



February 28, 2024

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

SB745

Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine - Funding
FAVORABLE

The Humane Society of the United States, Maryland Votes for Animals, and the Professional Animal Workers of Maryland urge a favorable report on SB745. Increasing the number of veterinarians able to graduate from our local program will help alleviate the veterinary shortage in Maryland, and is a worthwhile investment.

Veterinarians are facing historic challenges on several fronts as the profession struggles to provide access to care to animals in Maryland and nationwide. Staffing shortages are ubiquitous, with a dearth of veterinarians and veterinary technicians available to fill open positions. A recent study by Mars Veterinary Health found that there is a 16 percent shortage of veterinarians needed to meet national animal care needs and, if the current trends continue, as many as 75 million pets nationwide will be without veterinary care by 2030. In Maryland, that has resulted in pet owners waiting weeks to get veterinary appointments for their pets and the situation is even more dire in rural areas where clinics finding it even harder to attract veterinary professionals for open positions.

While this veterinary crisis is impacting all pet owners and caregivers, the impact is most profound on our shelters and rescues. Shelters that are fortunate enough to have a staff position for an on-staff veterinarian struggle to attract and retain qualified candidates, and shelters that rely on volunteer hours from veterinarians are having an increasingly difficult time finding volunteers. The lack of veterinarians providing support to our shelters impacts not just shelter animals, it impacts constituents and local government budgets.

This is a modest investment for a significant service. There's a critical shortage of qualified veterinary professionals and that shortage is expected to get worse over time. The investment in funding this program is countered by the cost-saving for local governments in ensuring shelters and rescues can continue to provide care to people and pets without outsourcing care or having to accept surrendered animals because their owners could not receive care. We urge a favorable report on SB 745.

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