

**Testimony on 2018 Senate Bill 435**  
Senator Robert Cowles  
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Thank you Chairman Wanggaard and committee members for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 435. This bill will provide the legal authority for first responders to provide emergency care to dogs, cats and other household pets once all humans have either been transported or are in stable condition.

The physical trauma that some people avoid during a car accident, house fire or other emergency situation may be offset by the emotional trauma they suffer from injuries or even death to a beloved pet. Anyone who has a canine, feline or other pet in their household will understand that these pets often become part of the family. If the pet is injured during an emergency situation, first responders are not legally able to treat these pets. However, under the state's current Veterinarian Practice Act, only licensed veterinarians are authorized to give aid to animals. This means that under statute, firefighters and EMTs must wait for an on-call veterinarian to arrive at the scene to treat any injured pets. Unfortunately, the response time for the on-call veterinarian to arrive at the scene may be too great to save the life of an injured pet.

Recent reporting by CBS58 in Milwaukee revealed that not only are many local fire departments already treating pets at an emergency scene, but they even have specialized equipment to help treat animals. Unfortunately, the first responders that provide this care may put themselves at professional risk as their actions are illegal under current law. Senate Bill 435 will fix this. Under this bill, first responders will legally be allowed to provide first aid to pets before they are transferred to a veterinarian for further treatment. Care to pets could not be provided until all humans have either been transported from the scene or are in stable condition at the scene. SB 435 will also provide immunity to first responders that either act in good faith while providing care to the animal or decline to render first aid.

First responders in Wisconsin are already working on the scenes of emergency situations to save our pets. This bill will provide the legal authority for first responders to continue helping families throughout Wisconsin, regardless the family member walks on two legs or four. This legislation is supported by a bipartisan coalition of legislators, the Human Society, the Wisconsin EMS Association, and the Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association.



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To: Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

From: Representative Dave Considine

Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 435

Date: January 4, 2018

Chairman Wanggaard, Vice-Chair Testin, and fellow committee members, thank you for holding a public hearing today on Senate Bill 435. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you regarding the merits of this legislation.

Chapter 89 of Wisconsin's Veterinary Examining Board currently only allows for veterinarians to advertise for or practice veterinary medicine. SB 435 would allow an exception to this by enabling emergency medical technicians and first responders to render basic first aid to animals they encounter in the course of responding to a call prior to transferring the animal to a veterinary facility.

Importantly, this legislation would provide immunity for emergency medical personnel to provide aid to animals if they are acting in good faith. This bill would not require ambulance service providers and their employees to provide first aid services to animals. It would merely give them the ability to do so should they feel comfortable in performing animal first aid.

Under the bill, animals are defined as a dog, cat, or other animal that is domesticated and kept as a household pet. This bill does not pertain to farm animals. Additionally, the first aid that can be provided by EMS personnel must be in the scope of practice of their license or certification when applied to human beings. In other words, they cannot exceed their current scope just because they are treating animals.

Examples of basic care procedures provided to animals could include bandaging, immobilizing a fracture, and administering oxygen.

If passed, Wisconsin would join 22 other states in enacting some form of this animal friendly legislation. We are proud to have strong, bipartisan support for this bill as well as the backing of the Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association and the Humane Society. I think you will also have the opportunity to hear from some EMS personnel as well as K-9 units describing the positive impact this bill would have.

Lastly, I want to mention that we have introduced a substitute amendment to this bill in the Assembly to conform the emergency medical technician terminology to Act 12, which was passed earlier this session. This was a bill, AB 59, introduced by Rep. Loudenbeck and passed both houses unanimously. The term "emergency medical technician" used to refer to all levels collectively but now just refers to EMT-basics. Therefore, to include paramedics and advanced EMT's under our bill we need to update the terminology to match Act 12.

With that, I ask you to please consider scheduling an executive session for SB 435 following the testimony today and thank you again for scheduling this public hearing.