



**HUMANE SOCIETY  
VETERINARY MEDICAL  
ASSOCIATION.**

March 2, 2022

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Honorable Jim Lilly, Chair  
House Rules and Competitiveness Committee  
374 Capitol Building  
PO Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-751

**RE: HSVMA Veterinary Support for HB 5804**

Dear Chair Lilly and House Rules & Competitiveness Committee Members:

On behalf of our more than 250 Michigan veterinary professional members, the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA) is writing to express our support for HB 5804 which would allow for the expanded use of veterinary telehealth services to help care for the companion animals of Michigan families.

More specifically, HB 5804 is in alignment with the landmark rules (R 338.4901A) issued in April 2021 by the Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Board of Veterinary Medicine which allowed for a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) to be established via the use of instrumentation and diagnostic equipment through which images and medical records may be transmitted electronically. These rules were adopted by the Board of Veterinary Medicine after the Michigan Veterinary Medical Association reported the success that some veterinary practices had in offering telehealth services to companion animals across the state.

Our country is experiencing a widespread veterinary professional shortage. Limited access and sparse availability of appointments has intensified an already difficult situation for people living in rural areas or in underserved communities without access to personal transportation.

Removing barriers to veterinary services through the expanded use of telehealth helps create equity in access to pet resources and animal health information for people living in underserved, and often overlooked, communities. By expanding access to telemedicine, more Michiganders will be able to obtain important veterinary services, particularly families living in communities, both rural and urban, where there are no neighborhood veterinary hospitals or clinics.



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Veterinarians have undergone rigorous education and training, and we should be trusted to exercise good judgement in our practice, including in our discretionary utilization of telemedicine. Telemedicine and the use of electronically transmitted images and medical records can help expand veterinary services and allow for more flexibility in treating patients, especially those whose caregivers may have limited mobility or other transportation challenges. While we acknowledge that a legitimate need exists for routine veterinary consultation and treatment of non-emergent pet medical issues in person, allowing virtual care means that more pet owners, no matter their circumstances, will be able to access vital services and help assure the health and wellbeing of their companion animals.

We thank the committee for your attention to this important issue and urge the committee to approve HB 5804. Increasing the flexibility of telehealth services can expand critical care to people and their pets, and the outcomes have proven to be lifesaving without causing undue harm to animal patients. These changes will bring Michigan pet owners greater access to veterinary care for their companion animals and allow Michigan veterinarians to better serve their communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Hodges". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barbara Hodges, DVM, MBA  
HSVMA Program Director, Advocacy and Outreach