

Testimony of Rustin M. Moore, Dean of the Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine on  
Senate Bill 131 before the Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

September 25, 2019

Thank you and good afternoon Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member O'Brien and all members of the Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

My name is Rustin M. Moore and I am the dean of the Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Ohio's only college of veterinary medicine. Our college educates and prepares future generations of veterinarians who serve in a variety of roles in Ohio and beyond.

I've been pondering and trying to understand the real and credible reasons for opposition to Senate Bill 131, which is to change the name from Registered Veterinary Technician to Registered Veterinary Nurse. I'm wondering what all of the fuss is over this issue.

As the last person to provide testimony and late in the day, I thought I would provide a bit of levity as well as clarify and to emphasize some important points, some of which were addressed in earlier testimony.

The word "nurse" originally came from the Latin word "nutrire", meaning to suckle, referring to a Wet Nurse, which is a woman who breast feeds and cares for another's child. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a nurse as follows: (1) a person who cares for the sick or infirm specifically : a licensed health-care professional who practices independently or is supervised by a physician, surgeon, or dentist and who is skilled in promoting and maintaining health; (2) a woman who suckles an infant not her own (known as a wet nurse); (3) a woman who takes care of a young child (known as a dry nurse); (4) a worker form of a social insect (such as an ant or a bee) that cares for the young; and (5) a female mammal used to suckle the young of another a nurse cow, nurse mare, etc. The word nurse is used in many ways. For example: registered nurse, school nurse, nurse practitioner; office nurse; hospital nurse; nurse anesthetist; clinical nurse specialist; nurse midwife; nurse practitioner as well as others.

It should be clear that a "nurse" is NOT a singular job, title, educational requirements or certifications. I do not believe that nurses "own" the word nurse. No more so than physicians owning the word "doctor". For example, physicians, both medical doctors (MD) and doctors of osteopathic medicine (DO) are referred to as physicians and doctors even though their training is different. Doctor of dental surgery (DDS, dentists), doctors of podiatric medicine (DPM, podiatrists), chiropractors, doctors of veterinary medicine (DVM) or veterinary medical doctors (VMD) otherwise known as veterinarians; and doctors of philosophy (PhD) are all referred to as doctors. I seriously doubt that if the public is visiting any of these professionals that they would be confused because of the reason they are actually visiting that particular professional. Another example would be engineers. Many times people state they are an engineer, but engineers come in all varieties – chemical, civil, aeronautical, environmental, electrical, and more. In all of these instances of doctors, nurses and engineers there is a modifying word that provides further clarity: medical doctor, doctor of dental surgery, etc.; registered nurse, licensed professional nurse, nurse practitioner, etc.; and civil engineer, electrical engineer, chemical engineer, etc. In this case, veterinary would be the modifying term for registered veterinary nurse.

One of the concerns I've heard is that the term nurse applied in veterinary medicine will confuse the public. I strongly believe the contrary is true – It will bring clarity and reduce confusion regarding what a registered veterinary technician can do and accurately reflect the educational

background/requirements, and their level of knowledge and skill levels. You heard earlier testimony from someone who is both a registered veterinary technician and a registered nurse describing the similarities in education and duties, and that she would proudly use the term, registered veterinary nurse, and doesn't have any fear of confusion or a need to "protect" the word nurse. Although educational backgrounds are very similar between nurses and registered veterinary technicians, there is one major difference. Registered veterinary technicians must learn, be tested on and receive licensure across all species other than people, whereas nurses only have to learn the anatomy, physiology, disease, etc. of one species, homo sapiens (humans).

The central reason for the name change is to provide clarity to the public and to provide some standardization of terminology. This bill does not change the scope of activities or duties of a registered veterinary technician. I have heard the argument that people will be confused by the word registered veterinary nurse or even if it were shortened to "nurse" in a veterinary practice. It is absurd to think that people who take their animals to a veterinary clinic when introduced to the registered veterinary nurse, veterinary nurse or even nurse, would think that it is a human nurse. Nurses cannot practice "nursing" on animals and registered veterinary technicians/nurses cannot practice "nursing" on people. I practiced as equine surgeon for 17 years and regularly referred to the registered veterinary technicians as "nurse" to my clients because that is a term they understood. They never asked questions. If I said, veterinary technician or registered veterinary technician, they had quizzical looks of confusion and asked many questions. This wasted precious time and required extra effort to build confidence and trust, which is not good for the wellbeing of the patient, in this case an animal.

To the point made earlier with the question of "What would be the harm of not using the term "nurse in registered veterinary nurse? I would rhetorically ask the corollary question: "What harm would we be doing by using the term "nurse" in registered veterinary nurse." I believe the harm would be greater by not using it than using it for the stated reasons.

There was also a question or statement made earlier by a committee member that the differences in time for various degrees or titles differentiates nurses from registered veterinary technicians. It is not the time that is important – there are two-year, four-year and other requirements for various levels/titles of a nurse. Rather than time, mastery of the content, knowledge and skills that are necessary and required for a given degree/position and the certification/licensing process that ensures competency and protects the public.

As has been stated previously, the term registered veterinary nurse more accurately reflects the scope of activities, procedures, skills, and knowledge of what a registered veterinary technician is permitted to do and perform based upon the Ohio Revised Code.

Why shouldn't Ohio be the model and take the lead in the United States with regard to accepting and adopting the title of registered veterinary nurse?

The Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine and the Ohio State Veterinary Medical Center, which employs a large number of registered veterinary technicians and helps provide experiential learning opportunities for veterinary technician students, are in full and strong support of Senate Bill 131 to change the name of a registered veterinary technician to a registered veterinary nurse.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony and I would be pleased to answer any questions the committee may have.