



North Dakota Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners

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**Testimony of
Dr. Sara Lyons
On behalf of the North Dakota Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners
In Support of Senate Bill 2129
Before the House Agriculture Committee
March 13, 2025**

Chairman Beltz and members of the House Agriculture Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Dr. Sara Lyons and I am the Executive Secretary for the North Dakota Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners. I am here today to present testimony on behalf of the board in support of Senate Bill 2129 relating to the practice of veterinary medicine and veterinary technology and to request two amendments.

The primary intent of this bill is to update and modify existing language to reflect changes within the professions of veterinary medicine and veterinary technology. Currently, there are areas of statute that contain cumbersome and outdated language that are confusing and restrictive for licensees and do not serve the needs of the board or the public. There was no intent by the board to change the existing licensing requirements or scope of practice for veterinarians.

Sections 3-9, 11-13, 20-22, and 24 provide clarification of language for the reasons expressed above and will not be addressed specifically within this testimony. The revised language allows for a more streamlined process for issuing licenses and completion of administrative duties. There is language that the board feels would be more appropriate in Administrative Code and has prepared the necessary revisions to reflect that if this bill is passed.

All references to page and line numbers within this testimony refer to the version 'Proposed Amendments to First Engrossment' prepared by Legislative Council staff for Senator Boschee March 12, 2025.

Section 1 (Page 1, line 12 through Page 6, line 17)

Section 1 has several new definitions that are used throughout this chapter and help to clarify and define existing terminology. A definition for the practice of veterinary technology was added to replace the previous list of veterinary technician duties and allow veterinary technicians to be utilized as deemed appropriate by the veterinarian.

Section 2 (Page 6, line 18 through Page 7, line 16)

This section was added to provide detailed requirements for the veterinarian-client-patient relationship, or VCPR, which is the cornerstone of veterinary practice. The importance of in-person establishment of the VCPR cannot be stressed enough. Veterinary patients cannot tell us how they are feeling, and video calls do not replace a hands-on examination for assessment of a patient. Therefore, the VCPR should only be established through an in-person examination or in-person visit to a premise where an animal is kept.

Section 10 (Page 12, lines 2 through 22)

The current statute does not provide adequate guidelines for the regulation of the profession of veterinary technology. Licensing requirements for veterinary technicians have been clarified in Section 10 with the addition of a jurisprudence examination. Currently, only veterinarians must take this examination. There are several benefits to adding this requirement for veterinary technicians including familiarizing those individuals with the laws that govern their profession.

Section 14 (Page 16, line 24 through Page 18, line 31)

This section pertains to exceptions to the unlicensed practice of veterinary medicine. This section was amended in response to concerns from the public regarding animal care professionals other than veterinarians and veterinary technicians. An exception was added for those individuals engaged in massage therapy and grooming, as examples. It is important to note that this exception does not allow for these individuals to diagnose, prescribe or to treat a new condition, but rather work under the direction of a veterinarian to care for a patient with a previously diagnosed condition.

Section 15 (Page 19, lines 1 through 31)

This section was created to provide exceptions to the unlicensed practice of veterinary technology.

Section 16 (Page 20, line 1 through Page 21, line 22)

Section 16 was initially amended to clean up language and include veterinary technology but was additionally amended upon recommendation from the Senate Workforce Development Committee to remove the term immoral. **(Page 20, lines 14-17)**

AMENDMENT: Section 17 (Strike lines 1-14 on Page 23)

The board proposes an amendment to Section 17 striking lines 1-14 on Page 23. This amendment was previously included in the amended version passed by the Senate Workforce Development Committee but unfortunately was not included in the engrossed version that was passed by the Senate.

Section 18 (Page 23, line 29 through Page 25, line 20)

A new section was created to allow for self-reporting by a veterinarian or veterinary technician and include language regarding treatment and monitoring programs. Veterinarians are not currently included in the NDPHP, but this language allows the statutory authority to join such a program in the future if available.

Section 19 (Page 25, line 21 through Page 26, line 3)

This section was created to allow for immunity for individuals involved with complaints, disciplinary action and reporting of impaired veterinarians or veterinary technicians.

Section 23 (Page 27, line 24 through Page 28, line 7)

The board does not wish to restrict veterinarians from employing non-licensed individuals but does wish to provide recognition of the importance of licensed veterinary technicians and their contribution to the profession. The goal of Section 23 is to provide title protection for veterinary technicians and a penalty for those who practice veterinary technology without a license.

The use of telemedicine is growing within the veterinary field and there is currently no statutory language pertaining to this area. Sections 25, 27 and 28 provide a framework for the use of telemedicine within the boundaries of an established VCPR. This VCPR must be established by the requirements listed in Section 2, which include an in-person examination or in-person visit to the premises where the animal is kept. The board feels strongly that allowing establishment of the VCPR through telemedicine may lead to inadequate assessment of a patient and therefore improper diagnosis and treatment.

AMENDMENT: Section 25 (Strike line 29 on Page 28 through line 9 on Page 29)

The second amendment proposed by the board is to strike line 29 on Page 28 through line 9 on Page 29. This amendment was also previously included in the amended version passed by the Senate Workforce Development Committee but unfortunately was not included in the engrossed version that was passed by the Senate.

The board has worked closely with the North Dakota Veterinary Medical Association and North Dakota Veterinary Technician Association throughout this process and feels that the amended version of SB2129 addresses all concerns expressed by these organizations as well as concerns that have been raised by the public.

The board appreciates your consideration and urges a do pass recommendation with the amendments provided. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.