

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

I am an equine veterinarian with advanced equine dental training, practicing in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. I am writing to express my strong opposition to proposed SB 976. In my 23 years of equine exclusive veterinary experience, equine dental care done by non-veterinarians causes severe harm to the welfare of horses.



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Thankfully, modern equine dental practices and theories have evolved well past the days of holding a horse down and forcefully shoving a hand file or power tool blindly into their mouth causing irreparable physical and mental harm to the horse. Yet, this is the type of training that most 2-6 week Equine Dental programs teach. Veterinarians are uniquely qualified to be the ones performing dental 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, the bill does not provide the structure or funding to create any regulatory oversight of equine dentists, leaving no accountability for quality of care, recourse for clients and horses harmed and ensuring any form of continuing education.

As an equine exclusive veterinarian with advanced dental training I see the harm done to horses by "equine dentists" on a weekly basis. This harm can include improperly aligned chewing surfaces that prevent proper chewing and cause excessive wear of the Temporomandibular joint, overly ground tooth surfaces that open tooth roots to infection, missed gingival infection and untreated dental disease. The correction and treatment of this damage can cost an owner thousands of dollars and cause a horse months or years of pain and suffering.

Non-veterinarians are prohibited from administering sedation, performing nerve blocks or prescribing pain medication while performing surgeries like tooth extractions. Oregon's veterinary practice act even prohibits veterinary technicians from performing dental extractions. Veterinary technicians are required to have 2 years of training, pass a state administered test and have yearly continuing education. Performing equine dentistry without sedation or pain modification causes unnecessary pain and fear for horses during these procedures. Some of these "dentists" do sedate illegally, which produces a large amount of danger for the horse as they are not trained in administering medications which can be life threatening. Additionally, it creates another route for regulated medications to be diverted into the general population.

Some supporters claim the cost of licensed veterinarians is higher than that of equine dentists. However, for a "equine dentist" to practice in a way that is not harmful and safe for a horse they need the expertise of a veterinarian beside them during the entire procedure. In my experience, states where dentistry is performed under veterinary supervision the cost difference is negligible and often more.

The claim that veterinarians receive little training in dentistry is false. Those of us in equine practice have invested countless hours in equine dental education, including school, internships, clinical practice, and ongoing continuing education. Veterinarians are uniquely qualified to provide the highest level of care for horses.

For the sake of the horse, I strongly urge you to vote no on SB 976.

Christopher Wickliffe, DVM