

CHAPTER 424-A

MAINE VETERINARY MEDICINE LOAN PROGRAM

§12121. Definitions

As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings. [PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]

1. Authority. "Authority" means the Finance Authority of Maine.
[PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]

2. Chief executive officer. "Chief executive officer" means the Chief Executive Officer of the Finance Authority of Maine.
[PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]

3. Insufficient veterinary services. "Insufficient veterinary services" means an insufficient number of practitioners of veterinary medicine in a veterinary specialty related to livestock or emergency and critical care, as determined by the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.
[PL 2021, c. 725, §1 (AMD).]

4. Maine resident. "Maine resident" means a person who has been a resident of the State for a minimum of 2 years for purposes other than education at the time of the person's entry to a school of veterinary medicine as determined by rule of the authority. In determining residency, the authority shall consider:

- A. Length of residence in the State for other than tuition purposes; [PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]
- B. Secondary school attended; [PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]
- C. Legal residence of parents; [PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]
- D. Place of voting registration, if registered to vote; [PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]
- E. Place where taxes are paid; and [PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]
- F. Other indicators established by the authority. [PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]

[PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]

5. Program. "Program" means the Maine Veterinary Medicine Loan Program established under section 12122.
[PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]

6. Underserved geographic region. "Underserved geographic region" means a geographic region of the State in which there is an insufficient number of practitioners of veterinary medicine, as determined by the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.
[PL 2021, c. 725, §2 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW). PL 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §6 (REV). PL 2021, c. 725, §§1, 2 (AMD).

§12122. Maine Veterinary Medicine Loan Program

1. Establishment. The Maine Veterinary Medicine Loan Program is established. The authority shall administer the program. Beginning January 1, 2011 and until December 31, 2022, the chief executive officer shall, as resources allow, award up to 2 loans annually up to an aggregate of 8.

Beginning January 1, 2023, the chief executive officer shall, as resources allow, award up to 8 loans annually up to an aggregate of 32. At least half, and no fewer than 2, of the annual loans awarded must be awarded to applicants who have demonstrated a likelihood to practice livestock veterinary medicine in the State unless the authority does not receive enough qualified applicants to meet this requirement, in which case the chief executive officer may award the remaining loans to other eligible applicants. Loans are available to Maine residents enrolled in a school of veterinary medicine.

[PL 2021, c. 725, §3 (AMD).]

2. Application process. Application for participation in the program must be made directly to the authority.

[PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]

3. Eligibility. To be eligible to participate in the program, a person must be a Maine resident, be enrolled in a school of veterinary medicine and meet additional eligibility criteria established in rules adopted under section 12124. In selecting recipients, priority must be given to a student who:

A. Previously received a loan pursuant to this section; [PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]

B. Exhibits financial need; and [PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]

C. Demonstrates an interest in practicing in an area of the State with insufficient veterinary services or in an underserved geographic region. [PL 2021, c. 725, §4 (AMD).]

[PL 2021, c. 725, §4 (AMD).]

4. Maximum amount. The maximum loan amount available under the program to each participant is \$35,000 per year for a period of up to 4 years.

[PL 2021, c. 725, §5 (AMD).]

5. Loan agreement; forgiveness. A student selected as a loan recipient shall enter into a loan agreement as set out in this subsection.

A. Upon completion of professional education, the loan recipient shall repay the loan in accordance with this paragraph.

(1) A loan recipient who does not obtain loan forgiveness pursuant to subparagraph (2) shall repay the entire principal of the loan plus simple interest at a rate to be determined by rule of the authority. Interest does not begin to accrue until the loan recipient completes veterinary medical education.

(2) A loan recipient who, upon conclusion of the loan recipient's professional education, including any fellowships, elects to serve as a veterinarian in an area of the State with insufficient veterinary services or in an underserved geographic region is forgiven 25% of the original outstanding indebtedness for each year of that practice. A loan recipient who practices in an area of the State with insufficient veterinary services or in an underserved geographic region less than full time may receive prorated loan forgiveness. A loan recipient who is not practicing in an underserved geographic region and who devotes less than 50% of the recipient's practice to the care of livestock or to emergency and critical care may receive prorated loan forgiveness.

(3) A loan recipient must make a commitment to undertake specific training, including clinical experiences in livestock medicine or emergency and critical care medicine. [PL 2021, c. 725, §§6, 7 (AMD).]

B. Loans must be repaid over a term no longer than 10 years, except that the chief executive officer may extend an individual's term as necessary to ensure repayment of the loan. Repayment must commence within 6 months of when the loan recipient completes, withdraws from or otherwise fails to continue veterinary medical education. [PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]

C. A veterinarian requesting forgiveness under this section shall report annually to the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry on the portion of the veterinarian's practice dedicated to livestock or emergency and critical care, the location of the veterinarian's practice and the geographic region served by the veterinarian's practice. [PL 2021, c. 725, §8 (AMD).]

[PL 2021, c. 725, §§6-8 (AMD).]

6. Default. A loan recipient under the program who agrees to practice in an area of the State with insufficient veterinary services or in an underserved geographic region and who fails to complete the period of service required to pay off the loan is liable to the authority for an amount equal to the sum of the total amount paid by or on behalf of the authority to or on behalf of the recipient under the agreement plus interest at a rate determined by the authority. Credit for practicing in an area with insufficient veterinary services or in an underserved geographic region is awarded for each consecutive 12-month period served. Exceptions may be made by the authority in accordance with subsection 7.

[PL 2021, c. 725, §9 (AMD).]

7. Deferments. Deferments on the repayment of a loan under the program may be granted for causes established by rule of the authority. Interest at a rate to be determined by rule of the authority must be assessed during the deferment. The loan recipient's total debt to the authority, including principal and interest, must be repaid either through return service or cash payments. The chief executive officer shall make determinations of deferment on a case-by-case basis. The decision of the chief executive officer is final.

[PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW). PL 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §5 (REV). PL 2021, c. 725, §§3-9 (AMD).

§12123. Selection committee for students of veterinary medicine

The chief executive officer shall annually convene a selection committee of not fewer than 3 members to advise the authority in developing application materials designed to identify students likely to practice livestock veterinary medicine, emergency and critical care veterinary medicine or in an underserved geographic region in the State and to make recommendations to the authority regarding the priority of applicants for loans to students of veterinary medicine. The selection committee must include the state veterinarian and a representative of a statewide association of veterinarians. [PL 2021, c. 725, §10 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW). PL 2021, c. 725, §10 (AMD).

§12124. Rules

The authority shall establish rules necessary to implement this chapter. The Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry shall adopt rules to establish criteria for determining areas of insufficient veterinary services for livestock or emergency and critical care, definitions of "livestock" and "emergency and critical care," criteria for determining underserved geographic regions and a method for determining the percentage of a practice that is devoted to livestock or emergency and critical care. In establishing criteria for determining areas of insufficient veterinary services for emergency and critical care and criteria for determining underserved geographic regions, the commissioner shall give priority consideration to regions within Aroostook County, Oxford County, Penobscot County, Piscataquis County, Somerset County and Washington County. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A. [PL 2021, c. 725, §11 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2009, c. 488, §14 (NEW). PL 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §6 (REV). PL 2021, c. 725, §11 (AMD).

§12125. Report by the Finance Authority of Maine

1. Report. The authority shall include in its annual report under Title 10, section 974, subsection 1 the following information regarding the program:

- A. The number of applications received each year; [PL 2021, c. 725, §12 (NEW).]
- B. The number of loans awarded each year; [PL 2021, c. 725, §12 (NEW).]
- C. The total amount disbursed through the program; [PL 2021, c. 725, §12 (NEW).]
- D. The total amount of loan forgiveness awarded through the program; [PL 2021, c. 725, §12 (NEW).]
- E. The total number of veterinary students assisted by loans through the program; [PL 2021, c. 725, §12 (NEW).]
- F. The total number of veterinarians awarded loan forgiveness through the program; [PL 2021, c. 725, §12 (NEW).]
- G. The number of current program participants working in a veterinary specialty related to livestock; [PL 2021, c. 725, §12 (NEW).]
- H. The number of current program participants working in a veterinary specialty related to emergency and critical care; [PL 2021, c. 725, §12 (NEW).]
- I. The number of current program participants working in an underserved geographic region; and [PL 2021, c. 725, §12 (NEW).]
- J. The location of each current program participant's veterinary practice. [PL 2021, c. 725, §12 (NEW).]

[PL 2021, c. 725, §12 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2021, c. 725, §12 (NEW).

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