



North Dakota Veterinary Medical Association

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Testimony of Frank Walker, Veterinarian In Support of SB 2140 March 8, 2021

Chairman Owens and Members of the House Education Committee:

I'd like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to present North Dakota Veterinary Medical Association's (NDVMA) support for SB 2140.

My name is Dr. Frank Walker, and I am a veterinarian at Flickertail Veterinary Service in New Rockford, North Dakota. My practice is mixed animal with a primary focus on food animal production. I am also the immediate past president of the North Dakota Veterinary Medical Association (NDVMA). I have been involved in organized veterinary medicine on the state and national level during my professional career including serving six years on the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Council of Education (COE). This body accredits veterinary colleges across the United States, Canada, Mexico, and internationally. I served a three-term appointment to the North Dakota Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners and served on the board of directors and as president of the American Association of Veterinary State Boards, which is a regulatory body dealing with national licensing issues.

The Professional Student Exchange Program (referred to as PSEP) was established in 1977 to provide North Dakota students access to veterinary education not available in North Dakota. Acceptance into any veterinary program is highly competitive. State funded veterinary schools accept a higher proportion of their own resident applicants leaving fewer seats available for those who apply from out of state, which increases the competition even more for those few remaining seats. Through the PSEP program, the State of North Dakota has entered into agreements that do two things for our veterinary students:

1. The State of North Dakota has negotiated PSEP agreements with specific universities that guarantee seats for ND students. Through these agreements the ND student doesn't have to compete against other applicants for admission to the college of veterinary medicine. Note that the student must still meet admission requirements and be officially accepted into the college of veterinary medicine. PSEP in essence "levels the playing field" for admission of ND students by reserving access to 12 seats/slots for qualified ND students at the following universities:
 - 4 slots at Iowa State University
 - 5 slots at Kansas State University (KSU)
 - Note that admission to the KSU program requires demonstrated interest in mixed animal/food animal practice on the part of the applicant.
 - 2 slots at University of Minnesota
 - 1 slot in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE)
2. PSEP pays the nonresident tuition differential (~\$105,513 per 4 yrs/student weighted average) for students who are admitted to these seats. PSEP provides a level playing

field for the cost of an education as the PSEP student is responsible to cover the “resident” tuition costs (~\$107,682 per 4 yrs/student weighted average) of their education and the state of ND covers the remaining costs above the “resident” tuition costs. These students are not being given a free ride or free education, they still must cover the remaining in-state cost or portion of their education.

From 1977, when PSEP was established, until 1983 there was a requirement to comeback and work in the state for three years or payback all their PSEP funding. This requirement was repealed in 1983. The “comeback or payback” was repealed because some graduate veterinarians who received PSEP funding were unable to find employment in ND and the ND University System found the terms of the repayment note were difficult to enforce and collect. In the 2017 legislative session, a bill was introduced to require comeback and payback for PSEP students but was voted down. In the 2019 legislative session, a provision was added to ND University System bill, where PSEP is funded, to again require graduate veterinarians to “comeback or payback” their PSEP funding. This provision was added in conference committee during the final days of the session, so there was no opportunity for public hearing or stakeholder input or debate. In the current 2021 legislative session, we are in support of SB 2140 that seeks to release PSEP recipients from the “comeback or payback” provision.

NDVMA greatly appreciates the opportunity that PSEP provides for veterinary students by paying the differential between the non-resident and resident tuition cost, thus allowing the student to enroll at the resident tuition cost for the selected university and for providing reserved seats for qualified ND students. This program is critical in providing qualified students the ability to pursue a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree. We believe the best interests of our stakeholders and students are served by not requiring them to “comeback or payback” the PSEP funding.

We ask for your support of SB 2140 that will remove the requirement to “come back or payback” PSEP funding on the part of veterinary students from North Dakota.

Dr. Derine Winning and Dr. Laura Beaudoin are joining us via Zoom to present additional supportive testimony. I'd be happy to answer any questions.