

The Honorable Marc Berman
Chair, Assembly Business and Professions Committee
California State Assembly
1020 N Street, Room 379
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for AB 516 (Kalra) – Clarifying Veterinary Technician and Assistant Duties

Dear Chair Berman,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express our strong support for Assembly Bill 516, authored by Assemblymember Kalra and sponsored by the San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the California Veterinary Medical Association, and the San Diego Humane Society. This important legislation will clarify that Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs) and veterinary assistants are authorized to perform any task that is not explicitly prohibited by law, ensuring that veterinary staff can be utilized to their full capacity.

Veterinary technicians and assistants play a critical role in providing care to animals across California, supporting veterinarians in shelters, clinics, and hospitals. Under existing law, RVTs are permitted to perform any duty that does not constitute surgery, diagnosis, prognosis, or prescription of medication. However, current regulations are structured in a way that has led to misinterpretation, causing unnecessary and artificial limitations on the scope of practice for RVTs and veterinary assistants. This has resulted in the underutilization of these skilled professionals, exacerbating the ongoing veterinary care shortage in California.

A 2023 survey by the UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program found that 25% of California's animal shelters lack adequate veterinary staffing, and 64% struggle to meet basic medical needs. There is also a shortage of private veterinarians serving the public in many areas in California. While regulatory confusion is not the sole cause of this crisis, it has contributed to inefficiencies by preventing qualified RVTs and veterinary assistants from performing tasks they are trained for, thereby increasing the burden on supervising veterinarians.

AB 516 provides a straightforward solution by affirming that RVTs and veterinary assistants may perform any task not explicitly prohibited by law, allowing veterinary teams to operate more efficiently and effectively. In addition to the general clarification, the bill specifically clarifies that RVTs can perform dental care procedures, including extractions, under the supervision of a licensed veterinarian. Importantly, this legislation does not mandate that veterinarians delegate any tasks they are uncomfortable with, preserving their professional discretion.

By passing AB 516, the Legislature can help alleviate the strain on veterinary professionals, enhance access to animal care services, and support the well-being of animals and pet owners across California. We respectfully urge your support for this critical measure.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Scarlett, DVM
Chief Executive Officer



Jennifer Hawkins, DVM
President



Julianna Tetlow
Senior Director of Government
Relations



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