

Respected Delegate,

Please support HB 1388 to prohibit non-compete agreements in health care and veterinary professions.

I am a Maryland horse owner that is being harmed by the use of non-compete agreements in veterinary employment contracts. I have two horses who've suffered through more than their share of health and performance issues. For the past 4+ years, I've built a relationship with two local vets, Dr. Caniglia and Dr. Williamson, who were a godsend.

They brought to our boarding barn a level of specialty care we'd never had outside a teaching hospital. Using cutting edge treatments, they kept my older horse feeling good well into his late teenage years, and literally saved his life when he came down with a massive infection. More recently, Dr. Caniglia discovered a cancerous mass in my younger horse's intestine and developed a technique for removing it using a scope and a wire snare passed all the way through the horse's stomach. Over the years, I felt so grateful to have such extraordinary health care for my animals. I feel equally sad to have these doctors ripped away from me, especially when I'm right in the middle of a very complicated medical case.

This past September, I was riding my horse Tissot when, out of the blue, he began staggering and shaking. I jumped off and called Dr. Caniglia as I watched my horse struggle to walk. Dr. Caniglia was there in 15 minutes and determined that Tissot had something wrong with his heart... he was in atrial fibrillation. While the horse did quickly stabilize, his career would be over unless we could get his heart to convert back to normal. Dr. Caniglia consulted with a cardiologist and over the next few weeks, we can up with a treatment plan to hopefully get Tissot back to normal through medical intervention. In the middle of all this fear and uncertainty, BAM, I learn that my trusted vets have to leave the practice and can longer care for my animals due to a non-compete clause. I was devastated and felt like the rug was completely pulled out from under me.

To deal with the ongoing heart issue, I was now required to transport the horse up to Pennsylvania, several hours away, for treatment. I do not have a horse trailer, so not only would I have to take off work for the day, I would have to have my barn manager also take off work and drive me, which only adds hundreds of more dollars to the expense.

My horse's successfully converted, but now I no longer had my trusted vet, who knew the horse and knew his history, to help me navigate through the healing process. Continuity of care was shattered. Finding a local vet just to get *routine* care is getting harder and harder. Appointments are no longer available within the week. And anytime you make an appointment, it comes with a warning that the vet is also on call for emergencies and might need to reschedule.

In my case, as part of Tissot's aftercare, I had to have a vet attach a 24-hour heart monitor which got scheduled and rescheduled. Because the vet I had out had never done this

before, the monitor came off overnight requiring yet *another* exhausting trip up to the Pennsylvania hospital, the last thing you want to do when you have a sick animal. Having my trusted veterinarians unable to treat my horses, after years of dedicated service, is simply unbearable. To me, it means additional time, worry, stress and money. But worst of all, it's the horses who suffer.

It is my right and responsibility to choose who cares for my animals. The doctor-patient relationship is exactly that, a relationship between me and the veterinarian of my choosing. The use of a non-compete clause by a practice or business forces me into a contract that I did not even know about and has a significantly negative impact on animal welfare in the area.

Please consider the following facts:

1. The veterinary shortage is well-known and documented. The AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association) acknowledges shortages of veterinarians in rural America, food animal, equine, academia, shelters, emergency practices, specialties, and public health areas. The AAEP (American Association of Equine Practitioners) data shows that only 1.3% of graduating veterinarians go into equine practice, 50% of those individuals leave the profession within 5 years, either switching to small animal practice or quitting veterinary medicine altogether. The Mars Veterinary Health Study (2022) predicts a shortage of over 15,000 veterinarians by 2030.
2. Several states have recognized that non-competes violate the sanctity of the doctor-patient relationship similar to how to the American Bar Association prohibits non-compete agreements because they violate the attorney-client relationship. California, Oklahoma, North Dakota have banned non-compete agreements across professions. Connecticut, Florida, Indiana have specifically banned non-compete clauses for physicians, and Maine has banned non-compete clauses for veterinarians.

Thank you for your service to our community, for hearing my concerns, and, ultimately, for supporting the elimination of non-compete agreements in the veterinary profession (HB 1388).

Sincerely,

Lorraine DiRienzo