

By: Darby, Raney, González of El Paso,  
Stucky, Rogers, et al.

H.B. No. 2026

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the Rural Veterinarian Incentive Program.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Sections 56.101(2) and (7), Education Code, are amended to read as follows:

(2) "College" means a college of veterinary medicine ~~[located in this state and]~~ accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education.

(7) "Rural county" means a county in this state with a population of less than 150,000 ~~[100,000]~~.

SECTION 2. Section 56.103(d), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(d) The committee shall adopt rules:

(1) establishing criteria to determine whether a person is an eligible participant as the committee considers reasonable, including the person's:

(A) background and interest in rural practice;  
and

(B) financial need;

(2) providing for requesting the distribution of money from the account for the program;

(3) establishing the criteria necessary for a community or political subdivision in a rural county to qualify as a student sponsor under Section 56.105;

1 (4) governing agreements of financial support between  
2 a rural sponsor and an eligible student;

3 (5) establishing preferential treatment in the  
4 selection process for applicants who:

5 (A) are residents of this state;

6 (B) graduated from a high school located in this  
7 state or general academic teaching institution located in this  
8 state; or

9 (C) graduated from an accredited college of  
10 veterinary medicine in this state; and

11 (6) [~~(5)~~] establishing other procedures necessary to  
12 administer the program.

13 SECTION 3. Section 56.104, Education Code, is amended to  
14 read as follows:

15 Sec. 56.104. ELIGIBLE VETERINARY STUDENT OR GRADUATE. A  
16 ~~[(a) Except as provided by Subsection (b), a]~~ person is eligible to  
17 participate in the program only if the person:

18 (1) is enrolled as a student of a ~~[the]~~ college or  
19 applies to participate in the program on or before the fourth  
20 anniversary of the date the person graduates from a ~~[the]~~ college;

21 (2) will receive or has received from a student loan at  
22 least 50 percent of the funds for tuition and fees for one or more  
23 academic years while enrolled in the college; and

24 (3) meets any additional qualifications adopted by the  
25 committee.

26 ~~[(b) A person enrolled as a student in an accredited college~~  
27 ~~of veterinary medicine located outside of this state may apply~~

1 ~~under Subsection (a) to participate in the program if the student~~  
2 ~~graduated from a high school located in this state or a general~~  
3 ~~academic teaching institution located in this state.]~~

4 SECTION 4. Section 56.105(b), Education Code, is amended to  
5 read as follows:

6 (b) To participate as a sponsor in the program, the  
7 community or political subdivision must enter into an agreement  
8 with the eligible participant to provide financial support to the  
9 eligible participant in an amount not less than the tuition and fees  
10 required for a full academic year for a student enrolled in a ~~the~~  
11 college in exchange for the eligible participant's agreement to  
12 practice veterinary medicine in the sponsoring community or  
13 political subdivision.

14 SECTION 5. Sections 56.106(a) and (b), Education Code, are  
15 amended to read as follows:

16 (a) To participate in the program, an eligible participant  
17 must enter into an agreement with the Texas Higher Education  
18 Coordinating Board ~~[university system]~~ that:

19 (1) requires the participant to practice veterinary  
20 medicine in a rural county for one calendar year for each academic  
21 year for which the participant receives financial support under the  
22 program;

23 (2) specifies the conditions the participant must  
24 satisfy to receive financial support under the program;

25 (3) provides that any financial support the  
26 participant receives under the program constitutes a loan until the  
27 participant satisfies the conditions of the agreement; and

1           (4) requires the participant to sign a promissory note  
2 acknowledging the conditional nature of the financial support  
3 received under the program and promising to repay the amount of the  
4 financial support, any applicable interest, and reasonable  
5 collection costs if the participant does not satisfy the conditions  
6 of the agreement.

7           (b) The financial support received by an eligible  
8 participant under this subchapter must be used to retire student  
9 loan debt or to pay tuition and fees to a college [~~the university~~  
10 ~~system~~] while the eligible participant is enrolled in the college.

11           SECTION 6. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
12 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
13 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
14 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
15 Act takes effect September 1, 2023.