

TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE SENATE AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK, AND IRRIGATION COMMITTEE
DR. LINDA KAUFFMAN, VETERINARIAN, FROM STEVENSVILLE, MT
RE
SENATE BILL 22 "AN ACT DEFINING "EQUINE MASSAGE THERAPY"; PROVIDING
THAT EQUINE MASSAGE THERAPY IS NOT THE PRACTICE OF VETERINARY
MEDICINE; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 37-18-101 AND 37-18-104, MCA

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Senate Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Committee:

For the record my name is Dr. Linda Kauffman. I am a licensed and practicing veterinarian from Stevensville, MT and am here testifying as a concerned veterinary professional. I am also the current President of the Montana Board of Veterinary Medicine but the views expressed here are my own.

Senate Bill 22 is not a positive change for veterinary medicine or for the consuming public, in my opinion.

- 1) The title of the bill includes the word "therapy" and the word "therapeutic" is used in the definition. These words imply that a diagnosis of an illness or disorder in animals has been made. Of course, diagnosis of illness or disorder is limited to veterinarians as stated in the veterinary practice act under State law [Section 37-18-102(1)(c), MCA.] The Bill provides no requirements for training, testing of knowledge or assurance to the consuming public of any competence in this area. Serious underlying illness could go undetected or be made worse by inappropriate treatment.
- 2) The text of the bill defines equine massage to employ "professional human massage techniques." There is no licensed profession of human massage in Montana. As a trained professional, I have trouble understanding what these techniques will be based on and how a consumer could evaluate the capabilities of an "equine therapist". The bill is too vague and undefined.
- 3) If the exemption is made through passage of this bill, there is a concern for public protection and animal safety, in my opinion. Without any oversight, what recourse would a consumer have against dishonest or unskilled individuals that might cause harm to their animals? As the situation exists currently, the Board of

Veterinary Medicine can at least remind those involved in equine massage where the line is drawn in the law.

- 4) Finally, I know that the Board of Veterinary Medicine has not opposed people who perform equine massage, but they have reminded them of what does constitute the practice of veterinary medicine. As long as a person does not diagnose, prescribe, administer a drug, perform surgery, or perform any of the skills specified in the law, they are not practicing veterinary medicine. If the Board has not opposed equine massage historically, what is the need for this exemption?

I URGE A "DO NOT PASS" ON SENATE BILL 22.