



SCIL
Social Compassion
in Legislation

March 1, 2024

The Honorable Ash Kalra
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 2133 Veterinary medicine: registered veterinary technicians. – Sponsor Letter

Dear Assemblymember Kalra:

I write on behalf of Social Compassion in Legislation, proud sponsor of AB 2133, to thank you for authoring this important legislation. The bill will allow registered veterinary technicians (RVTs) to perform neuter surgeries on male cats under the “direct supervision” of a California licensed Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM). The bill requires not only direct supervision, but also that the neuter is performed in accordance with written protocols and procedures established by the veterinarian and after a review of the animal’s history shows that the surgery is appropriate.

There is a pet overpopulation crisis in California and throughout the nation. During the Covid-19 pandemic, many Californians adopted animals from shelters, but unfortunately many more decided to buy from breeders. In response to this short-term uptick in demand for dogs, breeders pushed their animals to produce more litters while we also saw a surge in “backyard” breeders looking to make a quick dollar by breeding their family animals.

At the same time as we saw a surge in the breeding of animals, access to affordable and timely veterinarian care dropped. Various factors have contributed to the lack of veterinarian access –a systemic lack of access to veterinary education, a mental health crisis in the veterinary profession pushing some to leave the practice, cost pressures due to inflation and corporate consolidation of veterinary practices, among other factors. The lack access to affordable veterinary care has contributed to many animals not being spayed or neutered which has exacerbated the pet overpopulation problem.

A 2021 national survey shows that 14 California counties ranked in the bottom 25% on the Veterinary Care Accessibility Score, which means there is extremely limited or no ability to see a veterinarian. The overall score for California was 47 out of 100, with the Central Valley and North State faring the worst. By comparison, Nebraska has a score of 71.

Yet, veterinary care, specifically spay and neuter surgeries, are exactly what we need to combat pet overpopulation. It will be impossible to adopt our way out of this crisis. We need more spay and neuter surgeries both at shelters and in private practice. One way to do that is to expand the scope of practice for RVTs to allow for male cat neuter surgeries under the direct supervision of a DVM. By doing so, DVMs can give more of their time to the more complex spay surgeries and neuter surgeries of large dogs.

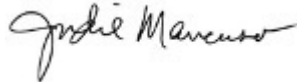
RVTs are already allowed to administer anesthesia for sterilization surgeries, which is widely viewed as the “riskiest” part of the procedure. Also, RVTs are allowed to perform dental extractions, a more complicated procedure than cat neuters. Current regulation states that “direct

supervision” requires the DVM to direct the actions of the supervised RVT and the DVM is physically in the vicinity of the surgery and available if needed. This means that a DVM will control when an RVT can and cannot perform these surgeries. The decision is ultimately in the hands of the DVM.

This modest proposal will not singlehandedly fix the pet overpopulation crisis, but it will give another tool to help alleviate the problem, particularly in shelter settings or high volume spay and neuter clinics.

For these reasons, Social Compassion in Legislation urges your colleagues to support AB 2133 and, again, thanks you for authoring this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judie Mancuso".

**Judie Mancuso
President and Founder
Social Compassion in Legislation**