

Jennifer Dawson, MSW, LMSW
IN FAVOR of HB 1388

Good Afternoon,

My name is Jennifer Dawson, and I am a Clinical Social Worker and here to ask for your consideration in the passing of the HB1388 bill. I speak not only as a clinician, but as an animal owner which brings me reasons to why this bill is important. I will start off as a practitioner to say that we all are aware of the mental health crisis that is consuming our country, specifically in the area of health care providers. This industry is overworked, overwhelmed, and emotionally draining, but yet we love what we do. Specifically looking in the veterinary industry, the statistics in terms of veterinarians, leaving their practice due to some of these issues is on the rise, along with other mental health struggles in terms of the suicide rates we see climbing. I have personally known 3 veterinarians that lost their lives due to mental health struggles related to their work. Why is this important in regards to this bill? One the stressors that veterinarians are dealing with having a noncompete in place now requires them to be stuck in a job that may be toxic, and they are now FORCED to start up or find a practice further away from where they live, which takes more time away from their families, and further away from their existing patients. Then there is the side of being a pet owner. We should not be forced to change our provider because of a non compete along with the stress of figuring out ways to have our animals seen when distance becomes a factor. Specifically with horses. These are not animals you can put in the back of your car. They require hauling transport which needs to be arranged and can be very costly vs. our vet being able to come to our barn which is the normal practice. Specifically speaking to emergencies, to not have access to our medical provider for our animals can be life altering. I can speak on this because my 24 year old horse was in the care of my veterinarian who has been with

him for years. He was dealing with a tumor that was being treated every 2 weeks and this was not a procedure all veterinarians do. Due to a non-competitor, when my vet left the practice, I was unable to see him, unless he was outside of a 30 mile radius from our previous employment. Not only does this become a huge stressor to find a vet closer, but I just had to start his treatments all over again. A non-competitor forced me to lose a month of time for my horse that needed to have regular treatments every two weeks. A sadder story, the one we all fear, was experienced at our barn because of the non-competitor. Our barn witnessed another horse that was under the care of our vet and because the non-competitor had to drive an hour and a half to be seen, this could've been remedied if our vet was able to practice within a 30 mile distance. Sadly, the horse succumbed to its health issues. This is every owner's worst nightmare that emotionally impacted our farm family, our trainers, and the vet that was involved in the care. How can this not impact everyone emotionally? It was a heartbreaking loss that was unnecessary, but the non-competitor forced it to be. As a Clinical Social Worker, signing a non-competitor means that if I have to leave my practice and adhere to a distance perimeter, my patients in order to stay with me as their therapist, will be impacted. We can agree that people that are in therapy come for help, clients are likely already stressed out and overwhelmed. So how do I tell a trauma patient, or a suicidal patient that I've been in a relationship for years that they're not gonna have access to me unless I'm 30 miles away? I'm sure we can all agree life is busy and simple conveniences, such as distance for doctors, veterinarians, dentists appointments etc. are all factors we take into consideration. I can speak even though this is extreme that I would not want the weight of a suicidal patient not being able to have access to me because of a non-competitor and I don't think anyone could say in this room that they would not agree with that. We know the value of a human life so I

asked you to please take this into consideration in terms of our animals.

Thank you.

Jennifer Dawson, MSW, LMSW
Maryland Licence 20509
Bayshore Counseling & Psychological Services
133 Old Solomons Island Road
Annapolis, MD 21401