



Hickory Veterinary Hospital

534 E. Jarrettsville Rd
Forest Hill, MD 21050
(410) 838-7797
www.HickoryVet.net

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Dear Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I am submitting written testimony today to ask for a favorable outcome for SB0745. As a partner of Hickory Veterinary Hospital in Harford County Maryland, we have been directly affected by the Veterinary workforce shortage in Maryland. In recent years we have seen an increase in demand for veterinary services at Hickory Veterinary Hospital. This has resulted in extended wait times to get appointments for my clients and increased pressure to meet those demands by my current veterinary staff. I also routinely hear of wait times as long as 8 to 24 hours at our local emergency veterinary hospitals that provide services overnight and on weekends. My practice has been trying to hire an additional veterinarian for over 3 years.

SB0745 will help to address this workforce shortage in the fastest possible path. By increasing the number of seats at Maryland's college of veterinary medicine, the Virginia Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, from 30 to 42 for the 2025 admissions class, the number of Maryland veterinary students graduating from VMCVM will increase by 40% by 2029. Expanding the number of seats is not only the fastest path to addressing the workforce shortage, but it is also the most fiscally responsible. This path will not be faced with the financial challenges or accreditation challenges of starting a new program. VMCVM has been an excellent steward of the funding it receives from Maryland for the last 40 years and delivers a fully accredited curriculum of the highest quality to Maryland resident students. Providing access to Maryland students through our local state school enhances the likelihood that they will live and work in Maryland because of the ties they already have to the state.

As you are likely aware, there is a proposed, second Maryland veterinary college at University of Maryland Eastern Shore. I do not believe that SB0745 and the proposed veterinary college at UMES are in conflict. SB0745 addresses an immediate concern for workforce shortage. The vision for UMES is to improve diversity and access to the veterinary profession for minorities and underserved. My understanding is that UMES plan is to have a nationwide application pool to improve diversity across the country and not just in Maryland. I am fully supportive of the effort UMES is making to improve access to the veterinary profession and have enjoyed reading about their progress in recent press releases. I do temper my hopefulness for the success of this program with the realization that accreditation and achieving a first graduating class takes time and is not guaranteed.

Thank you for your attention and please give SB0745 a favorable outcome.

Robert D. Silcox DVM
Hickory Veterinary Hospital
410-838-7797 x 2
silcoxsvm@comcast.net