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Maryland Department of Agriculture

Legislative Comment

Date: March 6th, 2026

BILL NUMBER: HB 1354
BILL TITLE: State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners - Veterinarians, Veterinary Technicians, and Veterinary Assistants
MDA POSITION: INFORMATIONAL

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) respectfully submits this letter of information for *House Bill 1354- State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners - Veterinarians, Veterinary Technicians, and Veterinary Assistants*. HB 1354 requires the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (SBVME) to create a licensing pathway allowing a veterinary technician's work experience to satisfy the requirements for a licensed veterinary practitioner..

Initial licensure for a veterinarian in Maryland, like all other North American jurisdictions, requires a degree from an American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) accredited school (typically eight years of post-secondary study) or a degree from a non-accredited school plus an equivalency certificate (PAVE or ECFVG), and a passing score on the North American Veterinary Licensing Exam (NAVLE). Veterinary practitioners are trained to diagnose and treat medical conditions, prescribe medication, and perform surgery. A veterinary technician's scope of practice is limited to performing supporting health care tasks under veterinary supervision, and their two-year education does not provide the foundation required for independent veterinary practice.

The requirements to sit for the NAVLE are strictly set by the International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA), mandating a degree from an AVMA-accredited school or an equivalency certificate. A pathway based predominantly on work experience would render applicants ineligible for the NAVLE, forcing the SBVME to develop a Maryland specific licensing exam. This is a lengthy, costly process (upwards of \$250,000 for development and \$50,000 every five years for evaluation) and would grant licensure based on non-aligned standards, potentially harming practitioners' ability to obtain licensure in other jurisdictions through endorsement.

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The SBVME has established an expedited process for out-of-jurisdiction veterinary technicians through licensure by endorsement, and a pathway for veterinary assistants to become registered veterinary technicians through work experience often referred to as the “alternative pathway”. Though veterinary assistants are not currently licensed or registered in Maryland or other jurisdictions, they are permitted to perform tasks under the direct supervision of a licensed practitioner. Through the SBVME’s alternative pathway, they have the opportunity to advance in their career to a veterinary technician after completing 10,000 hours of work experience and other requirements including some formal education. These proposed options in HB 1354 are duplicative of current processes designed to support and develop Maryland’s veterinary workforce.

While the SBVME is not averse to statutory authority to enter into reciprocity agreements with other jurisdictions, mandatory reciprocity requirements would inadvertently restrict the Board’s current ability to approve applications by endorsement. To ensure that established endorsement routes remain open to all qualified applicants, any new language should authorize, not mandate, the Board to enter into reciprocity agreements, preserving our ability to assess jurisdictional equivalence on a case-by-case basis.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture and the SBVME is deeply committed to supporting the State’s efforts to address the veterinary shortage and is currently reviewing existing licensing requirements and regulations to clearly define ways in which veterinary technicians and veterinary assistants may be better utilized in hospitals, freeing up veterinary practitioners to focus on tasks that are limited to doctors of veterinary medicine. MDA appreciates the consideration of the above information in the Committee’s deliberations.