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The Honorable Chair Ben Barnes
The Honorable Vice Mark Chang
Appropriations Committee
Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 25th, 2025

**SB0318 Higher Education - Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program
- Eligibility**

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and esteemed members of this committee,

Maryland is facing a shortage of Veterinarians and Veterinary Technicians. SB318 will provide a solution to this crisis by adding Veterinarians and Veterinary Technicians to the underutilized Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program (LARP).

First, the goal of this extension of the LARP is to attract and cultivate high quality professionals here in Maryland. Second, the shortage of professional treatment options hurts families unable to find proper and affordable care for their pets, farmers' ability to care for their herds, and shelters' ability to care for homeless animals.

Pets are family. They provide comfort, companionship, and therapy. This has been documented in numerous medical journals. When families have no other options, they turn to often understaffed, underequipped shelters in desperate bids for help, further exacerbating a shortage of resources.

Veterinarians also provide a crucial service to farmers throughout the State. They help farmers protect and grow the investments in herds and livestock. Beyond farmers, veterinarians provide crucial services in our other professional animal industries.

SB318 meets the goal of the LARP by requiring a veterinarian or veterinary technician to be employed in the State for at least five years or volunteer at an animal shelter for a local government for at least 100 hours per year for at least three years. At the same time, this will help address shortages by making the field more attractive.

Please help pets, their people, homeless animals, and Maryland farmers by providing an incentive to encourage more practitioners to enter the profession and stay in Maryland. By adding Veterinarians and Veterinary Technicians to the list of qualified employment types, we ensure that Maryland remains competitive with surrounding states for this career field.

This bill is identical in posture to its cross-file, HB0643. I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Karen Lewis Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Karen Lewis Young