

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

Senate Bill 54

(Senator Lam)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Environment and Transportation

**State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners - Grounds for Disciplinary Action
- Restrictions**

This bill prohibits the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners from suspending or revoking a license to practice veterinary medicine in the State, reprimanding or censuring a licensee, or placing a licensee on probation solely on the basis of the licensee discussing or recommending the use of cannabis or a product that contains cannabidiol on an animal for potential therapeutic effect or health supplementation purposes.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State finances or operations. To date, the board has not taken any formal actions that would be prohibited under the bill.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local government finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: Minimal or none. As noted above, to date, the board has not taken any formal actions that would be prohibited under the bill. As a result, the bill is not anticipated to materially affect small veterinary businesses.

Analysis

Current Law:

State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners

The State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners, which falls under the Maryland Department of Agriculture, licenses and registers veterinarians, registered veterinary technicians, veterinary hospitals, and animal control facilities and enforces the Maryland Veterinary Practice Act and related regulations. The board currently regulates more than

3,300 veterinarians, more than 950 registered veterinary technicians, more than 600 veterinary hospitals, and approximately 30 animal control facilities.

With respect to veterinarians and veterinary practitioners, the board is authorized to refuse, suspend, or revoke any application or license, and censure or place on probation any licensee after a hearing, on various grounds, including (1) being unable to practice veterinary medicine competently due to a physical or mental disability; (2) being convicted of a violation of specified State or federal drug-related laws; (3) being convicted of a felony, or of a crime involving moral turpitude; (4) failing to comply with board rules or regulations after receiving a license; and (5) being grossly negligent or deliberately cruel to an animal. The board is also authorized to impose a penalty of (1) up to \$5,000, for a first offense, in lieu of or in addition to suspension of a license, or in addition to revocation of a license and (2) up to \$10,000, for a second or subsequent offense, in addition to suspension or revocation of a license. The board may also issue a cease and desist order, on review and approval of the Secretary of Agriculture or the Secretary's designee, against a person who takes an action for which the board determines there is a preponderance of evidence of grounds for discipline.

Definition of "Cannabis"

"Cannabis" means the plant *Cannabis sativa L.* and any part of the plant, including all derivatives, extracts, cannabinoids, isomers, acids, salts, and salts of isomers, whether growing or not, with a delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol concentration greater than 0.3% on a dry weight basis. "Cannabis" includes cannabis products, seeds, seedlings, immature plants, and clones, but does not include hemp or hemp products, as defined.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: HB 452 (Delegate Guyton, *et al.*) - Environment and Transportation.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Agriculture; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 27, 2026
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