



88 Beech Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452
(802) 878-6888 voice • www.vtvets.org • kathy@vtvets.org

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Position Statement Regarding Possible Amendment to H. 219
Vermont Spay Neuter Incentive Program

The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA) supports the continued participation of Vermont veterinarians in the Vermont Spay Neuter Incentive Program. VSNIP is a popular program, providing our low-income veterinary clients with low cost spay/neuter services for their pets. Because of our strong support for the program, we have been supportive of passing H. 219 to allow, rather than require, the Agency of Human Services to implement VSNIP through a contract with a qualified organization.

We understand that an amendment may be offered on Tuesday to allow the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to run the VSNIP program *only* if no qualified private contractor can be found. The VVMA is strongly opposed to this amendment.

We are concerned that this amendment will significantly decrease the flexibility of administration of the VSNIP program. This program is essential to low-income pet owning Vermonters, and there simply must be an open and transparent process to choose the most capable administrative body available, not just the one that shows up. If this amendment is passed, we feel that our member veterinarians will be less enthusiastic about participating in the VSNIP program. Without the veterinary support, low-income pet owning Vermonters will experience greater difficulty in accessing this needed service.

During the years that the DCF administered VSNIP, VVMA members found them to be a responsive and reliable partner, and we worked with them to keep the standard of veterinary care acceptable to veterinarians while controlling the costs for the taxpayers. DCF had the necessary income data readily available, thus eliminating the uncertainties for us of whether clients will qualify.

Vermont's veterinarians are integral to this program, and we are committed to continuing to improve VSNIP, address the problems of unwanted pets, and make responsible pet ownership possible for low-income Vermonters. H. 219 is a responsible and necessary change to the statutes, and the possible amendment may significantly damage the long-term future success of the program. We hope the Senate Government Operations Committee will report it out favorably unchanged. Thank you again for your consideration.

Dr. David Hyde, Chair
VVMA Government Relations Committee
Ryegate Small Animal Hospital
dbhyde71@ryegatevet.com