

February 22, 2025

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

I would like to offer my support of Senate Bill 976 as well as express some skepticism of this bill as introduced.

I have supported myself with a professional career in the horse industry since earning my bachelors degree in Equine Sciences from Colorado State University in 2011. Since 2015, I have been working as a veterinary assistant in an equine exclusive practice and part of my job includes performing preventative veterinary dental procedures on horses under OAR 875-015-0050.

I have seen first hand how, as a group, equine veterinarians are especially passionate about their demanding careers. I wholeheartedly love the profession I have chosen as an equine veterinary assistant and equine dentist. I actively try to bring the same passion, energy and love for the horse to my daily job as the veterinarian who employs me and other professional veterinarians I have known throughout both my career and experience as a horse owner.

It is no secret that an alarming trend has been taking place for years in the field of equine veterinary medicine with few new practitioners entering the profession upon graduating and almost half of those new practitioners leaving equine practice within five years. In July of 2022 the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) even created the Commission on Equine Veterinary Sustainability to help recruit and retain more equine practitioners in an effort combat this alarming trend that threatens the health and welfare of horses across the country.

Equine Veterinary medicine covers a very vast scope of knowledge, many practitioners appear to increasingly focus the scope of their practice in an effort to stay at the cutting edge in an ever changing and expanding field and thus better care for their patients. I feel there is a large need in the industry to have certified or licensed non-veterinary equine dentists to help support the burden of preventive horse dental care and offer some relief to hard working equine veterinarians whom are unarguably irreplaceable for the welfare of horses in this country.

The passion equine dentists have for their niche profession often appears to parallel that of equine veterinary practitioners. The professionals that I have been exposed to actively work to enhance their knowledge and expertise so they can provide the best possible dental care for the horses they work on. My rigorous training and coursework through attending the Academy of Equine Dentistry and, testing to become a member of the International Association of Equine Dentistry (IAED) was nothing short of challenging and rewarding, as any good educational program should be.

As I am writing you in support of Senate Bill 976, I do wish to express some concern with the wording, as introduced, that "Allows an individual to perform equine dentistry [...] without holding a valid license issued by the Oregon State Veterinary Medical Examining Board". Contrary to how this introduced bill is written, I firmly believe the Oregon Veterinary Medical Examining Board (OVMEB) should play a crucial, regulatory role in allowing trained, educated and experienced non-veterinary equine dentists to provide services under a separate license. Similar regulations have been adopted in other states such as Texas, that recognizes "Licensed Equine Dental Providers", and Oklahoma, that recognizes "Non-Veterinary Equine Dental Care Providers", in their respective state veterinary medical boards. I firmly believe that a similar law in the state of Oregon would benefit horse owners, equine veterinarians and overall equine welfare.

There is no question that performing equine dentistry takes advanced skills which can only be accomplished through rigorous study, instruction, mentorship and practice. Individuals who feel that non veterinary equine dentists do not have the proper knowledge to safely and effectively perform equine dental care are quite often basing these opinions on real life experiences and cases which have resulted in unfortunate harm done to horses at the hands of an inexperienced or under qualified person. I have seen such horses and agree that it is a problem however, I strongly feel that the vast majority of certified equine dentists (who have attended established equine dental schools, undergone specific training, passed exams and pursue continuing education) are more than capable of providing high quality, humane dental care to a large population of horses. There is not a shadow of doubt that certain complicated and difficult cases will always need to be performed by, or in conjunction with, equine veterinarians to ensure the comfort, health and wellbeing of the horse. The licensing and regulation of qualified non veterinary equine dentists, however, will be paramount to allowing this niche group of skilled individuals to improve the welfare of horses in our state as well as helping relieve a small burden on equine veterinarians.

I would like to thank the Committee members for considering my position on SB 976 and hope this bill is given further discussion and consideration moving forward. If given the opportunity I would love to be "at the table" for further discussion and development of SB 976. I recognize all of the hard work that goes into passing Oregon Legislative Bills and appreciate the energy you are exerting to serve our state.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Corkery