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April 15, 2015
Senate Finance Committee
Testimony by Dr. Virginia Clarke on behalf of
the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association
FY16 Fee Proposal - Dog License Fee Increase for VSNIP

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association in support of an increase in the dog license fee to fund the Vermont Spay Neuter Incentive Program (VSNIP).

VSNIP is a popular program, and our low-income veterinary clients have been hoping for more availability of spay-neuter vouchers. Having more funds for the program will help ease the backlog of applications and allow for the issuance of more vouchers going forward. More animals spayed and neutered means less municipal cost and effort in stray animal control, and less unnecessary euthanasia of our companion animals.

The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association supports the Department of Children and Families (DCF) as administrators of this program. We feel that DCF is the most qualified organization to run the program, with its easy access to the low-income database, parallel oversight of other low-income support programs, low administrative costs, existing website and up-to-date familiarity with this program. We have found DCF to be a respectful and reliable partner, and have worked with them to keep the standard of veterinary care acceptable to our veterinarians while controlling the costs.

In addition to an increase in the dog license fee, we would also support a change in statutory language to designate DCF as the program administrators. The statute presently requires DCF to "...implement the program through an agreement with a qualified organization consistent with the applicable administrative rules." We hope the language can be changed to allow them to continue to administer the program as DCF has indicated they will put the program out to bid if legislation is not passed. I've included proposed language changes for your consideration.

Vermont's veterinarians are integral to this program, and we are committed to continuing to improve VSNIP and address the problem of unwanted pets. Thank you for your time, and please let me know if I or the VVMA can be of any assistance in furthering this discussion or answering any questions you may have.

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The Vermont Statutes Online

Title 20: Internal Security and Public Safety

Chapter 193: DOMESTIC PET OR WOLF-HYBRID CONTROL

Sub-Chapter 006: Dog, Cat, And Wolf-hybrid Spaying And Neutering Program Fund

20 V.S.A. § 3815. Dog, cat, and wolf-hybrid spaying and neutering program

§ 3815. Dog, cat, and wolf-hybrid spaying and neutering program

(a) The agency of human services shall administer a dog, cat, and wolf-hybrid spaying and neutering program providing reduced-cost spaying and neutering services and presurgical immunization for dogs, cats, and wolf-hybrids owned or cared for by low income individuals. The agency shall implement the program ~~through an agreement with a qualified organization~~ consistent with the applicable administrative rules.

(b) The program shall reimburse veterinarians who voluntarily consent to spay or neuter dogs, cats, and wolf-hybrids under the auspices of the program. The reimbursement shall be less any co-payment by the owner of a dog, cat, or wolf-hybrid for the cost of each spaying or neutering procedure.

(c) The secretary of human services, in consultation with the chair of the Vermont Board of Veterinary Medicine, may adopt and amend rules pursuant to chapter 25 of Title 3 to enable the agency to carry out the purposes of this act. (Added 2003, No. 163 (Adj. Sess.), § 39; amended 2009, No. 54, § 77, eff. June 1, 2009; 2011, No. 57, § 1.)