



OHIO VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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1472 Manning Parkway – Powell, Ohio 43065 – 614-436-1300

Testimony of Liesa Stone, DVM
House Bill 67
Ohio House Commerce & Labor Committee
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Good afternoon Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Dean, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and members of the House Commerce and Labor Committee, I am Dr. Liesa Stone, immediate past president of the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association. OVMA is a statewide professional association representing some 2,700 veterinarians practicing in a variety of disciplines and more than 600 veterinary students at The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

I appear before you today representing OVMA in opposition to House Bill 67. First and foremost, OVMA would like to thank Representatives Tom Brinkman and Brigid Kelly in their endeavor to address pet overpopulation. Pet overpopulation is, of course, a concern to our society and the veterinary community; however, if incentives are needed to help address it, the OVMA Board of Directors respectfully questions whether the use of veterinary continuing education is the most appropriate vehicle. We are working with the sponsors to find a solution that will both move the bill forward and address our concerns.

Regardless of what structure and scope humane societies, shelters, dog pounds and rescues take, they often seek the help of veterinarians in their community to assist with a variety of animal care and welfare needs. Certainly volunteering time for spay/neuter services is one of these requests, but there are also vaccination clinics, hoarding and animal abuse situations, disease outbreaks, re-homing and, at times,

euthanasia of animals who are suffering. Veterinarians volunteer countless hours to assist shelters and humane societies with these services that are critical to not only the animals themselves, but to our communities at large.

Additionally, veterinarians volunteer outside the animal shelter in numerous ways as well. We assist with animal rescue during natural disasters, treat injured animals that are lost or have no known owner, provide care for the pets of the homeless, and offer learning experiences for tomorrow's veterinary professionals, just to name a few.

In essence, what we are sharing is that, while volunteering one's time for sterilizing animals is certainly admirable and worthy, it is but one of the many ways veterinarians help their communities. To single out one of these important services for "credit" is perhaps viewing the entire body of volunteer work done by veterinarians in ways that conveys a singular focus to a broader need.

Like human medicine, veterinary medicine is constantly evolving. The goal of continuing education is to advance our knowledge of an ever-changing science and, in doing so, improve the health of our patients. Unlike human physicians, however, veterinarians aren't limited to treating one species; we care for pets, livestock, and exotics. An estimated 70 percent of emerging diseases present first in animals before being transmitted to people, and veterinarians are on the front lines of understanding and controlling zoonotic diseases.

As such, the OVMA Board is concerned that using continuing education credit for a purpose other than to foster an ongoing improvement in skills and knowledge dilutes the value of that education and ultimately falls short of meeting the standards of continuing education. Acquiring CE credit by performing something we already know how to do brings

us no closer to understanding new approaches to diagnostics, novel treatment methods, or emerging diseases. The OVMA Board believes that the concept of lifelong education should be preserved to the extent reasonably possible, for in doing so, the animal-owning public, their animals, and the profession itself is best served.

It is also important to note that veterinary CE can be obtained in a variety of local, state, and national venues, both in person and online, and often at minimal or no cost. Finally, if a nonprofit has difficulties finding veterinarians to assist with spay/neuter services, it could be caused by a number of factors that have nothing to do with education or volunteer incentives. An absence of income need verification, appropriate quantities of surgical materials and drugs, or arrangements for follow-up care may contribute to these challenges.

OVMA looks forward to working with the sponsors of House Bill 67 to address these concerns. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Ohio's veterinary community. I would be pleased to answer any questions.