

JAN 17 2025

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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO VETERINARIANS.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that there is a critical  
2 need for more licensed veterinarians in the State. In 2020,  
3 there were three hundred twenty veterinarians working in Hawaii.  
4 However, the existing growth rate will not be sustainable to  
5 meet the current and future demand of veterinary services in the  
6 State, as the number of veterinarians is expected to grow only  
7 by approximately 1.6 per cent each year through 2030.

8           Presently, there are a myriad of issues that limit the  
9 potential to increase the number of licensed veterinarians in  
10 the State. For one, the State does not have a veterinary  
11 school, requiring individuals interested in pursuing a career in  
12 veterinary medicine to advance their education out-of-state,  
13 where many often remain after graduation. Without an  
14 educational option in Hawaii, veterinary graduates who do return  
15 to the State encounter financial barriers such as higher out-of-  
16 state tuition and relocation costs, higher costs of living due  
17 to geographical isolation, and considerable student loan debt.



1           The legislature further finds that, in the United States,  
2 the pursuit of a doctor of veterinary medicine degree is a  
3 costly undertaking, with total program costs ranging from  
4 \$150,000 to \$400,000 for private out-of-state programs. Average  
5 program costs in the United States range from \$200,000 to  
6 \$275,000. The average graduates accumulates anywhere from  
7 \$150,000 to \$200,000 in student loan debt, with certain graduate  
8 accumulating more debt based on their chosen program.  
9 Therefore, it is imperative to incentivize practicing and future  
10 veterinarians to practice in the State by offering benefits to  
11 help lessen tuition burdens.

12           The legislature additionally finds that the university of  
13 Hawaii John A. Burns school of medicine administers the Hawaii  
14 state loan repayment program that provides debt repayment  
15 assistance to health care professionals who commit to working in  
16 certain rural and underserved parts of the State. There are  
17 also a number of scholarship programs available for qualifying  
18 medical students. These options have successfully incentivized  
19 more physicians to remain in Hawaii to practice medicine,  
20 closing health care gaps through wider availability of health  
21 care services. Offering prospective students and current



1 veterinarians a similar opportunity will catalyze growth and  
2 expansion of the field of veterinary medicine, enhance the  
3 agricultural industry, address the shortage of veterinarians in  
4 the State, incentivize the interests of individuals seeking  
5 entry into the profession, and assist qualified individuals who  
6 hold student debt.

7 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 8 (1) Establish the veterinary workforce development special  
9 fund;
- 10 (2) Establish a fee to be assessed on individuals  
11 obtaining or renewing a veterinary license; and
- 12 (3) Establish the veterinary workforce development loan  
13 repayment and scholarship program to assist  
14 veterinarians in the State with loan repayments and  
15 completion of veterinary medicine educations.

16 SECTION 2. Chapter 471, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is  
17 amended by adding three new sections to be appropriately  
18 designated and to read as follows:

19 **"§471-A Veterinary workforce development special fund.**

20 (a) There is established the veterinary workforce development  
21 special fund, to be administered and expended by the board.



1        (b) The following shall be deposited into the special  
2 fund:

3        (1) Appropriations by the legislature;

4        (2) Veterinary workforce development fees established  
5 pursuant to section 471-B;

6        (3) Grants, donations, gifts, or other income received for  
7 the purposes of the special fund; and

8        (4) Interest earned or accrued on moneys in the special  
9 fund.

10       (c) Moneys in the special fund shall be used to support  
11 the veterinary workforce development loan repayment and  
12 scholarship program established pursuant to section 471-C;  
13 provided that the veterinary workforce development fee shall be  
14 used for purposes identified by the board to support veterinary  
15 workforce assessment and planning efforts, including the  
16 recruitment and retention of veterinarians in the State. This  
17 shall include but not be limited to:

18       (1) Maintaining accurate veterinarian workforce assessment  
19 information and providing or updating personal and  
20 professional information, that shall be maintained in  
21 a secure database;



- 1        (2) Providing loan repayment to veterinarians who commit  
2        to working in shortage areas of the State as part of  
3        the veterinarian workforce loan repayment and  
4        scholarship program administered by the board; and  
5        (3) Providing scholarships to qualifying veterinarians to  
6        be determined by the board.

7        The board may disclose information specific to any veterinarian  
8        only with the express written consent of that veterinarian.

9        **"§471-B Veterinary workforce development; license fee.**

10       (a) Beginning July 1, 2025, when a license is issued or renewed  
11       pursuant to section 471-9, each veterinarian shall be assessed a  
12       fee of \$60 that shall be transferred and deposited into the  
13       veterinary workforce development special fund established under  
14       section 471-A to support ongoing assessment and planning of the  
15       veterinarian workforce in the State, consistent with the  
16       purposes established in section 471-A. Payment of the  
17       veterinarian workforce development fee shall be required for  
18       license issuance or renewal.

19       **"§471-C Veterinary workforce development loan repayment**

20       **and scholarship program.**    (a) There is established a veterinary  
21       workforce development loan repayment and scholarship program to



1 be administered by the board to provide financial support to  
2 veterinary students and practicing veterinarians who agree to  
3 work as a full-time veterinarian in shortage areas of the State  
4 for a period of time to be determined by the board.

5 (b) The veterinary workforce development loan repayment  
6 and scholarship program shall offer:

7 (1) Loan repayments to veterinarians who commit to working  
8 in shortage areas of the State for a minimum period of  
9 time determined by the board; and

10 (2) Scholarships to veterinary students attending  
11 veterinary colleges that meet standards established by  
12 the board; provided that the scholarship recipients  
13 commit to work in the State after graduation for a  
14 minimum period of time determined by the board.

15 (c) An individual who received a loan repayment or  
16 scholarship pursuant to this section and who does not work in  
17 the State for the minimum time period specified by the board  
18 shall repay the total amount of the loan or scholarship received  
19 to the veterinarian workforce development special fund; provided  
20 that the board may waive this requirement upon good cause shown.



1        (d) The board shall adopt rules in accordance with  
2 chapter 91 necessary to implement and administer the  
3 veterinarian workforce development loan repayment and  
4 scholarship program, including eligibility requirements and  
5 procedures."

6        SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
7 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                    or so  
8 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and  
9 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
10 year 2026-2027 to be deposited into the veterinary workforce  
11 development special fund.

12        SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the veterinary  
13 workforce development special fund the sum of \$                    or so  
14 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2025-2026 and  
15 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
16 year 2026-2027 for scholarships and loan repayments to qualified  
17 individuals working as veterinarians in the State pursuant to  
18 the requirements of section 471-A.

19        The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
20 of commerce and consumer affairs for the purposes of this Act.



# S.B. NO. 493

1           SECTION 5. In codifying the new sections added by  
2 section 2 of this Act, the revisor of statutes shall substitute  
3 appropriate section numbers for the letters used in designating  
4 the new sections in this Act.

5           SECTION 6. New statutory material is underscored.

6           SECTION 7. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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INTRODUCED BY: *Wendell P. Rasmussen* *WR*



# S.B. NO. 493

**Report Title:**

Board of Veterinary Medicine; Veterinarian Workforce Development Special Fund; Scholarships; Loan Repayment; Appropriations

**Description:**

Establishes the Veterinarian Workforce Development Special Fund. Establishes the Veterinarian Workforce Development Fee to support recruitment and retention of veterinarians in the State. Establishes the Veterinarian Workforce Development Loan Repayment and Scholarship Program to support qualified veterinarians committed to or currently working in veterinary medicine in the State. Appropriates funds.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

