

# SENATE, No. 3054

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED SEPTEMBER 29, 2022

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator JEAN STANFIELD**

**District 8 (Atlantic, Burlington and Camden)**

**Senator TROY SINGLETON**

**District 7 (Burlington)**

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes loan redemption programs for certain veterinarians practicing in the State.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



1 AN ACT establishing the New Jersey Veterinarians Loan  
2 Redemption Program and supplementing chapter 71C of Title  
3 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

4  
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*  
6 *of New Jersey:*

7  
8 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “New Jersey  
9 Veterinarian Loan Redemption Act.”

10  
11 2. The Legislature finds and declares that:

12 a. Veterinarians play a critical role in society as they are  
13 educated and trained to protect the health and welfare needs of  
14 every species of animal.

15 b. In addition to caring for the needs of all animals,  
16 veterinarians also contribute significantly to the fields of  
17 environmental protection, research, food safety, and public health.

18 c. The need for veterinary medicine services in the State and  
19 across the country is increasing, with national data showing that the  
20 number of appointments for veterinarians has grown since 2019.

21 d. The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges  
22 has previously predicted a shortage of 15,000 veterinarians across  
23 the country by 2026.

24 e. While there is a need to provide a more adequate level of  
25 veterinary care across New Jersey, the State remains an attractive  
26 location in which to practice as it provides the fifth-highest annual  
27 mean wage for veterinarians, according to the United States Bureau  
28 of Labor Statistics.

29 f. In response to the increased demand for veterinarians and  
30 workforce shortages, Rowan University is establishing a new  
31 School of Veterinary Medicine that will offer New Jersey’s first  
32 Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree, as well as graduate and  
33 undergraduate degrees, accelerated and dual M.S., M.B.A. and  
34 Ph.D. degree programs, an A.S. to B.S. degree pathway, and  
35 internship and residency opportunities.

36 g. The School of Veterinary Medicine will aid efforts to address  
37 the need for veterinarians in the State as many graduates of the  
38 school choose to work and establish practices in New Jersey.

39 h. It is fitting and proper that the State implement additional  
40 strategies to attract veterinarians to the State, including the  
41 provision of student loan debt relief to students graduating from  
42 veterinary medicine programs.

43  
44 3. As used in this act:

45 “Authority” means the Higher Education Student Assistance  
46 Authority.

47 “Eligible qualifying loan expenses” means the cumulative  
48 outstanding balance of qualifying student loans, including interest

1 paid or due, covering the cost of attendance at an institution of  
2 higher education for a doctor of veterinary medicine degree  
3 program.

4 “Executive director” means the executive director of the Higher  
5 Education Student Assistance Authority.

6 “Program participant” means a person who contracts with the  
7 authority to participate in the New Jersey’s Own Veterinarians Loan  
8 Redemption Program established pursuant to section 4 of this act  
9 and the New Jersey Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program  
10 established pursuant to section 12 of this act in exchange for the  
11 redemption of eligible qualifying loan expenses.

12 “Qualifying student loan” means a State or federal loan for the  
13 actual costs paid for tuition and reasonable education and living  
14 expenses relating to obtaining a doctor of veterinary medicine  
15 degree.

16 “Total and permanent disability” means a physical or mental  
17 disability that is expected to continue indefinitely or result in death  
18 and renders a program participant unable to perform that person's  
19 employment obligation, as determined by the executive director or  
20 his designee.

21  
22 4. There is established in the Higher Education Student  
23 Assistance Authority the New Jersey’s Own Veterinarians Loan  
24 Redemption Program, the purpose of which is to increase the  
25 number of veterinarians in the State and to encourage those who  
26 graduate from doctor of veterinary medicine degree programs in the  
27 State to work and establish practices in the State.

28  
29 5. a. The New Jersey’s Own Veterinarians Loan Redemption  
30 Program established pursuant to section 4 of this act shall provide  
31 for the redemption of eligible qualifying loan expenses for  
32 individuals graduating with a doctor of veterinary medicine degree  
33 from an institution of higher education in New Jersey. As a  
34 condition of the receipt of loan redemption under this program, a  
35 program participant shall commit to being licensed and practicing  
36 as a veterinarian full-time in the State for one year following  
37 graduation from a doctor of veterinary medicine degree program at  
38 an institution of higher education in the State. Loan redemption  
39 provided under this section shall begin with service completed after  
40 the one year of service required under this subsection.

41 b. (1) The annual amount of loan redemption under the New  
42 Jersey’s Own Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program shall not  
43 exceed \$10,000 of a program participant’s eligible qualifying loan  
44 expenses for each consecutive year of participation in the program,  
45 up to a maximum of five consecutive years. The total amount of  
46 eligible qualifying loan expenses which may be redeemed under the  
47 loan redemption program by a program participant, for five full  
48 years of participation, shall not exceed \$50,000.

1       (2) As a condition of eligibility to participate in the New Jersey's  
2 Own Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program, a program  
3 participant shall commit to being licensed and practicing as a  
4 veterinarian full-time in the State for an equal period of time in  
5 which the participant received loan redemption, following the  
6 completion of the period of time under which a program participant  
7 receives loan redemption. In the event that the program participant  
8 does not satisfactorily fulfill this obligation, the participant shall be  
9 required to repay in full the amount of loan redemption provided to  
10 the program participant, as a debt to the State.

11       c. The New Jersey's Own Veterinarians Loan Redemption  
12 Program that is established pursuant to section 4 of this act shall  
13 first accept applicants beginning January 1 of the year following the  
14 year in which the first class of students graduates from a doctor of  
15 veterinary medicine program at an institution of higher education in  
16 the State. Such students, however, shall be provided the opportunity  
17 to begin applying for the program beginning February 1 of the year  
18 in which they graduate from the doctor of veterinary medicine  
19 program and the authority may accept and approve applications on a  
20 rolling basis prior to January 1 of the year following the year in  
21 which the first class of students graduates from a doctor of  
22 veterinary medicine program at an institution of higher education in  
23 the State. The New Jersey's Own Veterinarians Loan Redemption  
24 Program shall conclude June 30 of the sixth year following the year  
25 in which the first class of students graduate from a doctor of  
26 veterinary medicine program at an institution of higher education in  
27 the State, except that the Governor may continue to renew the  
28 program pursuant to section 11 of this act.

29  
30       6. To be eligible to participate in the New Jersey's Own  
31 Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program, an applicant shall:

32       a. be a resident of the State and maintain residency during  
33 program participation;

34       b. have graduated with a doctor of veterinary medicine degree  
35 from an institution of higher education located in the State;

36       c. have an outstanding balance on a qualifying student loan and  
37 not be in default on any qualifying student loan;

38       d. have been licensed and employed as a veterinarian practicing  
39 full-time in the State for one year following graduation from a  
40 doctor of veterinary medicine degree program at an institution of  
41 higher education located in the State;

42       e. agree to be licensed and employed as a veterinarian practicing  
43 full-time in the State during the period of loan redemption;

44       f. continue to be employed as a veterinarian practicing full-time  
45 in the State for an equal period of time in which the participant  
46 received loan redemption after the completion of the loan  
47 redemption period; and

48       g. satisfy any additional criteria the authority may establish.

1       7. The executive director of the authority or the executive  
2 director's designee shall select program participants from among  
3 those applicants who meet the eligibility criteria established  
4 pursuant to section 6 of this act, subject to the availability of funds  
5 appropriated or otherwise made available for the purposes of the  
6 program.

7  
8       8. A person who meets the eligibility requirements under section  
9 6 of this act and has been selected by the executive director of the  
10 executive director's designee for participation in the New Jersey's  
11 Own Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program shall enter into a  
12 written contract with the authority. The contract shall, at a  
13 minimum, specify the dates of required employment by the program  
14 participant and shall specify the total amount of debt to be  
15 redeemed by the State in return for the number of years of service.

16  
17       9. a. A program participant under the New Jersey's Own  
18 Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program, who has previously  
19 entered into a contract with the authority, may nullify the agreement  
20 by notifying the authority in writing and reassuming full  
21 responsibility for the remaining outstanding balance of the loan  
22 debt. In no event shall employment for less than the full calendar  
23 year entitle the program participant to any benefits under the  
24 program.

25       b. In the case of a program participant's death or total and  
26 permanent disability, the authority shall nullify the employment  
27 obligation of the program participant. The nullification shall  
28 terminate the authority's obligations under the loan redemption  
29 contract. When continued enforcement of the contract may result in  
30 extreme hardship, the authority may nullify or suspend the  
31 employment obligation of the program participant.

32       c. In the case of a program participant's conviction of a crime  
33 or an act of gross negligence in the performance of employment  
34 obligations, the executive director or the executive director's  
35 designee is authorized to terminate the program participant's  
36 participation in the New Jersey's Own Veterinarians Loan  
37 Redemption Program.

38  
39       10. A person who knowingly or willfully furnishes any false or  
40 misleading information for the purpose of receiving loan  
41 redemption benefits under the New Jersey's Own Veterinarians  
42 Loan Redemption Program that is established pursuant to section 4  
43 of this act is guilty of a crime of the fourth degree.

44  
45       11. The Governor, in consultation with the Office of the  
46 Secretary of Higher Education and the New Jersey State Board of  
47 Veterinary Medical Examiners, may continue to renew the New  
48 Jersey's Own Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program until such

1 time as it is deemed that there is a sufficient supply of veterinarians  
2 practicing in the State.

3  
4 12. a. There is established in the Higher Education Student  
5 Assistance Authority the New Jersey Veterinarians Loan  
6 Redemption Program that shall provide for the redemption of  
7 eligible qualifying loan expenses for individuals with a doctor of  
8 veterinary medicine degree from an out-of-State accredited  
9 institution of higher education who meet the eligibility criteria  
10 established pursuant to section 13 of this act.

11 b. (1) The annual amount of loan redemption under the New  
12 Jersey Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program shall not exceed  
13 \$5,000 of a program participant's eligible qualifying loan expenses  
14 for each consecutive year of participation, up to a maximum of five  
15 consecutive years. The total amount of eligible qualifying loan  
16 expenses which may be redeemed under the program by a program  
17 participant, for five full years of participation, shall not exceed  
18 \$25,000.

19 (2) As a condition of eligibility to participate in the New Jersey  
20 Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program, a program participant  
21 shall commit to continuing to practice as a veterinarian full-time in  
22 the State for an equal period of time in which the participant  
23 received loan redemption, following the completion of the period of  
24 time under which a program participant receives loan redemption.  
25 In the event that the program participant does not satisfactorily  
26 fulfill this obligation, the participant shall be required to repay in  
27 full the amount of loan redemption provided to the program  
28 participant, as a debt to the State.

29 c. The New Jersey Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program  
30 shall first accept applicants beginning January 1 of the first year  
31 following the date of enactment of this act. This program shall  
32 cease to accept applicants upon the graduation of the first class of  
33 students from a doctor of veterinary medicine program at an  
34 institution of higher education in the State. The program shall  
35 conclude five years following the acceptance of the last cohort of  
36 program applicants pursuant to this subsection, except that the  
37 Governor may continue to renew the program pursuant to section 18  
38 of this act.

39  
40 13. To be eligible to participate in the New Jersey Veterinarians  
41 Loan Redemption Program that is established pursuant to section 12  
42 of this act, an applicant shall:

43 a. be a resident of the State and maintain residency during  
44 program participation;

45 b. (1) have graduated high school in New Jersey or was a  
46 resident of New Jersey upon graduation from high school;

47 (2) have graduated from an undergraduate degree program at an  
48 institution of higher education in New Jersey; or

1 (3) have graduated high school in New Jersey or was a resident  
2 of New Jersey upon graduation from high school and maintained  
3 residency in the State during the applicant's undergraduate course  
4 of study and during the time in which the applicant attended an  
5 institution of higher education located outside of the State for a  
6 doctor of veterinary medicine program;

7 c. have graduated with a doctor of veterinary medicine degree  
8 from an institution of higher education located outside of the State;

9 d. have an outstanding balance on a qualifying student loan and  
10 not be in default on any qualifying student loan;

11 e. be licensed to practice veterinary medicine in the State and be  
12 currently employed as a veterinarian practicing full-time in the  
13 State;

14 f. agree to be licensed and employed as a veterinarian practicing  
15 full-time in the State during the period of loan redemption;

16 g. continue to be licensed and employed as a veterinarian  
17 practicing full-time in the State for an equal period of time in which  
18 the participant received loan redemption, after the completion of the  
19 loan redemption period; and

20 h. satisfy any additional criteria the authority may establish.

21  
22 14. The executive director of the authority or the executive  
23 director's designee shall select program participants under the New  
24 Jersey Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program from among those  
25 applicants who meet the eligibility criteria established pursuant to  
26 section 13 of this act, subject to the availability of funds  
27 appropriated or otherwise made available for the purposes of the  
28 program.

29  
30 15. A person who meets the eligibility requirements under  
31 section 13 of this act and has been selected by the executive director  
32 of the executive director's designee for participation in the New  
33 Jersey Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program shall enter into a  
34 written contract with the authority. The contract shall specify the  
35 dates of required employment by the program participant and shall  
36 specify the total amount of debt to be redeemed by the State in  
37 return for the number of years of service.

38  
39 16. a. A program participant under the New Jersey  
40 Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program, who has previously  
41 entered into a contract with the authority, may nullify the agreement  
42 by notifying the authority in writing and reassuming full  
43 responsibility for the remaining outstanding balance of the loan  
44 debt. In no event shall employment for less than the full calendar  
45 year entitle the program participant to any benefits under the  
46 program.

47 b. In the case of a program participant's death or total and  
48 permanent disability, the authority shall nullify the employment

1 obligation of the program participant. The nullification shall  
2 terminate the authority's obligations under the loan redemption  
3 contract. When continued enforcement of the contract may result in  
4 extreme hardship, the authority may nullify or suspend the  
5 employment obligation of the program participant.

6 c. In the case of a program participant's conviction of a crime  
7 or an act of gross negligence in the performance of employment  
8 obligations, the executive director or the executive director's  
9 designee is authorized to terminate the program participant's  
10 participation in the New Jersey Veterinarians Loan Redemption  
11 Program.

12  
13 17. A person who knowingly or willfully furnishes any false or  
14 misleading information for the purpose of receiving loan  
15 redemption benefits under the New Jersey Veterinarians Loan  
16 Redemption Program is guilty of a crime of the fourth degree.

17  
18 18. The Governor, in consultation with the Office of the  
19 Secretary of Higher Education and the New Jersey State Board of  
20 Veterinary Medical Examiners, may continue to renew the New  
21 Jersey Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program that is established  
22 pursuant to section 12 of this act until such time as it is deemed that  
23 there is a sufficient supply of veterinarians practicing in the State.

24  
25 19. The authority shall adopt rules and regulations pursuant to  
26 the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et  
27 seq.), necessary to implement the provisions of this act.

28  
29 20. This act shall take effect immediately.

30  
31  
32 STATEMENT

33  
34 This bill establishes two loan redemption programs aimed at  
35 increasing the number of veterinarians practicing in the State,  
36 namely the New Jersey's Own Veterinarians Loan Redemption  
37 Program and the New Jersey Veterinarians Loan Redemption  
38 Program.

39 The New Jersey's Own Loan Redemption Program would  
40 provide for the redemption of eligible qualifying loan expenses for  
41 individuals graduating with a doctor of veterinary medicine degree  
42 from an institution of higher education in New Jersey. As a  
43 condition of the receipt of loan redemption under this loan  
44 redemption program, a program participant is required to commit to  
45 practicing as a veterinarian full-time in the State for one year  
46 following graduation from a doctor of veterinary medicine degree  
47 program at an institution of higher education in the State. Loan  
48 redemption would begin with service completed after the one year



1 of service following graduation. The annual amount of loan  
2 redemption under this loan redemption program would not exceed  
3 \$10,000 of a program participant's eligible qualifying loan expenses  
4 for each consecutive year of participation in the program, up to a  
5 maximum of five consecutive years. The maximum total amount of  
6 loan redemption under this program would be \$50,000.

7 To be eligible to participate in the New Jersey's Own  
8 Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program, an applicant would be  
9 required to:

- 10 • be a resident of the State and maintain residency during  
11 program participation;
- 12 • have graduated with a doctor of veterinary medicine degree  
13 from an institution of higher education located in the State;
- 14 • have an outstanding balance on a qualifying student loan and  
15 not be in default on any qualifying student loan;
- 16 • have been employed as a veterinarian practicing full-time in  
17 the State for one year following graduation from a doctor of  
18 veterinary medicine degree program at an institution of  
19 higher education located in the State;
- 20 • agree to be employed as a veterinarian practicing full-time in  
21 the State during the period of loan redemption; and
- 22 • continue to be employed as a veterinarian practicing full-  
23 time in the State for an equal period of time in which the  
24 participant received loan redemption after the completion of  
25 the loan redemption period.

26 The second program established by the bill, the New Jersey  
27 Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program would provide for an  
28 annual loan redemption amount not to exceed \$5,000 of a program  
29 participant's eligible qualifying loan expenses for each consecutive  
30 year of employment as a veterinarian practicing full-time in the  
31 State, up to a maximum of five consecutive years. The maximum  
32 total amount of loan redemption under this program would be  
33 \$25,000. To be eligible for this loan redemption program, a  
34 participant is required to:

- 35 • be a resident of the State and maintain residency during  
36 program participation;
- 37 • meet any of the following conditions:
  - 38 ○ have graduated high school in New Jersey or was a  
39 resident of New Jersey upon graduation from high  
40 school;
  - 41 ○ have graduated from an undergraduate degree  
42 program at an institution of higher education in New  
43 Jersey; or
  - 44 ○ have graduated high school in New Jersey or was a  
45 resident of New Jersey upon graduation from high  
46 school and maintained residency in the State during  
47 the applicant's undergraduate course of study and  
48 during the time in which the applicant attended an

- 1 institution of higher education located outside of the  
2 State for a doctor of veterinary medicine program;
- 3 • have graduated with a doctor of veterinary medicine degree  
4 from an institution of higher education located outside of the  
5 State;
  - 6 • have an outstanding balance on a qualifying student loan and  
7 not be in default on any qualifying student loan;
  - 8 • be currently employed as a veterinarian practicing full-time  
9 in the State;
  - 10 • agree to be employed as a veterinarian practicing full-time in  
11 the State during the period of loan redemption;
  - 12 • continue to be employed as a veterinarian practicing full-  
13 time in the State for an equal period of time in which the  
14 participant received loan redemption, after the completion of  
15 the loan redemption period.

16 The New Jersey's Own Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program  
17 would first accept applicants beginning January 1 of the year  
18 following the year in which the first class of students graduate from  
19 a doctor of veterinary medicine program at an institution of higher  
20 education in the State. However, these students would be provided  
21 the opportunity to begin applying for the program beginning  
22 February 1 of the year in which they graduate from the doctor of  
23 veterinary medicine program and the Higher Education Student  
24 Assistance Authority may accept and approve applications on a  
25 rolling basis prior to January 1 of the year following the year in  
26 which the first class of students graduates from a doctor of  
27 veterinary medicine program at an institution of higher education in  
28 the State. The program would conclude June 30 of the sixth year  
29 following the year in which the first class of students graduate from  
30 a doctor of veterinary medicine program at an institution of higher  
31 education in the State.

32 The New Jersey Veterinarians Loan Redemption Program would  
33 first accept applicants beginning January 1 of the first year  
34 following the date of enactment. The program would cease to  
35 accept applicants upon the graduation of the first class of students  
36 from a doctor of veterinary medicine program at an institution of  
37 higher education in the State. The program would conclude five  
38 years following the acceptance of the last cohort of applicants.

39 For both programs established under the bill, the Governor, in  
40 consultation with the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education  
41 and the New State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, may  
42 continue to renew the loan redemption programs until such time as  
43 it is deemed that there is a sufficient supply of veterinarians  
44 practicing in the State.