

The Honorable Angelique Ashby
Chair, Senate Business and Professions Committee
California State Senate
1021 N Street, Room 3320
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for SB 602 (Cortese) – Expanding Veterinary Access in Shelters

Dear Chair Ashby,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express our strong support for Senate Bill 602, authored by Senator Cortese and sponsored by the San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SF SPCA), the California Veterinary Medical Association, and the San Diego Humane Society. SB 602 will help expand access to critical veterinary services in animal shelters and community clinics by allowing Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs) to conduct vaccine and parasite control “wellness” appointments without requiring a veterinarian’s physical presence.

Animal shelters around the state play a crucial role in providing low-cost veterinary services, particularly for underserved communities. However, many shelters struggle to meet these needs due to the limited availability of veterinarians on-site. Current law mandates that shelters provide low-cost rabies vaccinations to the public’s animals to control the spread of disease and protect public health, but a lack of veterinarians often hinders their ability to meet this requirement.

RVTs are highly trained professionals capable of safely administering vaccines and parasite control medications, responding to any related emergencies, and ensuring proper medical protocols are followed. While recent legislative changes—such as Senator Cortese’s SB 669 (2023)—have allowed RVTs to work at remote clinics without a veterinarian present, this flexibility has not been extended to all shelter environments, leaving a gap in service availability.

SB 602 addresses this issue by permitting RVTs to perform vaccine and parasite control “wellness” appointments in shelters and clinics without requiring a veterinarian to be physically present, provided that a supervising veterinarian remains available by phone. The bill also ensures that RVTs have access to necessary emergency drugs and protocols, maintaining the highest standards of safety while expanding access to essential care.

By allowing shelters to maximize their existing workforce, SB 602 will improve public health by increasing vaccination rates, reducing disease transmission, and ensuring more pets receive timely medical care. This bill is a common-sense solution that will help alleviate veterinary access challenges, particularly for low-income pet owners and shelter animals.

We respectfully urge your support for SB 602 to ensure that shelters can continue their critical work in protecting both animal and public health.

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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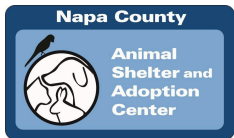
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