

Respected Delegate,

Please support HB 1388 to prohibit non-compete agreements in health care and veterinary professions.

I am a barn manager and trainer at Hunter Ridge Stables in Davidsonville, Maryland. I have two of my own horses and am responsible for the care of 21 boarders' horses. A little over 4 years ago, our barn forged a relationship with Dr. Caniglia, which exponentially raised the level of healthcare for our animals, especially when it came to sports medicine and specialty care (i.e. oncology/cardiology services.) Dr. Caniglia and later, Dr. Williamson, have also been extraordinary when it comes to the inevitable emergencies you deal with in this business. They took charge of cases where horses definitely would have died without intervention. They were available night and day, and over the years, developed close bonds with their human and equine patients alike.

For a time, they'd be at our barn every couple of weeks. The comfort level was such that they could come and treat horses in their stalls or in the field without the client even needing to be there. That's how much we all came to love and trust our vets.

Then suddenly, we learned that this relationship would be abruptly ending. The doctors had to leave the practice and could no longer treat any of their patients due to a non-compete clause. This news was completely devastating. My trusted vets were yanked away from me overnight, threatening our animals' health and their owners' peace of mind.

Yes, there are other vets who serve the area, but they simply do not practice the same kind of cutting-edge techniques offered by the vets that were forced out. The only way to get comparable care is to transport the horses out of state to hospitals in either PA or VA. Already, since October, I've had to do this 5 times. In one case, the patient didn't survive. Who knows if things would have been different had we been able to have Dr. Caniglia treat immediately.

It is my right and responsibility to choose who cares for my animals. The doctor-patient relationship is exactly that, a relationship between me and the veterinarian of my choosing. The use of a non-compete clause by a practice or business forces me into a contract that I did not even know about and has a significantly negative impact on animal welfare in the area.

Please consider the following facts:

1. The veterinary shortage is well-known and documented. The AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association) acknowledges shortages of veterinarians in rural America, food animal, equine, academia, shelters, emergency practices, specialties, and public health areas. The AAEP (American Association of Equine Practitioners) data shows that only 1.3% of graduating veterinarians go into equine practice, 50% of those individuals leave the profession within 5 years, either switching to small

animal practice or quitting veterinary medicine altogether. The Mars Veterinary Health Study (2022) predicts a shortage of over 15,000 veterinarians by 2030.

2. Several states have recognized that non-competes violate the sanctity of the doctor-patient relationship similar to how to the American Bar Association prohibits non-compete agreements because they violate the attorney-client relationship. California, Oklahoma, North Dakota have banned non-compete agreements across professions. Connecticut, Florida, Indiana have specifically banned non-compete clauses for physicians, and Maine has banned non-compete clauses for veterinarians.

Thank you for your service to our community, for hearing my concerns, and, ultimately, for supporting the elimination of non-compete agreements in the veterinary profession (HB 1388).

Sincerely,

Robin Johnson