

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Senate Bill 132

Controlled Substance Data Exemption for Veterinarians

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Alaska's 25th legislature created the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) in 2008. The legislative intent behind the PDMP was to create a database of prescriptions for controlled substances in the state. The PDMP may create obstacles for individuals seeking opioids to obtain multiple prescriptions from registered providers and may be a useful tool for human doctors in combating the opioid crisis. Under the current statutory framework, Alaska's veterinarians are required to participate in the PDMP, despite the irreconcilable differences between human and veterinary medical practice. PDMPs have been implemented in all 50 states, but 34 states have recognized the unsuitability of veterinary participation in the PDMP and exempted veterinarians. SB 132 would add Alaska to that list.

The majority of states exempt veterinarians from PDMP because they have recognized that PDMPs are designed for use in human medicine; and veterinary exclusion from PDMPs does not increase risk to the public. Alaska's inclusion of veterinarians in the PDMP has produced no identifiable benefit; yet the PDMP has created a multitude of verifiable harms to the veterinary profession and the Alaskans they serve. The PDMP is inappropriate and not effective for use with animal patients, as animals do not have identifiers such as a social security number, and veterinarians must view human owners' private health data before treating an animal.

Alaska has the highest veterinary licensure cost in the United States. Veterinary participation in the PDMP contributes to this unnecessary financial burden on a profession already experiencing extreme staffing shortages, decreasing availability of veterinary services to Alaskans. Moreso, a recent survey found attempted veterinary doctor shopping across the entire United States is essentially non-existent.

Veterinarians are tightly regulated by the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Know Your Customer Act, and the State licensing board. SB 132 seeks to correct an expensive overreach so that Alaskans can have access to treatment for their pets without compromising public safety.