

February 5, 2018

To: Vermont House Government Operations Committee

RE: H684 An Act Relating to the Office of Professional Regulation.

To whom it may concern,

I am writing regarding changes to the scope of practice for Acupuncturists that is being considered by the Vermont Legislature. I am commenting on disallowing acupuncturists to work on animals.

I have been practicing acupuncture since 1988 and was among the first acupuncturists licensed in Vermont, as well as in Massachusetts. I graduated from the Traditional Acupuncture Institute (TAI/Sophia) in Maryland 1988. I was involved in the process of writing our laws for acupuncture practice in Vermont and encouraged using Massachusetts law as a guide. The language "to the body" is in the law of both States. The new proposed language, "to the human body" is clearly the way to stop my profession from practicing on animals.

When at school, our acupuncturist professors worked on animals as a part of their practice. When I had the opportunity, I received animal acupuncture training during a year long program at the New England School of Acupuncture before I would treat anyone else's animal. With similar language in the laws in Massachusetts and Maryland, I assumed that we were allowed to practice on animals in Vermont.

I was accused of unauthorized practice in 2007, and the Office of Professional Regulation pursued disciplinary actions against me. Of course this was very upsetting to me, and after considerable time and money on my part, and about a year later, I was found to be complying with the law in Vermont.

During that time, I was forced to consider the circumstances surrounding the issue of who should practice acupuncture on animals. I reviewed the laws in many states and interviewed acupuncturists who practiced lawfully on animals to see what their experience was. My thoughts and conclusions are as follows:

1- It is my profession, the acupuncturists, who have historically trained veterinarians in acupuncture and herbal medicine. We do not attempt to practice western medicine on people or animals with comparable minimal training, and would not expect to be able to do so.

2- There is nothing intrinsic to the practice of western medicine for animals or humans that prepares for the practice of acupuncture such that it would be superior to what the acupuncturists do. The human medical world recognizes this, but the veterinarians refuse to do so.

3- I could not find any requirements for veterinarians to practice acupuncture in Vermont. If there are not, there should be. There are requirements now in Vermont to perform acupuncture on "any body", but mysteriously veterinarians seemed to have exempted themselves from those. I have discussed this with Vermont's Office of Professional Regulation, and they chose to ignore what I believe is the letter of the law.

4- There are no requirements for acupuncturists in Vermont to have special training to work with animals, and perhaps there should be.

5- There is no rational argument to be made for not allowing acupuncturists to work on animals. The practice is pretty much identical. We are much more rigorously trained than Veterinary Acupuncturists

and have a much broader field of professionals to train and consult with. There are no safety issues. There are no public health issues. There are no competency issues. There are no ethics issues. Therefore, the State of Vermont should have no issue and should not consider this change.

6- The public has the right to know and decide. My patients generally assume that a veterinarian who practices acupuncture went to school just like I did. The veterinarians simply do not practice superior acupuncture, and it could be argued that the opposite would generally be true. The public should be able to decide who they want treating their animal. Not the State of Vermont.

7-The only reason I have ever seen for the veterinarians to attempt to limit my lawful activities, and now my whole profession's, is for financial gain. This is not a unique circumstance. The veterinary profession has a financial stake in this question, plain and simple. The acupuncturists I know charge considerably less to see animals than veterinarians. Shouldn't the public have a fairer priced option?

8- After some veterinarians, trained by acupuncturists in that state to treat animals, complained in Maryland, a law was passed to require acupuncturists to have animal acupuncture training.

9- In Massachusetts, if there are complaints, such as the one leveled against me by the same veterinarian who complained in Vermont, the "requirement" of the veterinarians is there be a veterinarian appointment and diagnosis before an acupuncturist treats an animal. This is not codified in the law.

10- Perhaps Vermont would like to adopt either or both of the accommodations seen in Massachusetts and Maryland.

I sincerely hope that the law makers in Vermont will not succumb to this special interest group pressuring the State to do its bidding and prevent the public the option of getting care for their animals from highly competent and highly trained professionals.

Let the public decide who they want their animals to be cared for by.

Thank you for considering my comments.

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