

House Bill 1388 Testimony - FAV

Dear Members of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to express my **unequivocal support for House Bill 1388**, an important piece of legislation that addresses the critical issue of noncompete and conflict of interest clauses in employment contracts for veterinary and health care professionals. As a veterinary internal medicine specialist with a deep commitment to the well-being of animals and their owners, I have personally witnessed the profound negative impact that such restrictive clauses can have on both individuals and the broader community.

The emotional trauma and mental health toll inflicted by noncompete clauses are not theoretical concepts; they are real and tangible consequences faced by both veterinary professionals and the pet-owning community. I have experienced first-hand the heartbreaking scenarios where pet owners, desperate for specialized care, were left in a state of helplessness because of the limited availability of veterinary specialists due to noncompete restrictions.

One particularly distressing incident involved me receiving a tearful voicemail from a pet owner who could not find an internist for their ailing pet, resulting in a steady decline in the animal's health. Due to the constraints imposed by noncompete agreements, I found myself unable to respond and provide assistance, leaving the owner (and their pet) in distress. Additionally, I received desperate messages on social media from pet owners who, in their time of need, reached out to me for guidance because no other specialist was available to help them.

The detrimental effects extend beyond emotional distress, impacting the lives of animals as well. Reports surfaced of animals declining on waiting lists, with some sadly succumbing to their ailments due to the scarcity of available specialists. Primary care veterinarians were overwhelmed with complex cases for which they had no local specialists to refer, which resulted in backlogs of cases and increased stress to the local healthcare system. This almost certainly caused even further animal morbidity and mortality.

In my own experience, the limitations imposed by noncompete clauses compelled me to work outside my state, contributing to a broader economic detriment. As the closest facility within my specialty was located outside the state borders, I found myself traveling extensively, resulting in a loss for the local economy and a disruption in the continuity of care for the community I served.

House Bill 1388, by declaring certain noncompete and conflict of interest provisions as null and void, recognizes the importance of prioritizing public policy over restrictive contractual arrangements. This legislation is not just a legal reform; it is a compassionate response to the cries of distressed pet owners and the well-being of the animals under our care.

I urge you to wholeheartedly support House Bill 1388, ensuring its passage for the greater good of our communities, the welfare of animals, and the prosperity of the state.

Sincerely,

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