



**2024 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: SB 235 – Prescription Drug Monitoring Program – Dispensers – Veterinarians
COMMITTEE: Senate Finance Committee
POSITION: Letter of Support
BILL ANALYSIS: SB 235 alters the definition of “dispenser” for purposes of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program to include certain licensed veterinarians when dispensing controlled substances in the usual course of providing professional services.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) is in support of SB 235. This bill closes an important loophole in the state’s reporting mechanisms to the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program. Currently, veterinarians who dispense opioids and other controlled substances to pet owners for the treatment of their animals are not required to report these transactions. This omission in PDMP requirements sets up several scenarios that can lead to the diversion of opioids and other controlled substances into our communities.

A 2018 study published in the American Journal of Public Health¹ found that:

- 13% of surveyed veterinarians were aware that an **animal owner had intentionally made an animal ill, injured an animal, or made an animal seem ill or injured to obtain opioid medications**
- 44% were aware of **opioid abuse or misuse by either a client or a veterinary practice staff member**
- 12% were aware of **veterinary staff opioid abuse and diversion**

The knowledge that certain people willfully injure animals to obtain narcotics because they know that this is an avenue to obtain drugs they cannot get elsewhere should be sufficient reason to require greater accountability of opioid dispensing at veterinarian offices. SB 235 will also prevent pet owners from going to multiple practices to obtain large quantities of controlled substances. New PDMP reporting requirements will also provide greater external oversight of the volume of controlled substances being issued from each veterinary practice. This may help identify situations where staff are inappropriately diverting dangerous medications.

SB 235 brings veterinary practices into alignment with pharmacies that dispense controlled substances. With more than 100,000 Americans continuing to die each year as the result of drug overdoses, we need to continue to look for ways to limit diversion of prescription opioids into our communities. SB 235 will protect public health and reduce harm to animals.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this letter of support for SB 235. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*

¹<https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2018.304603>