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Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Sponsor Testimony on Senate Bill 268
June 11, 2024

Chair Schaffer, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present Sponsor Testimony in support of Senate Bill 268.

I would also like to thank my joint sponsor, Senator Huffman, for joining me on this legislation.

SB 268 builds on an already successful telehealth for pediatric and adult medicine by expanding this practice to veterinary medicine. I will let my joint sponsor speak to the medical side of this in a minute but I would like to focus on the business side.

By expanding telehealth to veterinarian medicine, we will increase access to veterinarian care across the state. In addition, this legislation will be particularly beneficial for those in rural or underserved areas as well for those who do not have access to transportation.

Not to mention this will make veterinarian care more efficient and timely in many cases. Imagine being able to take a photo or a short video of an animal as opposed to stressing an animal with a car ride and exposure to other animals when a qualified licensed vet can make a quick determination and call in your prescription.

We have heard some concern over the client patient relationship in regards to vet telehealth. That is why there are several parameters in current law as well as in this legislation that will help ensure that the veterinary-client-patient relationship is preserved including:

- Veterinarians must be licensed in Ohio
- Standards of care equally apply to in-person and tele-vet visits

I will now turn this testimony over to my joint sponsor, Sen. Dr. Huffman who will expand on the medical side of this legislation.

Many things in the medical field have changed in recent years. Telehealth specifically was expanded and has been quite successful in many areas of the nation as well as right here in Ohio. There is no reason to not follow suit with veterinarian care.

Several other states have already enacted legislation allowing for telehealth for veterinarians including Arizona, which enacted telehealth for veterinarians in 2023. California as well as Florida followed suit by enacting telehealth for veterinarians earlier this year.

In addition to the other safety measures that my joint sponsor mention earlier, there are additional checks and balances in this legislation including:

- Veterinarians may recommend an in-person visit if they can't determine issue
- Veterinarians must gain informed consent from the client
- Under current federal law can only prescribe certain medications and SB 268 goes one step further to prohibit prescribing controlled substances without in person physical examination of the patient
- Prescriptions prescribed to a patient via tele-health can only be for up to 30 days and no more than one refill for no more than 30 days before in person visit is required

In a time where there are national veterinarian shortages and continued competition to attract and retain veterinarians, Ohio should not allow an opportunity pass by to be an attractive place for veterinarians to be licensed and practice.

Chair, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and fellow members of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, we thank each of you for your time and interest in SB 268. We would be happy to answer any questions at this time.