

# OHIO VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



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Testimony of Liesa Stone, DVM  
Senate Bill 232  
Ohio Senate Agriculture Committee  
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Good afternoon Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Hoagland, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I am Dr. Liesa Stone current President of the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association. OVMA is a statewide professional association representing some 2700 veterinarians practicing in a variety of disciplines and over five hundred veterinary students at The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine where I also serve as the Assistant Dean for External Affairs.

I appear before you today representing OVMA as an interested party on Senate Bill 232. Let me first share that the OVMA appreciates and commends Senator Thomas for sponsoring this legislation and in doing so seeking to provide a unique approach to address concerns with pet overpopulation. Despite considerable progress in significantly reducing the number of unwanted animals in animal shelters work remains in further reducing the over population of dogs and cats in our country.

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 is one of these requests but there are also vaccination clinics, assistance with hoarding and animal abuse, disease outbreaks, re-homing and at times euthanasia of animals who are suffering. Each is important to our communities and their animal populations and each is done throughout

Ohio by veterinarians who may be volunteering their time and expertise or offering services at significantly reduced cost.

Of course veterinarians volunteer in countless other ways too such as in natural disasters, taking care of injured animals presented to them by a concerned citizen with no known owner, in caring for the pets of the homeless, and in providing learning experiences for tomorrow's veterinarian and veterinary technicians 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 many ways veterinarians may help their communities. To single out one for "credit" is perhaps viewing the body of volunteer work done by veterinarians in ways that convey a singular focus to a broader need.

If there are challenges in a community with obtaining veterinarians to assist with spay/neuter by a non-profit it could be factors which may make the veterinarians uncomfortable with the circumstances such as an absence of income need verification, appropriate levels of donated surgical materials and drugs, arrangements for follow up care or others.

The above perspectives are not an objection to SB 232 but ones of consideration and background.

One other consideration and the one which our Board discussed at length when considering this legislation is the use of veterinary continuing education credit for a purpose other than to foster a continual improvement in skills and knowledge. Veterinary medicine

like human medicine is constantly evolving with new approaches to diagnostics and treatments, not to mention emerging diseases.

Veterinary continuing education exists to advance veterinary knowledge and in doing so not only animal care but human health – an estimated seventy percent of emerging diseases present themselves first in animals before being transmitted to people. My Board believes that the concept of lifelong veterinary 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 venues from local to national, in varying in person and on-line formats and often at minimal or no cost options.

In summary the OVMA truly appreciates the sentiment behind SB 232 and the concept of additionally valuing the volunteer work of veterinarians in their communities. In the right circumstances for the right reasons you will often find veterinarians donating their skills not for a tangible reward but because animal care for many of them is not just a vocation it's a passion.

Pet overpopulation is of course a concern to our society and the veterinary community, however if incentives are needed to help address it our Board respectfully questions whether the use of veterinary continuing education is the most appropriate vehicle.

Thank you for the opportunity to present interested party testimony on Senate Bill 232. I would be pleased to answer any questions.