Testimony in Support of LD 528
An Act to Address the Rise in Rabies in Animals
by Appointing Certified Rabies Vaccine Administrators
Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
March 13, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker and members of the Committee on Agriculture Conservation and Forestry:

My name is Katie Hansberry and I am the Maine State Director of Humane World for Animals (formerly called the Humane Society of the United States) and current president of Maine Humane whose board includes representatives from the Animal Refuge League of Greater Portland in Westbrook, Animal Welfare Society in Kennebunk, Bangor Humane Society in Bangor, Catahoula Rescue of New England, Greater Androscoggin Humane Society in Lewiston, Maine State Society for the Protection of Animals in Windham, Meow Lounge in Westbrook, Midcoast Humane in Brunswick and Lincoln, Pope Memorial Humane Society in Thomaston, and Spirits Place in St. Albans, and animal control.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 528 and the proposed amendment, which will provide improved access to rabies vaccination by appointing certified rabies vaccinators and licensed veterinary technicians under the indirect supervision of a licensed veterinarian to administer rabies vaccines. There is a significant national and statewide shortage of veterinary professionals, and this expanded access is an important improvement towards vaccination access.

Rabies is a deadly, yet preventable, zoonotic disease and vaccination is key to maintaining control over its spread. The Maine CDC has warned about a concerning increase in the number of rabid animals. "In an advisory issued in June 2023, the Maine CDC said across the state, there were early signs of an active animal rabies season. Through the first five months of 2023, 30 animals had tested positive for rabies. During the same period a year ago, the total was 11."[1] This included a rare case of a kitten from Gardiner testing positive. Expanding who can administer rabies vaccines is great step towards reaching more pets, especially in underserved and remote areas.

Certified Rabies Vaccinators will improve public health and safety. They will be trained and will ensure vaccines are administered properly. Increasing access to trained professionals can help better protect communities from outbreak. It will make it easier for pet owners to comply with vaccination requirements and may even lower the cost of rabies vaccinations for pet owners.
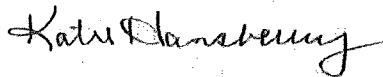
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[1] Jessica Lowell, "Two rabies cases, including a rare cat case, reported in Kennebec County amid summer uptick," *Kennebec Journal*, July 31, 2023.

Reducing barriers to vaccination is important state-wide, but especially in remote and underserved areas.

In addition to creating Certified Rabies Vaccinators, we also strongly support the utilization of licensed veterinary technicians (LVTs) to be able to administer rabies vaccines under the indirect supervision of a veterinarian. LVTs are highly trained, skilled professionals. In Maine, they are required to have education and to pass a licensing exam. The shortage of veterinary professionals impacts availability of services. Utilizing LVTs to administer rabies vaccinations is efficient and frees up veterinarians to focus on procedures that only they are allowed to perform. Indirect supervision is sufficient for administering rabies vaccines which, under proper guidelines, can be safely administered.

Importantly, LD 528 would expand the ability Maine's animal shelters to help address this issue and better serve their communities by allowing the use of Certified Rabies Vaccinators and LVTs to administer rabies vaccinations to the animals in their care and at antirabies clinics.

We strongly urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 528 to improve access to this critical veterinary service and community health practice. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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