

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6196

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As of February 1, 2018

**Title:** An act relating to allowing animal care and control agencies and nonprofit humane societies to provide additional veterinary services to low-income households.

**Brief Description:** Allowing animal care and control agencies and nonprofit humane societies to provide additional veterinary services to low-income households.

**Sponsors:** Senators Cleveland, Fain, Rivers, Van De Wege, Palumbo, Kuderer, McCoy, Takko, Wilson, Keiser and Saldaña.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long Term Care: 2/01/18.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Allows qualified animal control agencies and non-profit humane societies to provide veterinary services to animals owned by low-income households.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG TERM CARE

**Staff:** Greg Attanasio (786-7410)

**Background:** Animal control agencies and non-profit humane societies registered with the Department of Health may employ licensed veterinarians and veterinary technicians to provide limited veterinary services, including sterilization, vaccination, and electronic identification, to animals owned by low-income households. These facilities may also provide care on an emergency basis subject to local ordinances. The Washington Veterinary Board of Governors (board) administers the registration program and may suspend or revoke a facility's license for any act of noncompliance.

A veterinary clinic offering the full spectrum of veterinary services to the public at large must be operated by a licensed veterinarian or through a professional services corporation.

**Summary of Bill:** Animal control agencies and non-profit humane societies may provide veterinary services to animals owned by low-income households. A low-income household

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is a household whose adjusted income is less than 80 percent of the median family income, adjusted for household size, for the county where the household is located.

The board must adopt rules for regular reporting from registered animal control agencies and humane societies to demonstrate that the facilities are only providing veterinary services to low-income households.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Low-income households often cannot afford necessary care for their pets. Many people who cannot afford to pay for care surrender their pets to shelters. The bill would address an unmet need in many communities for affordable veterinary care without competing with for-profit veterinary clinics. It would expand access to care, relieve the pain and suffering pets must endure when their owners cannot afford care, reduce the number of pets who are euthanized because their owners cannot afford care, and keep families together. The model of allowing humane societies and animal control agencies to provide care to pets owned by low-income households works in many other states.

CON: The Washington State Veterinary Medical Association is interested in discussing the issue of allowing humane societies to provide care to pets owned by low-income households, but has not been given the opportunity to provide input. Many humane societies do not have a process to means-test clients and thus it is difficult to ensure only low-income clients are served. For-profit veterinary clinics already provide no-cost or discounted care and offer payment plans to meet the financial needs of clients.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Annette Cleveland, Prime Sponsor; Stacey Graham, Humane Society for Southwest Washington; Jeff Rosenthal, Idaho Humane Society; Janie Jacobson, citizen; Jen Stonequist, Director of Shelter Medicine, Kitsap Humane Society; Kay Joubert, Director of Companion Animal Services, PAWS.

CON: Greg Hannon, Washington State Veterinary Medical Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.