September 13, 2021

Matt Boyle, DVM
Board of Directors
Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association

RE: SF 73, Minnesota Companion Animal Board

Dear Dr. Boyle:

We are writing in response to your request for our thoughts on MN SF 73, which would establish the Minnesota Companion Animal Board with primary authority for regulating companion animals in Minnesota.

The AVMA strongly disagrees with the idea of creating the Minnesota Companion Animal Board (CAB) and providing it with authority, via Sec. 2 Companion Animal Board; Purpose, "to protect and promote the … physical and mental health of companion animals." The AVMA's Model Veterinary Practice Act (MVPA) defines the "Practice of Veterinary Medicine" as: "To diagnose, prognose, treat, correct, change, alleviate, or prevent animal disease, illness, pain, deformity, defect, injury, or other physical, dental, or mental conditions by any method or mode" [MVPA Section 2-18]. MN SF 73 would give power to a governmental agency for what the AVMA maintains is the responsibility of a licensed veterinarian. Further, the language provided does not indicate whether CAB resources and authority would be administered by licensed veterinarians.

The AVMA is also concerned about Sec. 4. Subd. 3., Services and Resources, that states "The Board must, at a minimum, provide the following services and resources: … (2) the collection, analysis, and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative data as it relates to companion animals in Minnesota …". The language provided does not specify who would collect and analyze the required information. Is it the intent of the legislature to have the CAB use the office of the State Public Health Veterinarian (SPHV), State Animal Health Official (SAHO), or another qualified party for this purpose? AVMA believes that any collection and analysis of such information should be conducted under the oversight of the SPHV and/or SAHO.

There are also concerns about Sec. 5. Subd. 4., Certificates of veterinary inspection, that states: "The Board of Animal Health must provide a copy of each new certificate of veterinary inspection for companion animals to the Companion Animal Board within 30 days of the receipt of the certificate of veterinary inspection." The proposed language provides no rationale as to why it is necessary to share the Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) with the CAB or what the CAB will do with this information. We strongly encourage that comment be sought from the Minnesota SAHO and SPHV on this topic, as well as from the National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials (NASAHO).

In conclusion, we oppose the proposed legislation because the compelling need, purpose, function, and benefits of the proposed CAB are not clear; there is the potential for interference with the practice of veterinary medicine; and the proposal appears to conflict with existing regulation and responsibilities for oversight of animal care in the state of Minnesota. We appreciate the opportunity to review this legislative language and your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Janet D. Donlin, DVM, CAE
Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer