

HB1328. Opposed. Margaret Quickel DVM, licensed in Maryland. Residence Perrysburg, OH

I am a veterinarian, have worked in human hospice care and have a parent with Parkinson's disease.

My concerns about HB1328 are many. My profession, which utilizes euthanasia for our patients, has the highest suicide rate of any medical profession. 1 in 6 have considered suicide per a CDC study (Led by Dr. Suzanne E. Tomasi, Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer at NIOSH; also published in JAVMA, April 1, 2015). While the causes for the mental health crisis in my field are multifactorial, researchers have concluded that the ethical dilemmas, the pressure and the knowledge of drugs and exposure to euthanasia, all play a role. There are also issues with drug diversion, which I fear will increase with the ease of availability.

There have been multiple times where individuals have tried to use coercion, or pressure to get veterinarians (including myself) to euthanize a pet. I've had people ask me to euthanize pets because, "It's a kitten who's living outside. It would be better if it was dead than eaten by a predator," or "my aunt left the dog and an inheritance to take care of the dog, but its cough is really annoying and is disrupting my quality of life." It can become a moral crisis for veterinarians as to when to say yes, when to say no, and there are many of grey areas. There have been pets that I have euthanized because I knew (and the owner's told me) that if I didn't legally euthanize it, they would roll over it with their car, drown it, etc.. These situations are morally troubling and do cause a large amount of compassion fatigue and mental health issues in our profession. The human medical profession already has shortages, burnout and retention issues. I can only imagine that, putting human doctors in the same ethical dilemmas we face, will tear apart their profession more. I also worry about the inequity of care for the poor, and other underserved demographics such as we see.

These issues have been studied in veterinary medicine for more than 30 years, I do not believe adequate data has been established yet for the human medical profession to be able to contradict this viewpoint. Capital punishment by means of lethal injection, which is the equivalent of what veterinarians typically use, has been discontinued due to the belief that human beings should not be guinea pigs.

The mental health crisis and many ethically questionable experiences of veterinarians should give pause to introducing this in the field of human medicine.