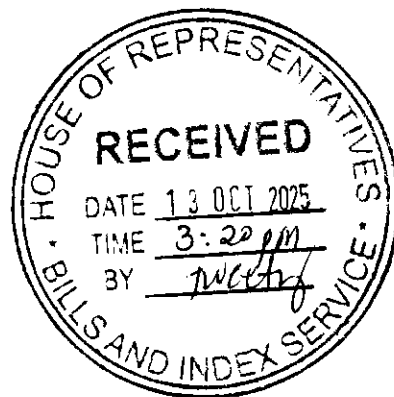




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila



TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 5531

Introduced by **Representative KATRINA REIKO CHUA - TAI**
1st District, Zamboanga City

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE AT THE WESTERN MINDANAO STATE UNIVERSITY IN ZAMBOANGA CITY, IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE GUIDELINES SET FORTH FOR THIS PURPOSE BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9268, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "PHILIPPINE VETERINARY MEDICINE ACT OF 2004," AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The demand for qualified veterinary professionals in the Philippines continues to grow, driven by increasing concerns related to public health, food safety, zoonotic diseases, and animal welfare. With the emergence of recurring outbreaks affecting livestock and poultry, veterinary professionals play a crucial role in disease prevention, control, and ensuring the safety of food supplies. Despite this vital need, access to veterinary medical and technological education remains limited, particularly in regions such as the Zamboanga Peninsula, where agriculture and livestock are key components of rural livelihood and regional food security.

The imbalance in the supply of veterinarians is underscored by the Professional Veterinary Medical Association (PVMA), which estimates that there are only over 14,000 registered veterinarians in the country. However, a significant portion of these professionals have either retired or are no longer actively practicing their profession. This shortage is further exacerbated by low passing rates in the national board examinations over recent years, highlighting challenges in both access to veterinary education and the quality of training available to aspiring professionals.

Recent licensure exam data from the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and media sources illustrate this trend. In the October 2024 Veterinarian Licensure Examination, only 633 out of 1,349 examinees passed, resulting in a passing rate of approximately 46.92%. In October 2023, the passing rate dropped sharply to just 9.34%, with only 92 out of 985 examinees successfully passing. Similarly, in September 2022, 335 out of 928 passed (36.10%), and in March 2023, 220 out of 681 examinees passed (32.31%). These figures suggest a persistent shortage of new veterinarians entering the workforce each year, due not only to exam performance but also to limited educational opportunities across the country, especially in Western Mindanao.

In response, the establishment of a College of Veterinary Medicine at Western Mindanao State University (WMSU) in Zamboanga City is hereby proposed. This initiative aims to directly address the regional and national shortage of veterinary professionals by offering accessible, high-quality veterinary education in Western Mindanao. The proposed programs will also help reduce the financial and logistical burden on students who would otherwise have to relocate to other regions to pursue veterinary degrees. This enhances educational equity and allows for the retention of skilled professionals within the region.

Moreover, the Zamboanga Peninsula is one of the most agriculturally productive regions in the Philippines, renowned for its extensive livestock and poultry industries, rich fishing grounds, and diverse agri-based economies. As such, the establishment of veterinary programs is not only strategic but essential for supporting and sustaining the productivity and resilience of the region. The availability of these programs in Zamboanga City will strengthen veterinary public health services and bolster local capacities for disease prevention, animal care, and livestock productivity. Improved veterinary services, extension programs, and diagnostic support can reduce animal losses, enhance food production, and uplift rural incomes. These programs will also enable WMSU to serve as a hub for regional research, clinical outreach, and disease surveillance, while local government units and communities respond to pressing veterinary public health challenges.

Furthermore, the inclusion of sustainable practices and principles in the curriculum, as well as the implementation various veterinary medicine programs within the said college, will enable future veterinary professionals to address pressing environmental and ecological issues related to animal agriculture, food systems, and public health. Training in areas such as sustainable livestock management, eco-friendly veterinary practices, and biodiversity conservation will ensure that graduates are not only technically competent but also responsive to the nation's long-term sustainability goals. The program supports the broader vision of achieving a balance between food production, animal welfare, environmental integrity, and economic viability, contributing meaningfully to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to health, education, sustainable agriculture, and climate action.

Finally, this proposal is aligned with Republic Act No. 9268, also known as the Philippine Veterinary Medicine Act of 2004, which mandates the regulation and promotion of high standards in veterinary education and practice. By institutionalizing a college of veterinary medicine at WMSU, the university will contribute to national goals on agricultural modernization, rural development, human and animal health, food safety, biosecurity, and environmental sustainability.

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



KATRINA REIKO CHUA - TAI



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Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. Title. - This Act shall be known as the "WMSU College of Veterinary Medicine Act."

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is the declared policy of the State to strengthen the delivery of veterinary services and education in the country by increasing access to quality veterinary medical and technological education, particularly in underserved regions such as Western Mindanao. Pursuant to this, the State shall support the establishment of veterinary education programs in accordance with the standards set by Republic Act No. 9268 or the "Philippine Veterinary Medicine Act of 2004."

SECTION 3. Establishment of Programs. - There is hereby established a College of Veterinary Medicine at the Western Mindanao State University (WMSU) in Zamboanga City, which shall offer undergraduate and graduate in veterinary medicine.

SECTION 4. Institutional Compliance. - The Western Mindanao State University shall:

- a. b Develop and implement all programs in accordance with the academic, professional, and institutional standards prescribed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Professional Regulatory Commission (PRC) through the Board of Veterinary Medicine, as mandated by Republic Act No. 9268.
- b. Ensure the compliance of its veterinary programs with the curriculum, faculty qualification, facilities, and internship requirements set forth in RA No. 9268 and by CHED and the Professional Regulatory Board of Veterinary Medicine;

- 1 c. Develop a veterinary teaching hospital and research facilities to support
2 instruction, clinical training, and extension services; and
3 d. Collaborate with the Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Industry, local
4 government units, and other relevant institutions in support of veterinary public
5 health, animal welfare, and livestock development in the region.

6 **SECTION 5. *Administration and Oversight.*** - The College of Veterinary Medicine
7 shall be headed by a Dean, who shall be appointed by the WMSU President upon
8 recommendation of the search committee and in accordance with the university's rules. The
9 Dean shall possess the qualifications required of deans of veterinary colleges as provided by
10 CHED.

11 The implementation of all programs shall be overseen by the Board of Regents of
12 WMSU, in close coordination with CHED and the Professional Regulatory Board of Veterinary
13 Medicine. They shall ensure that WMSU adheres to all standards for veterinary education,
14 including faculty recruitment, infrastructure development, and student admission.

15 **SECTION 6. *Faculty and Staff*** - The College shall employ qualified academic and
16 administrative personnel in accordance with Civil Service Commission (CSC) rules and CHED
17 guidelines. Priority shall be given to individuals with experience in veterinary education,
18 clinical practice, livestock management, and veterinary research.

19 **SECTION 7. *Appropriations.*** - The amount necessary for the initial implementation of
20 this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the Western Mindanao
21 State University. Thereafter, the funds necessary for continued operation and maintenance shall
22 be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

23 **SECTION 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).*** - Within sixty (60) days
24 from the effectivity of this Act, the WMSU in collaboration with the Board of Regents, and in
25 coordination with CHED and the Professional Regulatory Board of Veterinary Medicine, shall
26 promulgate the rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this Act.

27 **SECTION 9. *Separability Clause.*** - If any of the sections or provisions of this Act is
28 held invalid, all other provisions not affected thereby shall remain valid.

29 **SECTION 10. *Repealing Clause.*** - All laws, decrees, issuances, rules and regulations
30 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

31 **SECTION 11. *Effectivity Clause.*** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
32 complete publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

33 *Approved,*