



RE: HB 1388
Position: In Favor

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

I am a Maryland horse owner and a very concerned voter. Horses are my passion; one which I am lucky enough to share with my daughter. We compete our horses and frequently require specialized veterinary care. Our local veterinarians are a fantastic group but they do not have the specialized services need for sport horses. We use to have that care in Anne Arundel County but a non-compete agreement is preventing us from being able to provide the absolute best care for our horses.

A few facts about the Maryland horse industry:

- 101,000 horses (estimated) in Maryland (Maryland Horse Breeders)
- 10.5 horses live per square mile in Maryland that's more than any state in the nation (MD Horse Breeders)
- 81 equine veterinarian practitioners in Maryland (American Academy of Equine Practitioners)
- Horses have a 2.9 billion annual economic impact on Maryland's economy (American Horse Council)

Why is this important? Horses play a large role in Maryland's economy in addition to the \$2.9 billion total economic impact the added value to Maryland's economy from horses is \$1.77 billion and the employment impact is 28,434 jobs. Maryland needs horses and horses need veterinarians.

In reviewing the American Association of Equine Practitioners website there are 81 registered equine practitioners in Maryland. That means those 81 vets are each responsible for caring for 1,247 horses. We currently do not have enough veterinarians to properly care for our horses and it's time to remove the non-compete agreement for veterinarians and all health care professionals. Recently, I could receive emergency surgical care and specialized sport medicine care within 20 minutes of my farm. Thanks to the non-compete if I need access to 24-7 surgical care I am driving out of state; my choices are a 101-mile drive to Pennsylvania (at the time of writing this it's an hour and 56 minute drive) or heading south to Virginia which is a 76 mile drive (drive time currently 1 hour and 47 minutes). Our equine partners deserve better.

It is my right and responsibility to choose who cares for my animals. The doctor-patient relationship is exactly that, a relationship between myself 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 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.

The current legislation as it stands is bad for Maryland's economy, it's bad for the horse, it's bad for the horse owners and it's even worse for the veterinarians trying to provide care.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink that reads "Hunter Messineo". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Hunter Messineo
Blue Anchor Farm