

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5004

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As Passed Senate, February 25, 2019

**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:** Senate Committee on Health & Long Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Cleveland, Rivers, Conway, Fortunato, Frockt, Palumbo, Rolfes, Saldaña and Kuderer).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long Term Care: 2/06/19, 2/08/19 [DPS].

**Floor Activity:**

Passed Senate: 2/25/19, 49-0.

**Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill**

- Allows veterinarians and veterinary technicians employed by 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

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5004 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Cleveland, Chair; Randall, Vice Chair; O'Ban, Ranking Member; Becker, Dhingra, Frockt, Keiser and Van De Wege.

**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

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Board of Governors administers the registration program and may suspend or revoke a facility's license for any act of noncompliance.

**Summary of First Substitute Bill:** Veterinarians and veterinary technicians employed by an animal control agencies or non-profit humane societies may provide veterinary services within their scope of practice to animals owned by low-income households. A low-income household means a single person, family or unrelated persons living together 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.

Veterinarians and veterinary technicians employed by animal control agencies and nonprofit humane societies may provide emergency care to any animal where there is an unexpected, serious occurrence or situation that urgently requires prompt action in order to prevent an animal's death or permanent injury and may also provide veterinary care to sick animals for up to 30 days post-adoption.

The Veterinary Board of Governors must adopt rules to establish annual reporting requirements that demonstrate the animal care and control facilities and nonprofit humane societies are serving only low-income households.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**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 on First Substitute:** PRO: Many pet owners cannot afford to address the health issues of their pets and are in some cases forced to surrender the animal. A survey of 1200 low-income pet owners in Washington found that 65 percent would leave a pet's health issue untreated because of cost. This bill would expand access to veterinary services, relieve pain and suffering of pets and their owners, prevent economic euthanasia, keep families together, and encourage private clinics and humane societies to work together to serve more pets. The Washington State Veterinary Medicine Association and its members support the bill.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Annette Cleveland, Prime Sponsor; Glynis Frederiksen, The City of Everett; Stacey Graham, Humane Society for Southwest Washington; Greg Hanon, Washington State Veterinary Medical Association.

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