

Casey Cole  
Maine Veterinary Medical Association  
LD 1220

Dear Senator Baily, Representative Mathieson, and honorable members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services,

I'm Dr. Casey Cole, I'm the chair of the Maine Veterinary Medical Association Legislative Committee and I am testifying on behalf of the MVMA against LD 1220.

Last year, the Maine Chiropractic Association (MCA) approached the MVMA regarding this bill. We engaged with the MCA in good faith, hoping to collaborate on creating meaningful enforcement and accountability mechanisms to address chiropractors operating outside their scope of practice. Our organization frequently receives reports from members about chiropractors unlawfully treating animals. Currently, the only recourse is to report such cases to the District Attorney, which is an impractical and insufficient solution for addressing unqualified individuals practicing on animals. We worked with the MCA and created a list of critical items that we would like to see in the bill for us to support it. This bill as written does not adequately address those critical items that we are concerned about.

The Veterinary Practice Act is clear that veterinarians are the only people who are allowed to diagnose and treat animal diseases and conditions. To that end, we asked the MCA to include in the bill a requirement that any chiropractor can only treat an animal that has been diagnosed and referred by a veterinarian. Section 3c provides a very easy path for a chiropractor to bypass this with just 8 hours of additional training. Such minimal training is grossly inadequate to assess the complex medical conditions, infectious diseases, and zoonotic risks that veterinarians are trained to diagnose through years of education. Through an informal survey of our members, we received multiple accounts of chiropractors inadvertently misdiagnosing animals, resulting in delayed veterinary treatment. This not only jeopardizes animal health but also exploits pet owners who may have limited financial resources and place their trust in unqualified providers.

Additionally, we would like a reasonable time limit on referrals before a veterinarian has to reassess the patient and determine if continued chiropractic care is warranted. This bill also does not define "animal chiropractic care", which is concerning for us. This ambiguity further increases the risk of inconsistent standards and potential harm to animals. A clear definition is required in any medical work.

Finally, there is no clear enforcement mechanism for chiropractors who have not been certified to work on animals, which was one of our main goals in collaborating with the MCA. We would like to see enforcement in statute, rather than be left up to a rulemaking process that does not include veterinarian input.

It is important to note that Maine currently has at least 15 licensed veterinarians who have received specialized training in animal chiropractic and provide these services safely to dogs and equids. These professionals have undergone rigorous education to ensure the health and well-being of the animals they treat.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the committee to oppose LD 1220. Protecting animal welfare requires maintaining high standards of care, and this bill falls far short of that goal. While we oppose this bill, we do urge this committee to consider taking

action to create an enforcement mechanism for the many chiropractors currently working outside of their scope of practice and unlawfully treating animals.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your continued work on behalf of the State of Maine.

Sincerely,

Casey Cole, BVM  
Legislative Chair  
Maine Veterinary Medical Association