence causing the death or permanent disability of such parent;
243 (2) Such person shall have been a citizen of this state for a period of at least 12 months
244 immediately prior to the date of registration in an approved school and shall remain a
245 citizen of this state while receiving funds under this Code section;
246 (3) The parent or spouse of such person shall have been a public school employee or
247 public school teacher on the date of the act of violence from which death or permanent
248 disability resulted; and
249 (4) Any person otherwise meeting the conditions of this Code section shall be eligible
250 to receive a grant even though the act of violence causing the death or permanent
251 disability of such person's parent or spouse occurred prior to July 1, 2025.
252 (d) Any person meeting the conditions of this Code section may apply to the authority for
253 a grant. Such application shall be submitted in writing on forms prescribed by the authority
254 for such purpose. The applicant shall furnish such information as may be required by the
255 authority for determination of eligibility for the grant. The authority shall approve grant
256 renewals only upon receipt of the recipient's application therefor and upon a finding that
257 the recipient has successfully completed the work of the preceding school period and
258 presents evidence that he or she is a student in good standing, that he or she remains a
259 citizen of this state, and that he or she remains otherwise qualified to receive such grant
260 under this Code section.
261 (e) The authority is authorized to prescribe such rules and regulations as may be necessary
262 or convenient for administration of this Code section and to establish procedures for
263 determination of eligibility of applicants. The authority is also authorized to establish
264 standards and procedures for verifying the death or permanent disability of the applicant's
265 parent or spouse and for such purpose is authorized to require a physical examination and
266 to pay for the cost of such examination from funds appropriated for use by the authority for
267 the purposes of this Code section."

268 **PART IV**
269 **SECTION 4-1.**

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

273 "20-3-518.1.

274 As used in this part, the term:

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

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

279 ~~(2)~~(3) 'Commissioner' means the Commissioner of Agriculture.

280 ~~(3)~~(4) 'Department' means the Department of Agriculture."

281 **SECTION 4-2.**

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

284 "20-3-518.2.

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

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

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

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

291 (4) A person actively engaged in the production of livestock in this state, to be appointed
292 by the Governor, who shall serve for a term of four years and until his or her successor

293 is qualified and appointed. The term of the initial member appointed under this
 294 paragraph shall commence on July 1, 2011; ~~and~~

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

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

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

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

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

318 (2)(A) The board shall be authorized to establish a committee, consisting of two or
 319 more members of the board, which, to the extent provided by the board, shall have and

320 exercise the authority of the board in regard to the loan purchases provided for in this
321 part.

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

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

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

331 **SECTION 4-3.**

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

333 "Part 6B

334 20-3-518.8.

335 As used in this part, the term:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

349 20-3-518.9.

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

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

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

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

362 20-3-518.10.

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

368 (2) The loan purchases to be granted to each applicant shall be based upon the condition
369 that the consideration for such loan purchases shall be services to be rendered by the
370 applicant after entering into a loan purchase agreement with the board by practicing his
371 or her profession full time in a board approved animal shelter or nonprofit pet sterilization
372 clinic.

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

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

385 20-3-518.11.

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

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

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

398

PART V

399

SECTION 5-1.

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