



Formerly called the Humane  
Society of the United States

## Humane Veterinary Medical Alliance

1255 23<sup>rd</sup> St. NW, Suite 450  
Washington, DC 20037  
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[humaneworld.org/HumaneVMA](http://humaneworld.org/HumaneVMA)

February 17, 2025

Maryland House Appropriations Committee  
121 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: VETERINARY SUPPORT for HB 643 (Guyton)**

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Humane Veterinary Medical Alliance (HumaneVMA) I am writing to convey our strong organizational support for HB 643 - legislation that would provide financial relief for the veterinarians and veterinary technicians who face huge educational debt while serving Maryland's animal shelters.

When I graduated from the Virginia Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine in 1990, it was not unusual for many veterinary students (myself included) to start their careers with some degree of student loan debt. For most of us, that debt was manageable. However, the amount of educational indebtedness has relentlessly increased over the years, along with the spiraling costs of veterinary medical education.

Almost 40% of veterinary students graduating from veterinary school in 2024 have an educational debt greater than \$200,000 (only 16.6% have no debt at all). And among veterinary graduates with debt, the average educational debt is \$202,647. (See [2025 AVMA Report on the Economic State of the Veterinary Profession](#), Debt, pages 14 – 17).

Veterinarians and veterinary technicians working in shelter medicine have a harder time paying off their debt, because they earn less than most veterinarians and have less disposable income. The average annual salary of veterinarians working in shelter medicine is substantially lower compared with other veterinary fields. In 2024, the average starting salary for new graduates in non-profit veterinary medicine was \$105,756, while the average starting salary in companion animal medicine was \$137,227. (See [2025 AVMA Report on the Economic State of the Veterinary Profession](#), Compensation, pages 10 -13).

Yet shelter veterinarians and veterinary technicians are essential in the pivotal role they play in minimizing pet overpopulation, controlling infectious diseases (including those transmissible to people, such as rabies and Avian Influenza) and aiding underserved and low-income households. They have selflessly dedicated themselves to helping others, while foregoing more lucrative careers in other veterinary fields.



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The HumaneVMA respectfully encourages the House Appropriations Committee to support HB 643, thereby expanding eligibility in the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program to include Maryland's shelter veterinarians and veterinary technicians and helping them with repayment of educational loans.

Sincerely,

*Carrie B. Waters*

Carrie B. Waters, DVM, PhD, JD, DACVIM  
Maryland State Representative  
Humane Veterinary Medical Alliance (HumaneVMA)