

I would like to start by asking why this piece of legislature is necessary. Have there been a significant number of complaints by consumers about veterinary prescription medication availability, lack of competitive pricing or unfair practice with prescription medications through veterinarians?

Clients are already free to choose where they get their medications. Veterinarians already write prescriptions on a regular basis. If a client asks to have a prescription filled at a regular pharmacy or mail order pharmacy they have that right. There are rumors that a few veterinarians have refused to write/call in prescriptions or are asking for a fee to do this. Consumers will likely find another veterinary clinic if this is important to them. Consumers typically choose businesses with good customer service and reasonable charges. This is no different for veterinary clinics.

Is it typical practice for a business to send customers to another business for a product or service they offer? I doubt that if you patronize your local small hardware store that they will offer you a product with the disclaimer that you may get a better deal at Home Depot. A consumer visits a business because they are seeking product or service. It is common for consumers to “shop around” for the best product or service value. By creating law that requires a business to “tell” customers that they have options is not necessary and only creates more paper work and bureaucracy.

By forcing veterinarians to outsource prescription medication, veterinarians will typically carry a smaller or no inventory. This may affect our ability to practice good medicine and offer convenience to clients. There are many times during emergency service that there are no retail pharmacies open due to late hours or holidays. There are many times it is advantageous to start the pet on medications as soon as possible. Clients typically appreciate the convenience associated with “one stop” care. A trip to another pharmacy adds to an already stressful day. Again, they have the choice already to choose another pharmacy if they wish.

It is important that pharmacists (not corporate pharmacies) have input on this issue. I happen to know a few pharmacists and I have yet to talk to one who likes the idea of carrying veterinary only medications. They have no training in veterinary pharmacy and are not comfortable answering questions or making recommendations regarding pet medications. Are human pharmacists really the best source of information on veterinary medications? If there is a problem with the medication will the pharmacist be able to advise them?

Currently, most of the medications that I dispense typically cost my clients about the same or less than at a retail pharmacy. I don't typically carry medications that are readily available and inexpensive through pharmacies. I have had many clients request written prescriptions only to inform me later that it cost them more. Interestingly, all the veterinary only medications that I sell are significantly less expensive than Wal Mart and Costco, the two local pharmacies carrying them.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the current law is adequate. Consumers have the freedom to do business with whomever they want. They are being treated fairly. I am concerned that this legislation is being pursued only to push business to larger corporations. Let's let the consumer decide.