

BILL NUMBER – HB 1388

I am in FAVOR of this bill.

Wendy Lott- Owner of Wito Hollow Farm LLC

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This bill can affect all of us sitting or standing in this room and those of you reading my entire testimony. This is personal to all of us, giving us the right to choose who we want for health care for our family members, pets, and livestock. Pets and Livestock are also considered family to many of us.

I am a horse owner, dog owner, cat owner and I own a small business. I own a horse farm. On my farm I take care of horses, puppies, and dogs at Wito Hollow Farm. It is my responsibility for animals in my care to receive proper veterinary care. It is my responsibility to preserve the client-patient relationship with veterinarians of my choice or a client's choice. If there is a non-compete clause that is being invoked against a veterinarian of my choice or a client's choice, it hinders proper care for our animals.

I was previously a vet assistant at a local equine hospital, I have witnessed excellent surgeons and veterinarians forced to change their career paths when they wanted to continue working as an Equine Veterinarian. They had to leave the state of Maryland to practice Equine Medicine.

A non-compete clause prevents these health care workers from working within a certain mile radius of a current or previous employer. If I have a good relationship with a doctor or veterinarian and they decide to leave that practice they are not allowed to work within a certain milage range. That is not fair to me as a client if I want to continue to see that doctor or veterinarian to care for myself or my animals. Because of non competes as a consumer I am now forced to drive long distances to see who I want to see. Or use the proper specialist that was right in my area previously. This affects the elderly who can't drive, this affects people with special needs and animals with special needs. This can also be a large financial burden as well.

For those of you who don't know anything about horses. The horse doctors are usually ambulatory and drive out to our farms to see our horses. Some horse owners do not own a horse trailer to provide transportation for their horses. This makes it more imperative that we have more Equine Veterinarians to provide ambulatory services to our farms. Not everyone has the option to transport their horses. Especially in emergency situations. This also means that more horses are going to be euthanized because they can't be taken outside of that restrictive milage radius to be seen by the veterinarian or surgeon that needs to see the horses.

Right now, if one of my horses needs emergency surgery, due to the non-compete clause that affects an Equine surgeon who lives in Maryland. He is unable to provide emergency surgeries that can save my horse's life. I would have to drive to Leesburg Virginia -Marion DuPont Scott Equine Medical Center or to Kennett Square, Pennsylvania to the New Bolton Center for Equines, each being 2 hours away from me. Those are the two closest Emergency Equine Hospitals currently that can take horses in for emergency surgeries. That is a huge risk for my horse's life and my life traveling in an emergency situation.

There is a shortage of veterinarians in Maryland Why are we forcing them out with non-compete clauses? As one local equine (Horse Doctor) Veterinarian posted on her social media page. Where have all the Horse doctors gone? She warned people that we would see a shortage in horse vets to “be theatrical” and as she states “here we are. Here I am, one horse (vet) power. This veterinarian who stated this had nineteen veterinarians that have worked for her practice as past associates since she started her practice in 1998. She named fourteen of those veterinarians in her post. – she also stated that they had to make their own heart wrenching and difficult decision to change species of specialty or to leave the veterinary profession entirely. She goes on to say they leave due to long hours, on call duty, after hours, lower wages, and the interface with the public. But what she is NOT telling the public is she is the reason they can’t continue to work as a “horse doctor” because she makes them ALL sign a NON-COMPETE clause. So, if they leave her practice they are not allowed to work as an equine practitioner within a certain milage radius of her practice, which directly affects hundreds of horse owners. She forces them to switch to a different job. Can they buy her out of the non-compete? Yes, that is offered but she makes it so expensive for them they can’t afford to buy out the non-compete clause and then start over somewhere else that is local. Nor do they have the option to go to another local Equine Hospital to work within a certain milage radius. She also posted what the previous associates of hers are doing now. Out of all of the veterinarians she listed only four of them are practicing as Equine Veterinarians. They have moved out of state. Two are in Pennsylvania, one in New Mexico and one is in Mississippi. As she stated they were all FANTASTIC Equine practitioners. That is a bit hypocritical for her to say that they had to make a heart wrenching decision when she is the one that made that decision for them. If they don’t sign a non-compete, they can’t work for her hospital. Many new veterinarians getting out of college have their hands tied if they want a job as an equine practitioner. If they want to work, they have to sign a non-compete clause. But they should not have to make, as she puts it, a heart wrenching decision to switch to something else or get out of medicine all together. (SEE ATTACHED FOR HER ENTIRE FACEBOOK POST) She complains that here she is a “one horse (vet) holding down the fort. And that equine veterinarians are a dying breed. There could be nineteen equine vets working locally for me and other horse owners in Maryland right now if she didn’t force them to sign a non-compete clause. Nineteen Fantastic Veterinarians.

Eliminating non-competes will open up more jobs and careers for people in Maryland, appointments for people who need to be seen and animals that need to be seen sooner rather than later.

Have you recently tried to get an appointment for your dog or cat with your veterinarian? There is a shortage of veterinarians and appointments are backed up for weeks. Some practices are so busy they can’t take on new clients. We could definitely have more vets in Maryland by eliminating non-compete clauses.

Non-Compete clauses prevent and limits doctors, nurses, surgeons, veterinarians from working where they want to work. It deters specialty candidates from providing specialty care to patients in areas where it’s needed. It prevents them from opening up their own practice in the area of their choice. They’re bad for workers, consumers and bad for the economy. Businesses pay lower wages knowing they are holding a worker hostage with a non-compete clause. This also holds the consumer hostage to those who they are allowed to use. It takes the consumers’ choices away from them. Do you want to be told which veterinarian or doctor you’re allowed to use for your pet or loved

one? Do you want to be told who you can use as your personal doctor? A non-compete clause affects all of us.

Please support our families, our animals, and our businesses in Maryland by eliminating the non-compete clauses in the entire human medical industry and Veterinarian industry. In 2023 Maryland Census shows that we lost 22,000 citizens last year. Let's get more health care workers that are needed in Maryland. This leads to more job opportunities, better health care, healthier humans, and healthier pets. This will help keep people in Maryland. It will also bring more revenue for the State of Maryland. Let's keep citizens (doctors, nurses, veterinarians, and other health care workers) careers and jobs here in Maryland! Support HB 1388 and Eliminate Non-Compete Clauses in the Medical Industry!

Thank you,

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Wolf Creek Equine Hospital


Nov 17, 2023 · 🌐

In my Christmas newsletter a few seasons ago I warned readers about the threat of equine veterinary shortages that was on the horizon. I promised in that newsletter that we would see these shortages 'in our lifetime', to be theatrical. And here we are. Here I am, one horse [vet] power.

Here is a list of some of my past associates, interns or locum surgeons and what they are doing today:

Delaney Hartson - small animal emergency care

Melissa Bryant - small animal emergency care

James Hart - teaching Anne Arundel schools

Manuella Sanchez – small animal practice, now Merck sales representative

Isabella Cortez – pharmaceutical sales representative

Julia Miller - equine practice in PA (husband transfer)

Britta Lawson – small animal veterinary care

Ben Schraumer - real estate sales

Caitlin O'Shea – professor large animal

Shannon Brown - equine practice in NM (husband transfer)

Simon Towel - small animal anesthesia sales rep

Peter Jeanettes - small animal emergency care

Elysia Shafer - small animal surgery

Bill Valentino – equine practice in FL (relocation after family emergency)

Being my associate did not drive these people from seeing horses. These beautiful people studied all about horses and love horses and some were truly



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fantastic equine practitioners. Yet other forces drove them to make their own heart-wrenching and difficult decision to change species of specialty or to leave the veterinary profession entirely. In surveys conducted on a large scale, the reasons often listed for such departures are the long hours of equine practice, on-call duty after hours, lower wages (compared to other species), and the interface with the public. You can read more about this phenomenon, if your heart can take it, at <https://thehorse.com/features/where-have-all-the-horse-vets-gone/>

Whether you think of a business as a living organism or not, I will tell you that it is. It can be injured and it can be killed. It is said that the typical small business can endure 3 or 4 events a year that detract from daily operations and still continue to thrive. Those events do not necessarily need to be negative ones - having an open house, hosting a conference, or an essential employee on maternity leave are examples of positive events that affect daily operations. Examples of more negative events would include weather disasters, staff shortages due to injury or prolonged medical leave, essential pieces of equipment going down, supply shortages, legal actions, or resignation of key employees. Ever since COVID-19 shut downs in 2020, running a small business has been different, with even more nebulous challenges than these listed. Ask any small business owner or manager and they will share their woes.

I will tell you that this business in the last 12 months has had more than 4 events; I hesitate to count but



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my rough guess would be upwards of 30. I have owned this business for many years and have always regarded myself as its secret weapon, performing many of my administrative duties from the passenger seat of my truck, in the evenings or Sunday afternoons. The business needs my attention to thrive. I have been working very hard to hold it all together. I assure you it will make it, but things will obviously change.

I don't know how to feel about this recent out-pouring of emotion in social media. I rarely visit social media due to my demanding schedule. I have staff members who monitor the social media feeds and I do contribute content with their prompting. Patrons have every right to be concerned when a practice goes from four doctors to one.

For the patrons of this practice who actually know me (because some actually do not), they know that I have a heart for service. I have always regarded my interface with the public as my mission field to help spread my love of the Lord and his creations. I do not withhold my knowledge and always strive to be helpful and available. I am not retiring and haven't really slowed down, although my schedule admittedly changed when I announced that I was no longer performing chiropractic evaluations and spinal manipulation. I grew up on a dairy farm in the Midwest and I have quite literally spent my entire life caring for animals. I possess a tremendous amount of knowledge about horses and their care. I also possess a nice facility that can be utilized to help animals. I have no intentions of leaving the profession



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or closing the facility. Things will obviously change in the short term, but my vision for helping care for the horses in this region has not.

Wolf Creek Equine will get through this. I am not going anywhere. I built this practice from scratch and from nothing. Anyone who doubts me, stand back and watch me do it.

As hard as it is to do sometimes, THIS is the job I interviewed for. This is the job I want. I am here to help you.

Yours in Service
Susan Mende
Founder and owner of Wolf Creek Equine LL



thehorse.com

Where Have All the Horse Doctors Gone?

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