

Chair Golden, and esteemed members of the committee,

My name is Zachary Rhodes. I am a current resident of Nevada, but actively looking to make Oregon my home. I have been practicing equine dentistry for 14 years now. I work on roughly 1200 horses per year. I have completed well over 750 plus hours of formal education in equine dentistry. This includes class room work, continuing education, hands on instruction, and apprenticeship. I am currently a certified member of the International Association of Equine Dentistry and attained my Master Certification in the fall of 2022.

From 2017-2023 I served as the IAED Government Relations Committee Chairman. During my tenure, we successfully legalized dentistry in both Nevada, and Utah. There are currently 7 states that recognize some form of certification as a suitable option for licensure or exemption of non-vet professionals. Kentucky recently passed a bill in the house side that exempts certified equine dentists from the vet practice act, and South Dakota recently passed a bill on the senate side that designates equine dentistry as an act of animal husbandry.

Equine dentistry has been around for hundreds of years. Our craft has been honed and advanced by many Equine Dentists before me. In fact National Geographic published an article several years ago, citing archaeological findings that showed evidence of the earliest forms of equine dentistry in horses performed by the Mongolians roughly 3000 years ago. For many decades ranchers, and farmers performed their own equine dentistry as an act of animal husbandry. It wasn't up until the late 90's and early 2000's when equine dentists advanced instrumentation and started using power instruments, making the work more proficient and less strenuous, that veterinary boards across America started stripping horse owners of their right to choose who provides dental care to their horses.

There are currently 9.2 million horses in the US, according to the AVMA there are approx. only 4125 equine specific large animal vets practicing in the US and of those, only 17 are board certified equine dental specialists. According to an article from the March 2022 issue of the Horse Illustrated Magazine, Amy Grice, VMD, and current treasurer of the AAEP states that less than 2% of vet school graduates take equine practice associate positions each year. There are approximately 4000 vet student graduates each year, that means less than 50 take equine associate positions. Comstock Large Animal Hospital right here in Reno saw 5 veterinarians leave it's practice in 2022, severely impairing their ability to even offer simple services such as routine farm calls like dentistry and vaccinations. This is just one example.

You're going to hear many arguments today, so I'll keep this short and simple. SB 976 will help alleviate a serious crisis that not only horse owners are facing, but the veterinary community as well. As access to care grows increasingly sparse, the veterinary community grows weary of burnout and increasing rates of suicide. SB 976 will provide horse owners with a choice on who provides dental care to their animal while upholding current laws surrounding use of sedative drugs that will still require a valid VCPR and prescription for it's use and can still only be administered by the veterinarian, owner or employee of the owner. SB 976 also adds a layer of credibility in requiring a form of certification. The current vet practice act allows any vet from any practice, large or small animal to purchase dental instruments and use them on horses regardless of education or clinical background.

In closing, I urge you to **pass** SB 976. SB 976 will resolve not just an animal healthcare crisis, but a humanitarian crisis as well as we see the number of vets committing suicide on a yearly basis rise.

Thank you for your time,  
Zachary Rhodes

