



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

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Testimony of
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Good morning Chairman Hill, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Patterson and members of the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee. I am Dr. Rustin Moore, Dean of The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine and it is my great pleasure to speak with you today along with my colleague Dr. Liesa Stone, the current President of the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association. Thank you for the invitation and your time and interest.

Last year, the College of Veterinary Medicine joined with the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association to explore the economic contributions of veterinary medicine to the state of Ohio and the social impacts on Ohio's citizens. We engaged the services of economists Bill LaFayette, Ph.D. of the firm Regionomics and Stephen Buser, Ph.D. professor emeritus of Ohio State's Fisher College of Business, to assess the scope of veterinary medicine's contributions to Ohio's economy both directly and indirectly.

Before I go too much further and "bury the lead" as they say, let me share three key numbers with you from this study. Veterinary services directly contribute more than 2.4 billion dollars to Ohio's economy each year and that economic activity provides for the employment of over 23,000 Ohioans. When we also factor in indirect contributions to animal related industries like agricultural production, that economic impact grows to more than 13 billion dollars each year or over \$1100 for every man, woman and child living in our state. Veterinary medicine contributes significantly to Ohio agriculture by ensuring the health and marketability of farm animals.

Employment in Ohio veterinary services in 2015 was 15.5 percent higher than 2007 (immediately before the recession) and the veterinary auxiliary industries' employment was 22.2 percent higher. Total Ohio employment across all sectors as of 2015 was 0.9 percent lower than in 2007. This demonstrates the relative economic and job stability of the veterinary profession and auxiliary industries compared with the general economy. This speaks to the strength and power of the human-animal bond and the importance of veterinary medicine in protecting Ohio's livestock and animal agricultural industry.

There are approximately 3,300 veterinarians practicing in Ohio with ~80% being graduates of the Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine. While this number may seem relatively small, the corresponding economic impact of the veterinary industry in Ohio is remarkably strong. It is important to remind everyone Ohio State has the only college of veterinary medicine in Ohio and is only one of 30 in the US. Our college consistently has ranked in the top 5, the highest ranked college at Ohio State, and is one of the oldest colleges of veterinary medicine, having been established over 130 years ago. Correspondingly, we

have the largest number of alumni of any US veterinary college with nearly 8,000 living alumni who work in all 50 states and 40 countries.

Ohio State also accommodates a robust veterinary, animal agriculture, and biomedical research program, some discoveries of which are commercializable, and is home to one of the largest veterinary medical centers in the US. This along with Ohio State being the only university with seven health science colleges on one campus and located adjacent to the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, positions us uniquely for strong interdisciplinary collaboration compared to other colleges of veterinary medicine.

In addition to the economic impact, there are substantial social benefits and impacts on people related to animals and veterinary medicine. Animals convey a wide variety of physical, behavioral, mental, psychological and social benefits. Among these are the therapeutic value of owning and caring for pets. Veterinarians play an important role in the study, prevention and containment of zoonotic diseases — infectious diseases that animals can transmit to humans and that humans and animals share.

Pets make substantial contributions to the health and well-being of pet owners. Owning or interacting with pets or other animals has been found to lower blood pressure, alleviate depression, and improve many other health conditions. Interacting with animals has resulted in significant improvement in patients suffering from severe mental and emotional conditions, including schizophrenia, psychosis, autism, and post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). These benefits reduce healthcare costs, lengthen life spans, and likely improve workforce participation and economic productivity. Companies that allow employees to bring their pets to work enjoy greater productivity perhaps because of the effect on decreasing stress and increasing workplace satisfaction among employees.

A number of diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans have attracted worldwide attention because of the disruption, suffering, and death they have caused. This also has an immense economic impact because of the effect on travel, international trade, and healthcare costs. These include Ebola, avian influenza (bird flu), rabies, Lyme disease, West Nile disease, and Zika virus among others. Studying transmission and patterns of infection can help the medical profession understand, anticipate, and mitigate outbreaks of these diseases. Research has shown that approximately 70 percent of all human infectious diseases share this animal-to-human link and first originate in animals. Veterinarians are critical and central to the human-animal-environmental health triad, commonly referred to as One Health. Veterinarians often serve as the community health official because of their broad-based education.

A wide variety of ailments are also common to animals and humans. Veterinarians have developed methods for diagnosing and treating certain conditions applicable to animals and people. The ability to apply insights from veterinary studies and treatment protocols to treatment of humans can leverage the effectiveness and reduce the cost of medical research. There are numerous examples of clinical trials and other comparative research that lead to groundbreaking discoveries happening right here in Ohio that improve the health and well-being of people and animals, to include cancer, infectious disease, and many others.

Despite the vitality of veterinary medicine in the State of Ohio, we are at significant risk of deterring individuals from entering this field. The average debt of Ohio State 2016 veterinary graduates was 25% higher than the national average. Why is this? Because our in-state and out-of-state tuition are among the highest of the 30 US colleges of veterinary medicine.

Why is that? Because the amount of state support of veterinary medical education is by far the lowest among the top 10 colleges of veterinary medicine and near the bottom of all 30. Ohio's support amounts to ~\$19,500 per student, less than half the \$44,000 average for the top 10 veterinary programs nationwide. The fact that Ohio State has consistently ranked in the top 5 despite the low level of state support, speaks to our commitment to efficient and effective stewardship of our limited resources. Increases in state support are needed to attenuate increases in tuition and maintain a supply of qualified candidates that graduate and provide veterinary services in Ohio and help to protect Ohio's agricultural industry.

The high tuition of the Ohio State veterinary program and the high debt levels of its graduates are a direct result of comparatively low levels of state support. The total in-state tuition for a four-year veterinary degree at Ohio State is currently \$140,017, not including books, supplies, lab fees, room, and board. An annual survey by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) of veterinary program graduates found that students graduating in 2016 had an average debt burden of \$155,291, more than double the inflation-adjusted 2001 level. The average debt burden of Ohio State graduates was \$194,363, which is 25 percent greater than the national average. Our 2017 graduates had an average of over \$200,000 debt, which was 25% greater than the national average. There is a risk that the high cost of a veterinary education and the need to assume a large amount of debt will discourage interested students from entering the field. This is already an issue with regard to having people from rural and lower socioeconomic areas from even considering a career in veterinary medicine because of the high cost and ensuing debt, and the relatively low earning potential, particularly in the areas where they grew up. These are the very areas that are underserved by veterinary medicine and we need people from these areas to understand that a veterinary medical education is accessible and affordable.

We were asked by Chairman Hill and others in the past to calculate the amount of additional state support we would need to position the college in a better place among its peers and to be more reliably suited to deliver on its mission of education, research, service and outreach, and to protect Ohio's animal agricultural industry. We determined that an investment of an additional \$13 million annually to the College of Veterinary Medicine from the state will enable:

- Building on its infrastructure by recruiting expert faculty and expanding research capabilities to address problems important to Ohio, including those vital to supporting and protecting the states \$110 billion agriculture industry.
- Better serving the state and its citizens through public health, enhancing animal agriculture productivity and food safety, and preserving the human-animal bond and the positive health benefits on people, which translates into substantial human healthcare cost savings.
- Help control growing debt burden by limiting tuition increases and distributing more scholarships, so graduates can locate in undeserved rural communities, finance new veterinary clinics, and have an economically sustainable career in veterinary medicine.

I realize many of you have heard some of this information during tours of the college and Veterinary Medical Center, during prior testimony, and other interactions. My goal is to make sure that everyone is aware of the economic and social importance and impact of veterinary medicine and the of the only college of veterinary medicine in Ohio, and the issues we're facing, which can and will have untoward effects if we do not collectively address them.

Thank you for your time and interest and for inviting us here today to share the results of this most recent economic and social impact study of veterinary medicine in Ohio.

Now I am pleased to turn the podium over to Dr. Stone to share some perspectives as to how the broad reach of veterinary medicine has in making Ohio a safer, more prosperous place to live and work. Together we will take questions after her testimony.

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