



November 9, 2021

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the House Committee on Rules and Competitiveness

FROM: Joseph Dobesh, President & CEO

SUBJECT: House Bill 4912

Michigan Pet Alliance is a trade association representing animal shelters and rescues from across the state. The number one concern we hear from our members is the lack of access to veterinary care. We regularly receive reports of pets that aren't able to be spayed before becoming pregnant and routine care that is difficult to obtain. Many providers are not accepting new patients, and those offices that do are commonly scheduling appointments over a month out.

None of these issues are the fault of veterinarians. The underlying cause is a critical shortage of veterinarians in Michigan. Removing any tool to safely improve access to care is a dangerous step that will inevitably result in fewer Michigan companion animals receiving the care of a veterinarian. Many lessons were learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, including the effectiveness of telemedicine, which shouldn't be forgotten.

Telemedicine provides a means of access to services for those animals who may not be able to receive care otherwise. Advances in telemedicine technology make it possible to establish a safe and effective veterinarian-client-patient-relationship in order to provide routine care and triage emergent concerns when veterinary services are unavailable, due to both rural and urban veterinary shortages.

This is not unproven technology. Today you can consult a doctor online and receive medication for conditions as varied as depression to erectile dysfunction. We ask that this same opportunity remain available for Michigan's companion animals. Telemedicine helps alleviate the burden on veterinarians by allowing issues that don't require a physical examination to be addressed more efficiently, leading to better care statewide.

Michigan Pet Alliance supports reasonable regulations narrowly tailored to address the risks of telemedicine, but we believe the conditions to establish a veterinarian-client-patient-relationship in HB 4912 go far beyond what is necessary. Michigan Pet Alliance **opposes** HB 4912 as currently written.