



Potter League
Enriching Lives



RHODE ISLAND
SPCA
RHODE ISLAND SOCIETY FOR THE
PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS



Animal Rescue
Rhode Island
SINCE 1958



Vintage
PET RESCUE



Friends
of
Animals
in
Need



ASPCA



PARL
PROVIDENCE ANIMAL
RESCUE LEAGUE



VOLUNTEER SERVICES FOR ANIMALS



PETS
Partnership for Expanded
Telemedicine Services

May 20, 2026

RE: Support for SB 3180 Veterinary Telemedicine Access

Dear Chair Sosnowski, Vice Chair Britto, and Committee Members:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and our thousands of collective members in Rhode Island, we are writing to respectfully request your yes vote on SB 3180/HB 7020 to expand access to [veterinary telemedicine](#).

Rhode Island animal shelters and pet owners are struggling to access timely veterinary care¹ amidst an ongoing [veterinary shortage](#).² A lack of proper care can lead to costly and more complex treatment needs and cause unnecessary suffering, premature death, and more animals relinquished to shelters.³ Improving access to affordable and equitable veterinary care can help keep pets in loving homes and out of Rhode Island's overburdened shelters.⁴ A national study showed that 40% of low-income owners who rehomed their pets reported that access to affordable vet care would have helped them keep their pet.⁵

Increasing access to veterinary telemedicine can help mitigate the effects of the veterinary workforce shortage.⁶ Safe, convenient veterinary telemedicine can help address many common barriers to care faced by senior and disabled pet owners, as well as those who live in rural or underserved areas, face transportation problems, have large, fearful, or potentially aggressive animals, or need to access veterinary services outside of normal clinic hours due to work schedules or time-sensitive pet issues. Conditions such as eye, ear, or skin issues, common flea and tick prevention and treatment medications, initial assessment of gastrointestinal or mobility issues, as well as hospice, behavioral, or nutritional consultations are among the many situations that can be appropriate for telemedicine at the discretion of the veterinarian.

All 50 states have laws that empower physicians to use telehealth as an additional tool to establish new doctor-patient relationships and treat patients, including babies and other nonverbal patients.⁷ Over 100 million Americans now live in states where they can begin a new relationship with a veterinarian over telemedicine—including Arizona, California, Florida, Ohio, New Jersey, Virginia, Idaho, Washington, and Vermont.

As in human healthcare, telemedicine is an optional tool for care delivery. Nothing in this legislation requires a veterinarian to use telehealth technology. If a veterinarian does not wish to use telemedicine or believes they cannot properly diagnose a particular condition through telehealth, they simply ask the pet owner to bring the animal in for a clinical examination. Under SB 3180/HB 7020, only veterinarians who are licensed by the state of Rhode Island will be able to provide telemedicine to Rhode Island pets. We trust that our highly skilled Rhode Island licensed veterinarians can determine when an animal can be helped through telemedicine and when they need to see a doctor in person.

SB 3180/HB 7020 will modernize Rhode Island's veterinary laws and effectively expand access to veterinary care for pet owners of all income levels and residences in the state, as well as for veterinarians who wish to offer in-demand telemedicine services to more clients. Please contact us with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Hobgood, Ph.D., Senior Director, Access to Care Policy, ASPCA, on behalf of the following: ASPCA, Potter League for Animals, Providence Animal Rescue League, Providence Animal Control, Rhode Island SPCA, Partnership for Expanded Telemedicine Services (PETS), Friends of Animals in Need, Vintage Pet Rescue, Volunteer Services for Animals, Animal Rescue Rhode Island



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¹ Lopez, Jill. "Riverside, Rhode Island's Low-Income Veterinary Clinic to Close Amid Rising Costs and Economic Challenges." 21 March 2025. <https://www.myvetcandy.com/blog/2025/3/21/riverside-rhode-islands-low-income-veterinary-clinic-to-close-amid-rising-costs-and-economic-challenges>

"About Pets in Need." Potter League. <https://potterleague.org/veterinary/pets-in-need-clinic/pets-in-need/>

According to the Rhode Island Veterinary Access to Care Coalition, "In Rhode Island, thousands of people and their pets face challenges in accessing adequate veterinary care. This issue is multifaceted, encompassing concerns related to income inequality, transportation accessibility, language barriers, and the veterinary industry, among others." Source: <https://ripetcare.org/about>

² Gitter, RJ, Meek, JA, LaFayette, B. "Demand for and Supply of Veterinarians in the U.S. to 2032. June 7, 2024." Available online at: <https://www.aavmc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Demand-for-and-Supply-of-Veterinarians-in-the-U.S.-to-2032-New.pdf>

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Lloyd, JW., DVM, PhD. Pet Healthcare in the U.S.: Another Look at the Veterinarian Workforce. 1 Aug 2023. Available at: <https://www.marsveterinary.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Characterizing-the-Need.pdf>

³ Univ. of Tennessee College of Social Work. (2018) Access to Veterinary Care: Barriers, Current Practices, and Public Policy <https://pphe.utk.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/avcc-report.pdf>.

⁴ Bawden, Sarah and Kayla Fish. "'Out of space': RI animal shelters facing capacity crisis with more surrenders than adoptions." WPRI.com. 26 July 2024. <https://www.wpri.com/news/local-news/west-bay/ri-animal-shelters-facing-capacity-crisis-with-more-surrenders-than-adoptions/>. Accessed 21 April 2025.

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The Providence Journal. "Surrendered pets overwhelm RI animal shelters." Shelter Animals Count: The National Database. 9 December 2022. <https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/surrendered-pets-overwhelm-ri-animal-shelters/>. Accessed 21 April 2025.

"Why RI animal shelters, veterinarians are swamped." *The Providence Journal*. 9 Dec 2022.

⁵ Weiss, E., Gramann, S., Spain, V., & Slater, M. (2015). "Goodbye to a good friend: An exploration of the re-homing of cats and dogs in the U.S." *Open Journal of Animal Sciences*. 5: 435-456.

⁶ Snyder, Alec. (2021). Covid-19 pandemic magnifies workforce crisis in veterinary field. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/20/us/vet-tech-shortage-burnout/index.html>

Today's Veterinary Business. (2022). AVMA is Urged to Address Veterinarian Shortage.

<https://todaysveterinarybusiness.com/avma-veterinary-shortage-letter/Veterinary-Practice-News>. (2020). Staffing shortage threatens health of 75 million pets by 2030: Banfield addressed industry-wide shortage at its annual summit. <https://www.veterinarypracticenews.com/75-million-pets-may-lose-access-to-care-by-2030/>

⁷ <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2018-10/ama-chart-telehealth-patient-physician-relationship.pdf>