

From: Kristine Antoski <user@votervoicenet>  
Sent: Tuesday, February 15, 2022 12:15 PM  
To: Michael Nelson <Rep.Michael.Nelson@house.mn>  
Subject: Oppose the Companion Animal Board Bill!

Dear Representative Nelson,

As a veterinarian in your district, I am contacting you and asking you to oppose House File 208, the Companion Animal Board Bill.

This bill has many problems. It gives power to a governmental agency that should be the responsibility of a licensed veterinarian; is unclear whether Companion Animal Board resources and authority would be administered by licensed veterinarian; lacks clarity regarding its compelling need purpose, function, and benefits; allows for the potential interference of practice of veterinary medicine, and may conflict with existing state animal care regulations and responsibilities.

The definition of "Companion Animal" goes beyond dogs and cats. It includes "any animal owned, possessed by, cared for, or controlled by a person for the present or future enjoyment of that person or another as a pet or companion, or any stray pet or stray companion animal. This bill could pertain to literally any species of animal.

Creating this board is duplicative, unnecessary, and costly. The mission of the current Board of Animal Health is "to protect the health of the state's domestic animals through education and cooperation with veterinarians, producers, owners and communities." The proponents of this bill have not demonstrated the need for a Companion Animal Board. The creation of a duplicative board will make it more difficult to respond to a zoonotic disease such as rabies.

This legislation would reduce the effectiveness of the Board of Animal Health, which is already under-funded, to be able to manage the spread of another virus, such as the African Swine fever, which caused havoc in the agriculture economy. This ultimately impacts our food supply and what is sold at the grocery store. We need a strong and functioning Board of Animals Health.

Minnesota has animal welfare laws and enforcement entities in this state that are more than adequate to address any concerns intended to be addressed by the Companion Animal Board. The authority for enforcing these statutes already lies with the Minnesota Federated Humane Societies that is charged with investigating animal welfare issues in the state.

The funding mechanism and distribution of funds being proposed in the bill are also extremely questionable and unusual for a newly created state agency. The bill states that the Companion Animal Board can accept monies from anywhere, including special interest groups or entities of interest to the members of the Companion Animal Board itself. The Companion Animal Board would also have the authority to distribute funding to any entity, including entities of interest to

the members of the Companion Animal Board itself. This is a direct conflict of interest and should not be allowed.

This bill includes rule-making authority. With the broad scope definition of a "companion animal" and far-reaching aspects of the language, this new board would be able to make rules that may affect our state's poultry flocks and livestock herds. Rather than relying on the owner or manager of animals, the livestock and poultry industry may be subject to new additional rules and regulations.

Please oppose this bill if it comes before you in committee or on the House floor!

Sincerely,

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