

Introduced by

1 A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 15-10 and a new chapter to
2 title 43 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the professional student exchange
3 program and veterinarian, optometrist, and dentist recruitment grants; to provide for a report to
4 legislative management; to provide for a continuing appropriation; and to provide for application.

5 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

6 **SECTION 1.** A new section to chapter 15-10 of the North Dakota Century Code is created
7 and enacted as follows:

8 **Professional student exchange program - Bank of North Dakota - Agreements -**
9 **Repayment.**

- 10 1. The state board of higher education may not make a payment to an out-of-state
11 institution on behalf of an individual participating in a professional student exchange
12 program in veterinary medicine, dentistry, or optometry unless that individual signed a
13 legally binding agreement with the state board of higher education which identifies the
14 amount of the award under the professional student exchange program.
- 15 2. If the individual who signed the agreement under subsection 1 is not practicing
16 veterinary medicine, dentistry, or optometry in this state within thirty-six months
17 following graduation or of leaving the education program, the individual shall repay the
18 award amount in full at that time. The proceeds of the repayment must be deposited in
19 the veterinarian, optometrist, and dentist recruitment fund. The state board of higher
20 education shall identify whether the repayment funds were from an individual enrolled
21 in a veterinary medicine, dentistry, or optometry program.
- 22 3. If the individual who signed the agreement under subsection 1 practices veterinary
23 medicine, dentistry, or optometry in this state within thirty-six months following
24 graduation, the state board of higher education shall reduce the amount of the award

1 by one-third for each full year the individual continues practicing in the state. If the
2 individual discontinues practicing in this state before the award amount is waived in its
3 entirety, the individual shall repay the remaining portion of the award.

4 4. If the individual who signed the agreement under subsection 1 departs before
5 graduation from a program in dentistry or optometry, that individual shall repay the
6 amount of the award in full at the time of departure.

7 5. The Bank of North Dakota shall allow an individual who is required to repay an award
8 under this section to obtain a loan from one of the Bank's student loan programs to
9 provide the funds needed for repayment, up to the amount certified by the state board
10 of higher education. To qualify under this subsection, the individual must meet student
11 loan credit criteria as established by the Bank.

12 6. The state board of higher education shall defer any repayment of an award amount
13 otherwise due under this section for the period of time the individual who signed the
14 agreement is pursuing full-time graduate or postdoctoral studies or is called to active
15 duty as a member of the armed forces. The repayment provisions under an agreement
16 signed under this section must provide for cancellation of the repayment requirements
17 if the individual dies or becomes permanently or totally disabled.

18 7. The state board of higher education shall adopt policies and procedures implementing
19 this section.

20 **SECTION 2.** A new chapter to title 43 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and
21 enacted as follows:

22 **Veterinarian, optometrist, and dentist recruitment grant program - Maximum amount**
23 **of funds.**

24 Each year the state health council shall select qualified applicants to participate in a
25 recruitment grant program, as provided for in this chapter. An applicant must be a veterinarian,
26 optometrist, or dentist and must agree to provide veterinary, optometry, or dental services to
27 communities in this state. An optometrist or dentist selected shall agree to accept medical
28 assistance patients and assignments or provide services in a public health clinic, a practice with
29 a focus on an underserved population, or a nonprofit clinic. An applicant selected is eligible to
30 receive up to fifty thousand dollars in recruitment grant funds payable over a three-year period,
31 including twenty-five thousand dollars the first year and twelve thousand five hundred dollars

1 each year thereafter. The number of applicants the council may select for participation in the
2 recruitment grant program is limited to the extent funds are available to support the program, as
3 provided in this chapter.

4 **Veterinarian, optometrist, and dentist recruitment grant program - Powers and duties**
5 **of state health council.**

6 The state health council shall administer the veterinarian, optometrist, and dentist
7 recruitment grant program and may:

- 8 1. Determine the eligibility and qualifications of an applicant for grant funds under this
9 chapter;
- 10 2. Identify communities in need of a veterinarian, optometrist, or dentist and establish a
11 priority ranking for participation in the program by the selected communities;
- 12 3. Enter a nonrenewable contract with the selected applicant and the selected
13 community to provide to the applicant funds for the grant in exchange for the applicant
14 agreeing to actively practice in the selected community; and
- 15 4. Cooperate with the department of health and human services to effectuate this
16 chapter.

17 **Criteria.**

- 18 1. The health council shall establish criteria to be used in selecting qualified
19 veterinarians, optometrists, and dentists and in identifying communities that have a
20 defined need for veterinary, optometry, and dental services. The criteria must include
21 consideration of:
 - 22 a. The number of veterinarians, optometrists, or dentists providing services in the
23 community;
 - 24 b. Access to veterinary, optometry, or dental services in the community;
 - 25 c. The optometrist's or dentist's plan to provide services to individuals on medical
26 assistance or in a public health clinic, a practice with a focus on an underserved
27 population, or a nonprofit clinic; and
 - 28 d. A veterinarian's training in food animal veterinary medicine and ability and
29 willingness to engage in food animal veterinary medicine, and the extent to which
30 such services are needed in a selected community.

1 2. A qualified applicant may not have participated in the professional student exchange
2 program administered by the state board of higher education, except as provided in
3 subsection 3.

4 3. An applicant may be qualified if the applicant repaid the professional student
5 exchange program award pursuant to section 1 of this Act.

6 4. A qualified applicant may not have provided services in this state for more than six
7 months before applying for the program under this chapter.

8 5. The state health council shall give priority for participation to a community that
9 demonstrates a need for a veterinarian, optometrist, or dentist.

10 6. In evaluating communities for participation in this program, the state health council
11 may consult with public and private entities and visit the communities.

12 **Contract obligation.**

13 The state health council shall enter a contract with a selected veterinarian, optometrist, or
14 dentist. The contract must provide the state health council agrees to make payments of
15 recruitment grant funds to the selected veterinarian, optometrist, or dentist, subject to the
16 veterinarian, optometrist, or dentist meeting the requirements and limitations established by the
17 state health council under this chapter.

18 **Payment - Termination.**

19 1. The state health council may not provide any recruitment grant funds to a veterinarian,
20 optometrist, or dentist under this chapter until the selected applicant has practiced at
21 least twelve months on a full-time basis in the community the state health council
22 identified as having a defined need for services.

23 2. Except as otherwise provided, the state health council shall make payments under this
24 chapter at the conclusion of each of the three twelve-month periods of service during
25 which the veterinarian, optometrist, or dentist met the qualifying terms of the contract.

26 3. Payments under this chapter terminate upon the earlier of completion of three years
27 as a participant in this recruitment grant program or failure of the veterinarian,
28 optometrist, or dentist to meet the qualifying terms under the contract.

1 **Veterinarian, optometrist, and dentist recruitment fund - Creation - Continuing**
2 **appropriation.**

3 There is created in the state treasury the veterinarian, optometrist, and dentist recruitment
4 fund. The veterinarian, optometrist, and dentist recruitment fund consists of moneys deposited
5 in the fund pursuant to section 1 of this Act. Moneys in the fund are appropriated to the state
6 health council on a continuing basis for the purpose of providing veterinarian, optometrist, and
7 dentist recruitment grants under this chapter. The state health council shall allocate:

- 8 1. Funds repaid by an individual enrolled in a veterinary medicine program to recruitment
9 grants for veterinarians;
- 10 2. Funds repaid by an individual enrolled in an optometry program to recruitment grants
11 for optometrists; and
- 12 3. Funds repaid by an individual enrolled in a dentistry program to recruitment grants for
13 dentists.

14 **Veterinarian, optometrist, and dentist recruitment grants - Report to legislative**
15 **management.**

16 The state health council shall report to the legislative management before October first of
17 each even-numbered year regarding the veterinarian, optometrist, and dentist recruitment
18 grants program, including the number of recipients by occupation, the amount awarded by
19 occupation, and the community in which each recipient of a grant awarded under this chapter is
20 located.

21 **SECTION 3. APPLICATION.** Section 1 of this Act applies to individuals initially entering a
22 professional student exchange program in veterinary medicine, optometry, or dentistry after
23 June 30, 2024.