

I am writing today to support the enactment of House Bill 1388 (“HB 1388”). My name is Andrew Vaziri and I am the owner of Vaziri Sport Horses LLC, an equestrian business which operates in Anne Arundel county. The enforcement of a large animal veterinary non-compete agreement has come to negatively impact my ability to do business and because I am aware that many other Maryland equestrian businesses are also struggling under this same impediment, I feel compelled to reach out to support the enactment of HB 1388 as a public policy necessity for horse owners like myself operating in Maryland as well as the other Maryland residents and industries impacted by veterinary and medical professional non-compete agreements.

For my business, a veterinary non-compete agreement is making it nearly impossible to get my customers’ horses the veterinary care they need. I own and run a horse training and sales business located in Davidsonville. When I relocated my business to Anne Arundel County, a huge consideration was having direct access to the veterinarians of my choosing. I began using Dr. CJ Caniglia and his wife Dr. Brittany Williamson prior to either of them joining Wolf Creek Equine and followed them to Wolf Creek when they accepted positions there. I trust their clinical judgment and expertise: Dr. Caniglia as a specialist and boarded equine surgeon and Dr. Williamson has focused her practice on lameness and sports medicine, working under some of the best in the country. We have a rapport that was developed long before their association with Wolf Creek.

My veterinarians needed to resign from Wolf Creek Equine for a variety of reasons that are theirs, not mine to share, and the practice owner is now diligently and perhaps spitefully enforcing a non-compete agreement she had them sign when they took their positions. Among other issues, non-compete agreements, and the one used by Wolf Creek in particular, are negatively impacting and restricting equestrian commerce in my county as well as the welfare of many horses including those who have been their patients for years. While there may be situations and industries where the impact of a non-compete is felt less by the community, my conversations with fellow equestrian business owners inform me that this is a real problem: panicked professionals who cannot find a vet to come treat a colicky horse, horses with crippling acute lameness that have to suffer a trailer ride out of the area for adequate diagnostic treatment, I could go on and on with examples.

A large part of my business consists of clients sending me horses that need to be retrained to sell. This often entails determining whether the issues are behavioral or physical and I regularly work very closely with my veterinarians to diagnose lameness or other performance issues and together with my veterinarians, diagnose and treat those issues, then once the horses are comfortable, they return to training to sell. A significant reason why these clients send me these horses is because I historically have had direct access to high quality veterinarians. This is a large source of revenue for my business as the horses are boarded at my farm, I generate income in their training, and eventually a sales commission. Being denied access to my trusted veterinarians has significantly negatively impacted this type of clientele’s desire to send horses to me and thus my ability to make a living.

In addition, for the customer horses who are presently under my care, I have had numerous incidents where I was unable to get them timely quality veterinary care, often resulting

in shipping sick or injured horses extensive distances out of the county to get them the care they need. In some instances where time was of the essence, I attempted to call other veterinarians in the area, but they are unable to provide prompt care to clients without an existing relationship and are struggling to pick up the uptick in their demand from the loss of two full-time vets in the county. In other instances, they lacked the state-of-the-art diagnostic tools and treatment equipment that my sports-medicine focused veterinarians have. This has resulted in my clients having excessive bills: the first opinion vet that I could beg to come out, and then paying shippers to get the horses to another vet, and then to secondary vets to treat or diagnose the injury the local vet could not. The customer suffers, the animals suffer, and my ability to conduct my business suffers.

If enforcement of veterinary non-compete continue to impede the ability to get quality and timely veterinary care for the horses under my care, I may be forced to relocate my business. In addition, the chilling impact of this non-compete on horse boarding and training has further downstream effects—businesses that support equestrian activities are also impacted— the local feed store where feed is purchases, Dover Saddlery in Crofton, local farriers who shoe the horses, etc.

As a horse owner myself and an equestrian business owner, I should have the right to have the veterinarian of my choosing treat my horses and as a business owner I should have the right to utilize the vendors I need to maintain a successful business. It is my hope that my government can provide the relief that I and others need by enacting HB.

Sincerely,

Andrew Vaziri

Owner, Vaziri Sport Horses