

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

I am a veterinarian in Missouri with a primary interest in dentistry, particularly in horses. I have a lot of experience teaching equine dentistry to veterinary students and veterinarians, having taught 59 dentistry courses. I have grave concerns about Senate Bill 976. Equine dentistry is a component of veterinary medicine that includes diagnosing and treating conditions and diseases of the oral cavity, not just floating teeth. There are no institutions offering degrees in equine dentistry in the United States. There are groups offering “certification” in equine dentistry but these groups have no outside accreditation as is found in other areas of animal or human medical care. Likewise, there are no accredited programs for teaching non-veterinarians how to perform pregnancy examination in cattle. Because SB 976 does not define what equine dentistry is or what would be allowed and does not provide for any mechanism of oversight of individuals who would be allowed to practice equine dentistry, the potential for harm to horses either directly or by delay in appropriate treatment is great. The teeth of horses are living structures that can be damaged by aggressive treatment or overheating through improper use of instruments. Additionally, potentially dangerous sedative drugs that can injure or even kill an animal patient or a person who is accidentally exposed are necessary to perform a thorough examination and treatment of the equine oral cavity. One of these drugs, xylazine, is even being controlled in some states due to its potential to kill people. I urge you to think carefully before advancing SB 976 because, if passed, it could result in harm to horses with no recourse to the public as is the case with veterinarians. The biggest risk of allowing lesser trained individuals to perform pregnancy verification of cattle is the spread of economically damaging diseases either within a herd or between herds.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this bill and allowing me to comment. Please vote no on Senate Bill 976.

Sincerely,

Bruce Whittle, DVM