

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

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 student loan repayment for  
3 veterinarians who practice shelter medicine and veterinarians who practice in nonprofit pet  
4 sterilization clinics; to create the State Veterinary Education Board for Shelter Medicine and  
5 Pet Sterilization; to provide for definitions; to provide requirements for participation in the  
6 loan repayment program; to provide for maximum total and annual repayment amounts; to  
7 provide for terms for repayment agreements; to provide for rules and regulations; to provide  
8 for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

10 **SECTION 1.**

11 Article 7 of Chapter 3 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to  
12 scholarships, loans, and grants, is amended by adding a new part to read as follows:

13 "Part 6B

14 20-3-518.8.

15 (a) As used in this part, the term:

16 (1) 'Animal shelter' means any facility operated by or under contract for the state or any  
17 county, municipal corporation, or political subdivision of the state or by a nonprofit  
18 organization for the purpose of impounding or harboring seized, stray, homeless,  
19 abandoned, or unwanted dogs, cats, or other animals.

20 (2) 'Board' means the State Veterinary Education Board for Shelter Medicine and Pet  
21 Sterilization created under Code Section 20-3-518.9.

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

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

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

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

30 (7) 'Veterinary facility' shall have the same meaning as provided in Code Section  
31 43-50-3.

32 20-3-518.9.

33 (a) There shall be a State Veterinary Education Board for Shelter Medicine and Pet  
34 Sterilization which shall consist of:

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

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

38 (3) The chairperson of the Department of Small Animal Medicine and Surgery of the  
39 College of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Georgia or his or her designee;

40 (4) A person employed as an executive director or equivalent of an animal shelter, or a  
41 nonprofit pet sterilization clinic, to be appointed by the Governor, who shall serve for a  
42 term of four years and until his or her successor is qualified and appointed. The term of  
43 the initial member appointed under this paragraph shall commence on July 1, 2025; and

44 (5) A veterinarian employed full time in the practice of high-quality, high-volume pet  
45 sterilization services in this state to be appointed by the State Board of Veterinary  
46 Medicine, who shall serve for a term of four years and until his or her successor is  
47 qualified and appointed. The term of the initial member appointed under this paragraph  
48 shall commence on July 1, 2025.

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

51 (c) The board shall elect annually a chairperson and a vice chairperson to serve in the  
52 absence or inability of the chairperson. The board shall meet at least once each year at  
53 such time and place as may be fixed by the board. Special meetings shall be held upon the  
54 call of the chairperson. Three members of the board shall constitute a quorum for the  
55 transaction of business. No official action shall be taken by the board except upon the  
56 affirmative vote of at least three members of the board.

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

59 20-3-518.10.

60 (a) The board may provide for the purchase of loans made to students for educational  
61 purposes who have completed a program of study in the field of doctor of veterinary  
62 medicine or its equivalent and are authorized to practice veterinary medicine in this state  
63 and are residents of this state, with services in the form of the practice of veterinary

64 medicine while residing in this state to be rendered as consideration for such loan  
65 purchases.

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

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

70 (d) The board shall give priority to applications from eligible applicants who, at the time  
71 of application, are practicing shelter medicine or who are practicing at a nonprofit pet  
72 sterilization clinic in areas of the state with a high need for such practice areas. The board  
73 shall determine which areas of the state have a high need.

74 (e) For eligible applicants who practice shelter medicine full time, the board shall give  
75 priority to applicants whose practices include predominantly pet sterilization services.

76 20-3-518.11.

77 (a)(1) Subject to appropriations, persons whose applications are approved and enter into  
78 a loan purchase agreement with the board, as provided by Code Section 20-3-518.10,  
79 shall receive a loan purchase in a total amount to be determined by the board, but not  
80 exceeding \$75,000.00 per person. The loan purchases shall be paid in such manner as the  
81 board shall determine.

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

87 (3) For time served after entering into a loan purchase agreement with the board in  
88 practicing his or her profession full time in an animal shelter or nonprofit pet sterilization  
89 clinic, the applicant shall receive a loan purchase at a rate equivalent to \$25,000.00 per

90 12 months of service; provided, however, that the total purchase amount shall not exceed  
91 the maximum specified in paragraph (1) of this subsection.

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

99 20-3-518.12.

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

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

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

112 **SECTION 2.**

113 The provisions of this Act relating to and necessary for the anointment of members to the  
114 State Veterinary Education Board for Shelter Medicine and Pet Sterilization shall become

115 effective upon the approval of this Act by the Governor or upon its becoming law without  
116 such approval; and the remaining provisions of this Act shall otherwise become effective on  
117 July 1, 2025.

118

**SECTION 3.**

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