

Testimony of Dr. Zeke Zekoff

Currently Chief Veterinary Surgeon at Kyle Veterinary Hospital

President and Founder of United Pet Fund

OVMA Distinguished Service Award Winner (2010)

Past President of Ohio Animal Health Foundation

Past President of the Cincinnati Veterinary Medical Association

In Support of 2025 Ohio Senate Bill 60 – Veterinary Telehealth

Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Chairman Schaffer, Members of the Committee

May 27, 2025, 3:00 PM | Columbus, OH

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you again today. My name is Dr. Zeke Zekoff. I'm a practicing veterinarian in the State of Ohio with over 40 years of experience, and I come before you today as a strong proponent of Senate Bill 60.

This is not the first time I've come to this Committee to advocate for this legislation. I've visited both my State Senator's office and my State Representative during the OVMA Legislative Day in the Spring of 2024. I've spent the past year championing this bill because I firmly believe it represents a much-needed step forward in how we deliver veterinary care in the 21st century.

Senate Bill 60, sponsored by Senators Wilkin and Huffman, is not radical. It is responsible.

This bill does not eliminate or replace in-person veterinary care—it simply provides veterinarians with *another tool* in the toolbox. A tool that reflects how we already live, communicate, and work in today's world. Much like in human medicine, virtual consultations can offer triage, guidance, and even follow-up support in appropriate situations. It allows for real-time decisions, access for those in rural or underserved areas, and faster care when it's needed most.

Let me be blunt—Ohio is falling behind.

Many states have already passed similar telehealth legislation for veterinary care. These laws recognize that the veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR) can be initiated safely through live video when a veterinarian uses their training, judgment, and compassion. Senate Bill 60 doesn't force any veterinarian to use telehealth—it merely makes it legal.

And it gives Ohio pet owners and animal shelters and rescues access to care that is often currently out of reach due to geography, finances, or crisis.

During my decades in the profession, I've seen first-hand how innovation can improve care and save lives. But I've also watched our profession be hamstrung by outdated regulations that assume every patient can be brought to a clinic, every time. That's just not reality anymore. Not for working families. Not for the elderly. Not for the disabled. Not for low-income pet owners. Not for those running shelters and rescues on a shoestring budget.

This bill is about *access*. It's about *compassion*. And it's about *trusting licensed veterinarians* to know when telehealth is appropriate—and when it's not.

This Memorial Day weekend, my wife and I visited the Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation. On the wall of that museum is a simple but powerful statement:

“What is an Innovation? It addresses a real need. It improves on something we already do or use. It changes our behavior.”

That is exactly what Senate Bill 60 does. It doesn't replace veterinary care. It improves the way we deliver it. It responds to a real need. And yes, it has the potential to change access and outcomes for the better.

But there's one more quote in that museum that I believe is even more relevant today—words from Steve Jobs:

“Technology is nothing. What's important is that you have a faith in people—that they're basically good and smart—and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them.”

Honored Senators, I ask you today to have faith in the veterinarians of Ohio. Give us this tool. Trust us to use it wisely. And help us move veterinary care into the future by passing Senate Bill 60.

Thank you for your time and your consideration. I'm happy to take any questions.