



February 1, 2023

To: House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee

Re: Statement IN SUPPORT of HB 2652

Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Nelson and Goodwin and members of the Committee:

Washington County Animal Services supports HB 2652 and the -1 amendments

This bill will help address an unprecedented shortage of veterinarians and veterinary technicians; professional employees that are an important part of the health care and human services personnel network. We have had a veterinary technician position vacant for almost two years, and our colleagues in the Portland Metro region have experienced similar challenges with filling vacancies in their own animal shelters, veterinary clinics and hospitals.


You might ask, "how do animal care issues relate to health care and human services?"

Oregon has led the way for decades in recognizing the importance of animals when it comes to addressing human services. From public safety to zoonotic diseases to mental health and quality of life, animal and human services are intertwined. Animal issues are people issues. At Washington County, the Department of Health and Human Services tag line is "caring for people, animals and the environment" in recognition of the strong bonds between humans and animals and the importance of including both when providing health and human services.

This critical shortage of veterinarians and veterinary technicians in Oregon is adversely affecting the quality of life of many Oregonians. The inability to schedule an appointment for routine animal vaccinations increases the chance of preventable animal diseases becoming prevalent, and zoonotic diseases like rabies becoming deadly. Keeping pets healthy is an important part of keeping people healthy, and the shortage of veterinary professionals in Oregon is adversely affecting pet owners' ability to access the care their pets need, and they need to ensure their own physical and mental health.

Washington County Animal Services very much supports this bill and we believe passing it will help address the veterinary professional shortage through direct, local control and provision of certain benefits and incentives to potential workers.

Please vote to pass House Bill 2652 and the -1 amendments out of committee.

Respectfully, 

Randall B. Covey, Manager, Washington County Animal Services | 503-846-7148
A Division of the Washington County Department of Health and Human Services