

April 23, 2025

Louis Mansolillo
Committee Clerk
Rhode Island House Committee on Corporations
HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov

Re: Support for Proposed Sub A HB 5555 Veterinary Telemedicine

Dear Mr. Mansolillo, Chair Solomon, Vice Chairs O'Brien and Caldwell, and Committee Members:

I am an east coast based veterinarian who has had a special focus in veterinary telemedicine since 2019. I am currently seeing patients remotely in New York, New Jersey, Virginia, DC, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania full time. This has allowed me to accrue thousands of hours of experience seeing pets and their caretakers over remote means, most commonly through synchronous audio-video communication, or video chat. I have worked closely with veterinarians who are interested in expanding their practices to include telemedicine services, and with the companies who provide the technology for these services. I speak to pet parents daily who choose telemedicine for their pets for various issues, and I am familiar with the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges of practicing medicine "virtually."

Veterinary telemedicine, and particularly the allowance to establish a Veterinary-Client-Patient-Relationship (VCPR) through virtual means, is a valuable tool that would expand the access and quality of care for pets. Human medicine has demonstrated a high success rate in quality of care using telemedicine. Pet owners nationwide demand this service because of its convenience, accessibility, and flexibility. With virtual care, I am able to provide veterinary care in a timely manner to people who are differently abled, injured, away from home, and caretaking for family members. With virtual care, I am able to provide veterinary care in a timely manner to pets who are too anxious to be safely transported, aggressive to veterinary staff, too large to load into a vehicle, or simply more comfortable at home.

The responsible and safe practice of veterinary medicine has always been and remains an important concern. I strongly disagree that the allowance of a virtual VCPR somehow increases the risk of unsafe or risky practice of medicine. Veterinarians are practicing responsible telemedicine now and have been for years. They are highly educated, stringently examined, and regularly requalified to remain in license. Rhode Island veterinarians can be trusted to determine when a virtual VCPR is enough to appropriately prescribe medication and give recommendations, and when further evaluation of the pet, such as a physical exam, is needed. The appropriate medical care of a pet should be the result of cooperation and understanding between their caretaker and their trusted veterinarian.

Bringing a pet into a veterinary clinic for examination comes with a natural barrier to care. A pet parent must arrange transportation, may have to miss work or school, and spend 30-45 minutes at minimum at a clinic. Sometimes this is the best route to care, and is the best choice for all involved. Other times, in-person care may not be required or possible, and in-person visits can

April 23, 2025

be reduced in frequency or scheduled with more convenience by using telemedicine as part of the spectrum of veterinary care. In many situations, clients' choices are severely limited by their circumstances, and they will choose virtual services or elect for no care at all. Allowing veterinarians to decide when and how telemedicine is ethical and responsible, just as they are trusted to make all other decisions of veterinary practice, will result in the most appropriate care. It is important to meet pet parents where they are instead of withholding care until arbitrary conditions are met.

A virtual VCPR in no way reduces or undermines the veterinarian's commitment to high quality medicine - on the contrary, it adds another tool for us to reach as many pets as possible and provide expert guidance for pet parents in modern times alongside our counterparts in human medicine. Fear and trepidation are natural reactions to change, but technology and the evolution of the delivery of medicine must be embraced to allow positive progress.

I respectfully recommend your support for HB 5555 Proposed Sub A. Thank you for your consideration. Please reach out if I can provide any additional information or insight.

Sincerely,
Hannah Lau, DVM
Board Member, Veterinary Virtual Care Association
Associate Director of Virtual Medicine, Bond Vet
hannah@bondvet.com
(540) 335-4569