



Washington State Veterinary Medical Association

October 29, 2020

Ms. Lorelei Walker, Program Manager  
Veterinary Board of Governors  
WA State Dept. of Health  
P O Box 47852  
Olympia WA 98504-7852

Dear Ms. Walker:

We would like to express our concern for the proposed apprenticeship program introduced by Cascade Veterinary Clinics. Ten years ago, the WSVMA passed legislation that potentially removed the pathway to veterinary technician (VT) licensure through five years of on-the-job (OTJ) training. That was for two reasons. First, the owners of the VTNE promised to remove access to the exam for any state that still allowed OTJ as a route to becoming licensed. Secondly, we recognized that the veterinary technician profession was rapidly advancing and in order to keep up with scientific and technological advances, it was critical that VTs were appropriately educated and trained to meet and keep up with future demands.

Before the Board approves any such apprenticeship program for VT training, we feel it's critical that the program be evaluated by AVMA's accrediting body, Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities, to ensure the program meets current educational standards offered by AVMA-accredited programs. This is to ensure that graduates are appropriately prepared not just to pass the VTNE, but to be able to work across practice sectors and to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world and profession. Without this evaluation, this or other similar programs run the risk of being little more than an OTJ experience.

We recognize there's a veterinary shortage, and additional training opportunities may bring a modicum of relief, but it won't solve the issue, especially when we already have five state degree programs plus national online degree programs. According to the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA), 49% of VTs leave the profession within five years, and the reasons cited include low pay, lack of adequate employee benefits, lack of respect, and being underutilized. It's not just an issue of attracting and training qualified individuals. We need to retain them once they've graduated.

We respectfully request that prior to the Board approving this or any other potential VT training program, the curriculum will be evaluated through the same rigorous review as our state and national accredited degree programs, both initially and at regular intervals. This is the only way to ensure the safety of the public and the health of the animals in our care.

Sincerely,

Candace Joy  
Chief Executive Officer