



**Representatives Brinkman & Kelly
House Bill 67 Joint Sponsor Testimony**

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chairman Schaffer, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 67.

This bill was originally brought to us by a constituent in Hamilton County. The idea was to find a way to help Ohio veterinarians receive necessary continuing education credits while also working to responsibly and ethically curb the issue of pet overpopulation in our state. Through careful deliberation in the House, and through continuing work with advocates and industry professionals, House Bill 67 accomplishes these goals while also creating additional opportunities for attracting and retaining veterinary talent in our state through a loan repayment program. In addition, this bill will not cost any additional money and instead will make use of already available funds.

Specifically, House Bill 67 creates the Veterinarian Student Debt Assistance Program, which allows the State Veterinary Medical Licensing Board to repay all or part of any educational loans taken out by a veterinarian while in veterinary college. In order to qualify, applicants must agree to perform charitable veterinarian services (include free spay and neutering services and any other services specified by the Board in rules). Winners are selected via lottery and must agree to perform charitable veterinarian services in Ohio and to reside in Ohio for a set period of time (although not longer than two years). The Board has broad discretion in creating rules for the program, but there is a great deal of transparency in the process in order that we may ensure accountability to the public. In addition, the Board must submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly describing the operations of the program during the previous biennium.

As previously mentioned, the creation of this important program will not require more funding. The aforementioned awards will be funded through total revenue credited to Occupational Licensing and Regulatory Fund during the previous biennium. You can see an example on pg. 6 of the LSC summary to see how the formula would have worked if the Board certified an amount for the program on August 1, 2019.

House Bill 67 is a bipartisan bill that has received strong support in the House. The bill passed unanimously in committee and passed 92 to 2 on the House floor. This commonsense legislation will continue to invest in Ohio's veterinarians, while also safely managing our pet population. We appreciate the chance to offer testimony on House Bill 67 and would be happy to answer any questions.