



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

February 15, 2023

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

SB390

Provision of Veterinary Services – Routine Medical Care and Rabies Vaccines

FAVORABLE

The Humane Society of the United States, on behalf of our members and supporters in Maryland, urges a favorable report and speedy action on SB390. This bill would make two changes to allow our shelter partners to access critical veterinary care – enabling shelters to better serve communities and animals.

The veterinary shortage is impacting pet owners everywhere, but nowhere is the need more critical than for our shelters. Maryland must expand the basic services that vet techs and out of state vets can provide shelters. Essentials such as rabies vaccines, health exams, and diagnostic testing are the most widely needed services that shelters provide animals and communities. The inability to access veterinary care to provide these services causes delays in the ability of shelters to care for, and adopt out, the animals in their care.

Many shelters do not have veterinarians on staff, or do not have full-time veterinarians working for them. This causes meaningful delays in providing care and can delay the shelter's ability to release adoptable animals to partnering rescues or new adoptive homes. Expanding the availability of rabies vaccines and allowing out of state vets to administer basic care procedures would ease these burdens tremendously.

And these are not unprecedented reforms. Of the 40 states that have a statewide requirement for rabies vaccination of companion animals, fifteen states and the District of Columbia allow for rabies vaccines to be administered by non-veterinarians. And fourteen other states, including our neighbors Pennsylvania and Delaware, have enacted some form of reciprocity policy for practicing veterinarians licensed in other states.

The impact of the veterinary shortage on our shelters is real and translates into longer stays for adoptable animals; an inability to provide services such as rabies vaccines to residents in our communities; and allowing the limited veterinary staff shelters can afford to employ to focus on more complex health cases.

We are happy to continue working with stakeholders and the sponsors to refine the legislation and allow for a bill that will be effective and a working solution for all parties. We urge a favorable report on SB390.

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