

February 20, 2025

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

My name is Erin Wickliffe. I am a horticulturist for the Oregon Department of Agriculture, married to an Equine Veterinarian that practices veterinary medicine in Tangent, Oregon and a horse owner.

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed S.B. 976 bill overlooks the best interest and welfare of the horse and horse owners. Veterinarians, who are rigorously trained in not only dental practices but also can administer the necessary sedation for safety and comfort for both human and horse, 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 these individuals, leaving no accountability for quality of care or ensuring continuing education.

This bill grossly oversimplifies a medical practice of care. It does not see the ramifications of improperly floated teeth that prevent proper chewing, missed infections, untreated dental disease and unforeseen emergency situations that require immediate licensed Veterinary knowledge and ability.

Non-veterinarians are prohibited from administering sedation. Dental work on horses without the ability to sedate is cruel and unsafe in most situations. At minimum, it can amount to unnecessary pain and fear for horses during procedures. For example, dental extractions are cruel without sedation and a local block. 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.

Dental care is an important part of veterinary care. I know that from the comments this committee receives written by horse owners, committee members will understand that dental care appointments with their veterinarians provide great value. This value is found in comprehensive care, identifying other health issues and offering appropriate treatments as part of a legitimate veterinarian-client-patient relationship. It is a full team approach with a full picture. A horse's teeth are critical to the overall health, performance and quality of life of our equine friends. They deserve the best of care.

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

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Erin Wickliffe