



Senate Committee on Universities & Technical Colleges

2025 Senate Bill 501

Creating a veterinary loan repayment grant program administered by the Higher Educational Aids Board

October 15, 2025

Chair Hutton and Members of the Senate Committee on Universities & Technical Colleges:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today in support of Senate Bill 501, related to the creation of a veterinary loan repayment grant program administered by the Wisconsin Higher Education Aids Board (HEAB).

The University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine (SVM) is the only school of veterinary medicine in the State of Wisconsin. After its creation by an act of the Wisconsin State Legislature in 1979, the school opened in 1983 and quickly earned a reputation as one of the leading schools of veterinary medicine in America. The school includes a veterinary medical teaching hospital, UW Veterinary Care; cutting-edge technology; and high-quality lab and classroom spaces for teaching and research. In 2024, UW Veterinary Care saw nearly 29,000 patient visits.

The UW School of Veterinary Medicine provides outstanding programs in veterinary medical education, research, clinical practice, and service that enhance the health and welfare of both animals and people and contribute to the economic well-being of the State of Wisconsin. Faculty and staff in the school's four academic departments train students in a four-year program leading to the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degree. SVM was ranked #5 in the nation in 2024. The school ranked #1 of any veterinary school or programs in active patents and most patents per faculty member from research. Research at SVM includes a total of \$46.3 million in research funding and the most in communicable disease research on the UW-Madison campus.

The current first year SVM class represents 100 students; 2/3 of these students are Wisconsin residents. While it varies by year, of the 96 SVM graduates, a little over half of all SVM graduates stay in-state to practice after graduation. As the only school of veterinary medicine in the state, SVM takes seriously its mission and obligation to educate and train the next generation of veterinarians to serve communities across Wisconsin. As part of that commitment, SVM



distributed \$2.9 million in student financial aid and scholarship support to DVM students last year. Since 2010, the SVM Food Animal Veterinary Medical Scholars (FAVMedS) program has helped to cultivate the next generation of food animal veterinarians. FAVMedS facilitates the mentorship of promising undergraduate students from across the Universities of Wisconsin who show an interest and qualifications in the field. 83% of program participants have pursued a career in food animal practice across Wisconsin.

Wisconsin is experiencing a shortage of large animal veterinarians, particularly in rural and agricultural communities. This shortage poses risks to animal health, food safety, and the economic stability of the state's agricultural sector. Addressing this shortage will take a multi-pronged approach, which could include the creation of loan repayment or tuition reimbursement, incentives for rural practice, support of additional funding for clinical training, and the exploration of licensing innovations. UW-Madison supports efforts by policymakers to incentivize rural practice through student loan repayment provisions like the one in Senate Bill 501.

UW-Madison thanks the authors, Senator Cabral-Guevara and Representatives Kitchens and Tranel, for their interest and commitment to the success of Wisconsin's future veterinarians. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 501. If you have questions, please reach out to Crystal Potts or Mitch Goettl (crystal.potts@wisc.edu; goettl@wisc.edu).