

House Bill 1097

State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners – Veterinary Technicians and Veterinary Assistants

Outline: For the purpose of authorizing a veterinary assistant to perform certain tasks under the direct supervision of a veterinary practitioner or veterinary technician; authorizing a veterinary technician to perform certain procedures, including certain emergency procedures and euthanasia, under certain circumstances; requiring the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners to develop by regulation a certain alternative pathway for employed veterinary assistants to become veterinary technicians; and generally relating to the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners and veterinary technicians and veterinary assistants.

Position: Favorable

Comments:

It's 2am on a Friday night. A young Chesapeake Bay Retriever is in surgery for a splachnicectomy to save her life. While one patient is in surgery, an owner brings in her 19-year-old cat. The cat is open mouth breathing, and the owner is concerned about quality of life and doesn't want her cat to suffer anymore. The doctor on duty is performing lifesaving surgery and now must decide which patient to help.

This scenario is all too common in our veterinary ERs. If the doctor steps away from the surgery, the patient might not make it. If the doctor continues in with the surgery the other patient waits in agony, for what could be hours. No matter what, the doctor's stress and anxiety has drastically increased. Today's increased stress and anxiety is just compounded interest to a career that is full of burnout and compassion fatigue.

House Bill 1067 hopes to make at least this scenario a little better. It would allow licensed technicians in an emergency to stop a patient's suffering. A licensed technician with support of the veterinarian and owner can help make this difficult situation less stressful and bring peace to a suffering patient while ensuring the doctor stays focused on the lifesaving surgery.

I used the word patient, but these are family members. We often see these family members in the worst situations. Our goal is to be as safe and humane as possible. We want to do as much suffering as possible while simultaneously reducing the amount of suffering.

I am also in favor of the timeline of October 1, 2027, for the bill to go into full effect. Our local program at the Community College of Baltimore County and the online program Penn Foster usually takes 24 months (about 2 years) to complete. Completion of this program culminates in the VETERINARY TECHNICIAN NATIONAL EXAM. The passage of this exam results in becoming a fully licensed veterinary technician.

Thank you for your time,

Adam Alfano  
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