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11108 County Road 19  
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North Dakota Legislative Council  
State Capital  
600 east Boulevard Avenue  
Bismarck, ND 58505

Senate Workforce Development Public Hearing,

This is a testimony opposing senate bill number 2129. After reviewing the proposed bill from the North Dakota board of veterinary medical examiners, this bill needs to NOT pass due to being unfair to the public, businesses, animal owners, and work force industry.

On behalf of the Balanced Stride Equine services, we excel in excellence in the rehabilitation and condition of equines, commonly known as horses. This business strives to serve their clients to their fullest potential by providing exceptional services. Unfortunately, if this bill passes, we will be forced to close our facility along with several others across the state. At our business, we provide therapy services utilizing an aqua treadmill and massage therapy techniques tailored to each individual horse. Each individual horse comes to us with specific therapy instructions specified by that client's veterinarian, and we work very closely with their equine veterinarian. Not only do we provide weekly updates to their veterinarians, but we specifically follow their protocols with their therapy regime.

Not only do we offer these services at our business, but we travel to different clients and rodeos practice massage therapy. These performance horses require this type of therapy, and do you think veterinarians are going to travel on the weekends to rub horses for a living? Probably not since they went through YEARS of education and spent TONS of money on tuition.

Under Section 1. Amendment. Section 43-20-01.1 definitions it states, "Complementary, integrative, and alternative therapies means a heterogeneous group of preventative diagnostic, and therapeutic philosophies and practices not considered part of conventional veterinary medicine practiced by most veterinarians." This statement alone includes everything that my business has to offer, massage therapy, aquatic rehabilitation and conditioning, kinesiology taping, and PMF technology. Later in the bill on page 3 line 19, it continues to define "Practice of veterinary medicine ... including complementary, integrative, and alternative therapies..." As you can see, in the addition of these statements, my business, which also employs three other individuals, would be forced to close the doors increasing the unemployment status and taking away a large revenue source for families.

In addition to this bill, it is trying to stop the certifications of certificates according to the redaction on page two line seven, earned by individuals, who have worked a large portion of their life. These individuals in therapeutic philosophies are very skillful and have learned from experts in that field whether it is massage, aquatic, or kinesiology-taping therapies. Ask yourself these questions, 1) Who do you go see when you get sick? 2) Who do you go see after to help in recovery or therapy?

You may answer a doctor to the first question and a therapist to the second question. Let those who specialize in their fields perform their duties and this bill would eliminate a lot of therapists.

Equines play a huge role in this state whether it is from trail riding, ranching, rodeos, or performances at the Medora Musical. This state is in the need of equine specialists just as humans are in the need of doctors and therapists. As you can see, this bill has changed in numerous areas, but it is also going to eliminate a lot of jobs and close several equine facilities across the state of North Dakota. Allow those who are practicing massage and aquatic therapies to continue utilizing their talents and skills to help this industry. Almost every individual practicing these alternative therapies are certified individuals with specific trainings from experts. I encourage you to stop this bill and force the board to revise these statements to allow individuals to stay certified helping this crucial industry.

Look at the state of Minnesota who have adopted this industry. Only one facility in the entire state is authorized to utilize these alternative therapies because they have a veterinarian on staff. We are better than this state. Let's demonstrate to other states how it is possible to allow gifted individuals to become certified in this field and bring some good to this state. Let's stop those who are trying to monopolize or control specific industries. Let's live the American Dream and work hard.

Here is a little story of that American Dream coming true. My wife worked very diligently and hard to get into veterinary school. She received excellent grades and even worked for a veterinary clinic for seven years to gain experience to be eligible for veterinary school. After years of applying to Vet School, she never got accepted due to high competition and only a few being selected each year. She then decided to chase her dreams of helping equines, horses, in a different way. Now she is the co-founder with me at Balanced Stride Equine Services where she utilizes aquatic and massage therapies to help these animals perform at their highest potential. We don't diagnose or treat animals, all we do is just help them live a better life.

I am going to leave you with this last thought. We recently received a horse at our business with a strict therapy regime. This horse was examined by a well-known equine veterinarian in the state and was provided with a strict aquatic therapy regime from the veterinarian. The owner of this horse is a large veterinarian but does not simply have the time or resources available to follow the therapy protocol. This is where people and businesses in my industry step up and help by providing the necessary time and tools for these animals to achieve their highest performance possible by living a better.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas P. Van Ness". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a long, horizontal stroke.

Thomas Van Ness  
Balanced Stride Equine Services  
Co-Founder