

April 3rd, 2025

Senator Bailey, Representative Mathieson and honorable members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee

My name is Dr. Libby Helmer. I am a resident of Monmouth; I am an equine veterinarian, and I am testifying in opposition to LD 1220.

I will start by sharing examples of diseases that can present as musculoskeletal or nerve pain.

1. Most viral infections, some of which are zoonotic.
2. Bacterial infections such as those spread by ticks, as well as clostridial myositis and strep myositis.
3. Primary muscle disorders such as Recurrent exertional rhabdomyolysis, Hyperkalemic periodic paralysis, Equine polysaccharide storage myopathy
4. Immune mediate myositis
5. Nutritional deficiencies such as white muscle disease

Diagnosis of these diseases often involves extensive work up such as blood work, culture, muscle biopsy. Many of these diseases can be deadly without veterinary medical intervention. None of these diseases would be cured with chiropractic care.

Animals are obviously very different from humans. They differ in their biomechanics, spinal conformation, musculature and most importantly how they communicate. Humans can acknowledge where they have pain and why.

After ruling out systemic disease, musculoskeletal pain is diagnosed through extensive examination where a veterinarian watches the horse move, performs flexion tests, and uses diagnostic analgesia. Diagnostic analgesia is a common veterinary procedure where local anesthetic is injected around nerves to temporarily relieve pain in a way that can help isolate areas of concern. After that, imaging such as Xray and ultrasound may be necessary to make a full diagnosis. This systematic approach is imperative to find out the location as well as the source of an animal's pain. Chiropractors have no training in this area even if they complete the required courses. They must rely on the presenting complaint from an owner, which often leads to extreme misdiagnoses, poor return on investment for the owner and an animal who continues to suffer.

Owners may perceive that there is a musculoskeletal problem when there is an internal medicine issue. I have a particular case that demonstrates the danger of the situation that we are already dealing with.

The client had a young horse that was acting uncomfortable; There was a chiropractor at the barn who attempted to relieve the pain but was unsuccessful. By the time I was called the horse was in

severe pain. I was able to diagnose an intestinal torsion, an ailment only cured with surgery, we rushed it to the hospital but unfortunately it was too unstable by the time it got there and did not make it. This delay in care may have cost this animal its life.

Another all too common example of unguided chiropractic treatment is Lyme disease. One of the clinical signs of Lyme disease is joint pain. Owners attempt to treat with chiropractic care but when the horse doesn't get better they finally seek veterinary care. The best chance to treat Lyme disease is in the acute phase; delayed treatment dramatically changes the prognosis once a horse has chronic Lyme disease.

Human chiropractors are already unlawfully working on horses with no repercussion. It is negatively impacting animal welfare and the false information that the chiropractors are relaying to animal owners is a huge setback in owner education and animal husbandry.

It is my goal to impress upon the committee that the health and wellbeing of animals should not be jeopardized by allowing human chiropractors to practice on non-human mammals without guidance and referrals from a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

Thank you for your time,

Libby Helmer MS, DVM