



Colorado Veterinary
Medical Association

Testimony on SB14-039
House Health, Insurance and Environment Committee
February 25, 2014

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to present these comments. I am Dr. Apryl Steele, a veterinarian with a companion animal practice in Denver, and today I am speaking for the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA). With more than 2,000 members, CVMA is the voice of the veterinary profession in Colorado. CVMA strongly supports Senate Bill 14-039:

- First, this bill legalizes a beneficial action that is presently illegal. Perhaps you can recall a picture of a firefighter giving a pet oxygen at the scene of a house fire. But what's wrong in that picture? Under the Colorado Veterinary Practice Act, such an action by an emergency responder is illegal because it constitutes the practice of veterinary medicine without a license. This bill would allow an emergency medical service provider to provide stabilizing care to a dog or cat so that the animal can be treated by a veterinarian. The timely provision of stabilizing care can contribute to improved outcomes for cats and dogs affected by these emergencies. Because this stabilizing care would be administered by licensed or certified emergency service providers – in whom we entrust the care of humans – we are confident that these cats and dogs will be in good hands at the scene of an emergency.
- Second, this is a voluntary system. There's no requirement in this bill for any entity or organization that employs or utilizes emergency medical service providers to provide pre-veterinary emergency care. There's no requirement that an agency that opts in to this system must adopt a pre-determined policy or protocol – they can custom design what works for them. And for those agencies that decide to "opt in" to the system, they will now have the certainty that they are not violating the veterinary practice act when they provide stabilizing care.

Over the years, CVMA has received many requests from fire departments and individual emergency responders for training programs on stabilizing care – for example, appropriate flow rates for administering oxygen to cats and dogs. Many agencies already own pet-specific oxygen masks and equipment, often donated to them by concerned and supportive citizens. However, because it is presently illegal for these emergency responders to provide stabilizing care to dogs and cats, CVMA was not able to provide such training. It's time to change the law so that emergency medical service providers can legally provide, if they elect to do so,

stabilizing care to dogs and cats. We believe that dogs and cats across Colorado (and their human companions!) will benefit, and we look forward to collaborating with our colleagues in the emergency medical services arena in this regard. We ask for your support of SB14-039.

We appreciate the diligent and thoughtful efforts of Senator Balmer, Representative McCann, and Representative Court to turn this concept into reality. And thank you members of the Committee for your consideration.