



March 27, 2024

Senator Pam Beidle, Chairperson  
Senate Finance Committee  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Favorable  
HB1388/SB1182  
Labor and Employment– Noncompete and Conflict of Interest Clauses– Veterinary and Health  
Care Professionals

Dear Senator Beidle and Senate Finance Committee Members,

I am the Agriculture Business Development Director for the Anne Arundel Economic Development Corporation, a quasi-governmental organization in Anne Arundel County with the mission to support businesses and serve as a catalyst for business growth to increase jobs, expand the tax base, and improve quality of life. I speak in support of House Bill 1388 for both my department and County Executive Steuart Pittman.

Agriculture is Maryland's largest commercial industry, contributing over 8 billion dollars annually to the economy. There are over 94,000 horses in Maryland with a 2.9-billion-dollar economic impact. 1.24-billion dollars goes to 28,434 industry job wages, with 1.77-billion contributing to value added, and 982-million dollars is spent by participants and spectators on equine tourism. Nearly 5,000 horses and only six equine veterinarians reside within Anne Arundel County. Two of those vets are banned from practicing within the county due to non-competes. One of those two is the only Board-Certified surgeon that accepted surgical cases in Maryland after hours. The removal of accessibility to these vet's services forces owners to transport sick or injured horses out of the radius. In the case of emergencies, the closest surgical centers are in Leesburg, Virginia and New Bolton, Pennsylvania. Services that previously could be provided by a visit to your farm or a short trailer ride to the equine hospital now are forcing your constituents to travel unnecessarily far distances to have access to their medical care. This adds unnecessary stress to the animal and the delay in treatment jeopardizes successful outcomes.

Sasha Hill, an aspiring equine veterinarian has submitted written testimony to you on the inability for her to gain field experience due to a non-compete. Ms. Hill previously would travel with Dr. Brittany Williamson to gain hands-on experience in the equine medicine field. Dr. Williamson is one of the veterinarian's held to a non-compete. Veterinary students are unable to schedule long distance drives to meet veterinarians that cannot practice in their home area and continue to thrive in their educational schedules. Ready access to field education is pertinent to develop skills that cannot be taught in the classroom. A national shortage of 15,000 veterinarians

is expected by 2025. Only 1.5% of veterinary students graduate and enter equine medicine. 50% of those leave their path within 5 years. The allowance of non-competes prevent our youth from obtaining experience and education. Maryland agriculture needs vets, not non-competes.

The question has been posed on the viability of current businesses should this bill pass. Those same businesses offer that the solution to inaccessibility is to buy out the non-compete. Further demonstrating that veterinary non-competes are for profits, not animal welfare. Those businesses will still exist should their business models and standard of care meet owner and animal welfare expectations of Do No Harm.

In addition, the Maryland Hospital Association argues the loss of non-compete contracts will cause a shortage in doctors for rural areas. The only shortage caused by non-competes is access to medical care professionals by the public. If a doctor or veterinarian must leave a practice for hostile workplace or uphold Do No Harm oaths, non-competes effectively remove them from the radius surrounding that practice. Non-competes are the only factor causing doctor shortage and patient access to health care. Non-competes are against the public health interest.

Non-competes bind unknowing third parties to the contract: the animal, the owner, and the student. This cost is transferred to the health of the animals that Maryland's agriculture relies on. We ask that the Senate Finance Committee give this bill a favorable vote for the good of the public, the agriculture of Maryland, the furtherance of education and most importantly: the animals. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Shelley Garrett*

Shelley Garrett  
Agriculture Business Development Director  
Anne Arundel Economic Development Corporation