

Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
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Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide testimony today. My name is Rustin Moore, and I am the Dean of The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine. It is my privilege to share information about our college and the impact it has on Ohio, and to ask for your continuing support for our comprehensive efforts and contributions.

First, a few quick facts about the college:

- Ohio State's College of Veterinary Medicine is the only school of veterinary medicine in the state, and one of only 33 veterinary schools in the country.
- Founded in 1885, we are one of the oldest and largest veterinary colleges in the nation with 165 students per class and alumni working in all 50 states and 40 countries.
- As a land-grant university, our mission is to serve in education, research, outreach, and patient care.
- Over 80 percent of the about 3,300 veterinarians in the state are alumni of our college.

The costs to operate a college of veterinary medicine and educate a veterinary student are similar among veterinary colleges, especially across the 25 land-grant institutions with similar missions. Among our land-grant peers, Ohio State's College of Veterinary Medicine remains the lowest funded veterinary school when comparing state support on a per student basis, and even some private schools receive more state support than we do. Despite this disparity, our school consistently maintains a top 5 ranking nationally and a top 10 ranking internationally, all while operating with fewer faculty and more students than our peers. Additionally, the college has not received any public funds for capital expenses since 1998, yet over \$80 million of new and renovated facilities have occurred in the last eight years through philanthropic support.

We are deeply appreciative of the line item (235569) for the college included in Governor DeWine's executive budget. This funding is critical, and I am here to ask for your support of an amendment to increase this line item from \$5.15 million to \$7.5 million in FY24, and from \$5.3 million to \$10 million in FY25. The total requested increase is just over \$7 million dollars across the biennium. Even with this increase, we would still be far below the median level of state support received by our peers.

Your enhanced support through this amendment will have a substantial return on investment. The state's partnership helps our college to maintain programmatic excellence, recruit and retain top talent in a highly competitive market, prepare the next generation of veterinarians, serve the animals and people in Ohio, support the state's largest industry, agriculture, and provide an accessible and affordable veterinary medical education for Ohioans.

Veterinarians play a vital role in protecting Ohio's over \$120 billion agricultural industry by keeping livestock and poultry populations healthy and productive while safeguarding their welfare; ensuring an abundant and safe food supply; and preventing disease outbreaks, like highly pathogenic avian influenza, African swine fever and foot and mouth disease, which could decimate these industries.

Less visible, but equally important, are veterinarians and researchers on the front lines of prevention of zoonotic infectious diseases transmitted from animals to people such as Ebola, influenza, Lyme disease, SARS, rabies, and anthrax. Our scientists conduct groundbreaking agricultural animal research and engage in comparative biomedical and translational research of diseases impacting animals and humans, like cancer, arthritis, and diabetes.

Aside from their impact on the agricultural industry and research, the importance of veterinarians is keenly felt by families throughout many households in your districts. Approximately 75% of Ohio households have at least one pet, and these companion animal owners contribute over \$4 billion annually to the economy. The veterinary services industry provided more than 16,500 jobs and about \$440 million in annual pay in Ohio in 2021. Veterinary-related jobs increased 46% in Ohio between 2010 and 2021, almost seven times the total statewide employment increase. The veterinary industry is at the heart of a group of animal care industries that together accounted for more than 43,000 jobs and approximately \$940 million in annual pay in 2021 in Ohio.

While the impact of the veterinary profession on our economy is clear, we are also facing competition to keep Ohio's best and brightest students in state for their training. Despite limiting tuition increases, Ohio students can currently attend other top-ranked schools and pay less tuition as an out-of-state student than they would pay in-state at our college. We are working to change this, and during my time as dean we have increased philanthropic scholarships by over 730% (from \$370,000 to \$3.1 million) and decreased educational debt from over \$200,000 to \$160,000, but even this is inadequate. The extra state dollars will help keep our best and brightest home.

In Ohio and across the nation, the veterinary profession is facing critical workforce shortages that impact all areas of the profession, from the veterinarians who work in our communities, to the veterinary specialists who care for the most complex cases, to the faculty who conduct research and prepare the next generation of veterinarians. The additional funding provided through this amendment will help position the college for success, sustainability, and impact.

In closing, this amendment has the dedicated support and endorsement of the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association, with a membership of over 2,600 Ohio veterinarians, and support from a host of other industry and commodity groups that recognize the critical role veterinarians play in protecting the state's agricultural industry and growing Ohio's workforce and economy.

Thank you for your time and for allowing me to share my pride and dedication in the College of Veterinary Medicine. I hope you will strongly consider supporting this amendment and urge its adoption into the substitute version of HB 33. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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