

January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022

The Honorable Representative Grier Hopkins  
State Capitol Room 434  
Juneau AK, 99801-1185

**RE: HB 91 - Exemption for veterinarians from Alaska's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.**

Dear Representative Hopkins:

My name is Irene Fisher. I am a veterinarian working in the interior and a constituent of your district. I am writing to **urge you to support HB 91**, which would exempt veterinarians from the requirements of the prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP). **Veterinarians' inclusion in this program is not only ineffective but also a huge infringement of the privacy rights of our clients.**

First, the PDMP was created in an effort to decrease controlled drug misuse among humans, which is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. However, as veterinarians, our inclusion in this program is not an effective means of tracking controlled substance prescriptions among our clients. Instead, **it is forcing veterinarians to use an unusable database that is wasting valuable time and resources in an already overworked and understaffed profession.** For example, when prescribing controlled substances for our patients, we must look up our human clients because there is no way of searching animals in the database, as they lack any reliable form of identification. Then when reporting drugs under the animal, there is no way to link this to their human counterpart. So, when we look up the animal again or a human physician looks up their client none of the information about that pet's medications is visible. This fact alone deems the entire program useless for the veterinary profession. The whole process of querying the system, obtaining private medical information about an owner (or whoever brought the animal in that day), then entering the animal and its medications (that will be lost to the system, never to be seen again) takes up time and puts unneeded stressors on the whole practice.

Additionally, if we do not comply appropriately and are deemed non-compliant with the program, the Alaskan Board of Veterinary Examiners (BOVE) must launch investigations that, again, are taking up resources that could be better used elsewhere. The Alaskan BOVE is independently funded, and the added costs of these investigations is passed along to Alaskan veterinarians in the form of increased licensing fees (already the highest in the nation), and in turn will be passed along to our clients. The financial ramifications of this program on the veterinary profession are a whole different topic. So, I will stop there.

Secondly, as a veterinarian or a veterinary technician/assistant (who are also able to query the database) **we have NO HIPAA training** and are not considered a covered entity under the HIPAA Privacy Rule. The fact that we and our staff are able to access clients personal and private medical information is inappropriate and dangerous. Many clients find it intrusive just when asked for full name and mailing address to make an appointment, let alone when we need to see ID, ask for date of birth, physical address and telephone number to query the PDMP database. Most clients do not know that we have access to such information and when told, are very upset, as they should be.

As a medical professional and member of the community, **I urge you to support HB 91 and join 34 other states that have exemptions for their veterinarians from participating in the PDMP.** Exempting

veterinarians from this program will help our profession continue to provide care for our patients without having to navigate an unusable system, waste resources, incur added costs, or infringe on the privacy of our clients.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Irene Fisher, DVM

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