

Submitter: Kelsey Palsgaard  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and  
Wildfire  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB976

Dear Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee,

I am an equine veterinarian practicing in Oregon. I'm writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed S.B. 976 bill, as it would severely hinder the welfare of horses. Veterinarians, who are trained in modern dental practices, should be the ones performing these procedures, not individuals with minimal credentials from short, unregulated courses.

The bill references individuals who are described as "credentialed in equine dentistry," but these credentials are typically earned through short, unregulated two-week courses, which lack oversight to ensure that the practices taught align with current, evidence-based standards. Furthermore, there is no regulatory oversight of equine dentists, leaving no accountability for quality of care or ensuring continuing education.

I've personally seen harm done to horses by these "equine dentists", from improperly floated teeth that prevent proper chewing, to missed infections and untreated dental disease in older horses.

The bill will also not change the fact that non-veterinarians are prohibited from administering sedation, performing nerve blocks or prescribing pain medication while performing surgeries like tooth extractions. Performing equine dentistry without sedation or pain modification will lead to unnecessary pain and fear for horses during procedures. Without proper sedation, dental extractions are cruel. Some of these dentists do sedate illegally, which produces a large amount of danger for the horse as they are not trained in administering those medications which can be deadly.

While some argue the bill is needed due to a shortage of veterinarians, passing S.B. 976 will worsen this problem. Dental care is an important part of veterinary care. It will drive more equine veterinarians out of the profession, making it even harder to access both routine and emergency care. This is especially concerning given the high suicide rate among veterinarians, which is already 10 times that of the general population.

Some supporters also claim the cost of licensed veterinarians is higher than that of equine dentists. However, my experience in states where dentistry is performed under veterinary supervision shows that the cost difference is negligible. Additionally,

veterinarians provide comprehensive care, identifying other health issues and offering appropriate treatments as part of a legitimate veterinarian-client-patient relationship.

Lastly, the claim that veterinarians receive little training in dentistry is simply false. I have invested countless hours in equine dental education, including school, internships, clinical practice, and ongoing continuing education, ensuring I provide the highest level of care for horses.

I strongly urge you to reconsider the implications of this bill for the future of equine care in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Palsgaard DVM