

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESB 5899

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As Passed Senate, February 17, 2026

**Title:** An act relating to creating a license endorsement to allow qualified licensed chiropractors to perform chiropractic diagnosis and adjustments on nonhuman animals.

**Brief Description:** Creating a license endorsement to allow qualified licensed chiropractors to perform chiropractic diagnosis and adjustments on nonhuman animals.

**Sponsors:** Senators Short, Lias, Dozier, Lovelett and Riccelli.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 1/23/26, 2/03/26 [DP].

**Floor Activity:** Passed Senate: 2/17/26, 49-0.

**Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill**

- Creates a license endorsement for a licensed chiropractor to practice animal chiropractic.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Cleveland, Chair; Orwall, Vice Chair; Slatter, Vice Chair; Muzzall, Ranking Member; Bateman, Chapman, Christian, Harris, Holy, Riccelli and Robinson.

**Staff:** Jacob Ewing (786-7402)

**Background:** Chiropractors. Chiropractic services provide diagnosis, analysis, and treatment of the vertebral subluxation complex and its effects, articular dysfunction, and musculoskeletal disorders. Chiropractic treatment includes the use of procedures involving spinal adjustments and extremity manipulation. An individual can be licensed as a chiropractor in Washington by providing documentation that they have:

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- graduated from an accredited chiropractic college with at least 4000 hours of a resident course of study;
- passed an examination; and
- completed at least half of the requirements for a baccalaureate degree at an accredited and approved college or university.

Individuals licensed to practice chiropractic under the laws of any other state or territory of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, or province in Canada, with qualifications substantially equivalent to those required in Washington, may be licensed by the Washington State Chiropractic Quality Assurance Commission (CQAC) to practice chiropractic in Washington.

**Summary of Engrossed Bill:** A license endorsement for a licensed chiropractor to practice animal chiropractic is created. To qualify for the endorsement, an individual must:

- hold a valid state chiropractic license;
- provide proof of successfully completing an approved animal chiropractic education program within the previous two years that includes a minimum of 210 curriculum hours, or proof the chiropractor holds a current animal chiropractic certification; and
- pay fees as required in state statute.

An animal chiropractor may practice animal chiropractic only if:

- the animal patient has been referred to the animal chiropractor in writing by a veterinarian licensed in Washington State and who has personally examined the animal receiving the animal chiropractic care;
- the animal chiropractor assumes liability for the quality of the animal chiropractic care performed; and
- the animal chiropractor has received training and education related to the animal type of the animal patient.

An animal chiropractor may engage in animal chiropractic consistent with statute, including reviewing existing imaging reports of animal patients for diagnostic purposes. An animal chiropractor may not order magnetic, roentgen, or sonographic imaging of animal patients.

An animal chiropractor must maintain a separate written medical record of each animal patient receiving animal chiropractic care for at least five years. An animal chiropractor is required to provide a written medical record of the animal patient receiving care to the referring veterinarian within seven days of each visit.

A licensed chiropractor who is enrolled as a student in an approved animal chiropractic educational program may practice animal chiropractic as is required in the curriculum of the animal chiropractic educational program.

A chiropractic facility that treats both human and animal patients on the same clinical premises must:

- have appropriate signage as established in rule; and
- observe all clinical and sanitary standards for veterinary facilities and chiropractic facilities required in rule, or as described in state law or local ordinance.

Animal chiropractors must maintain all patient records and documentation as required in state statute and rule, and, upon request, provide those records to the client or veterinarian as designated by the client. They must maintain the address and contact information for the closest veterinarian or emergency animal clinic or both to be given to a client should an animal patient need emergency care during a chiropractic appointment.

An animal chiropractor who reports, in good faith and in the normal course of business, a suspected incident of animal cruelty to the proper authorities is immune from liability in any civil or criminal action brought against them.

An animal chiropractor license endorsement is valid for three years. An endorsement can be renewed if the animal chiropractor provides proof of a current certification from an approved animal chiropractic educational program and proof of a current animal chiropractic license endorsement, provides an attestation that the animal chiropractor has completed at least 30 hours of continuing education every three years, and pays fees as required in state statute.

An animal chiropractor is responsible and accountable for services they render.

Annually, CQAC must share information regarding complaints or disciplinary action against an animal chiropractor with the Secretary of Health and the Veterinary Board of Governors (VBOG).

CQAC and VBOG must convene a joint task force on animal chiropractic for the purpose of reviewing complaints, investigations, and disciplinary actions related to animal chiropractic care. Membership of the joint task force will be made up of an equal number of representatives from CQAC and VBOG. By October 30, 2030, the joint task force shall submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature on the animal chiropractic endorsement.

The report must include:

- the risks to public health, quality of care, or animal welfare identified through complaints submitted to CQAC, investigations conducted by CQAC, and disciplinary actions taken by CQAC related to animal chiropractic;
- an assessment of the incidence of veterinary denials of requests for referrals to chiropractors;
- a review of regulatory approaches to animal chiropractic in other jurisdictions, including referral requirements and veterinary supervision; and
- recommendations for any changes to the rules or statutes governing the animal chiropractic endorsement.

A veterinarian who refers an animal patient to an animal chiropractor must include a copy

of the medical record transmitted to the veterinarian by the animal chiropractor as a part of the animal patient's medical record.

A veterinarian who refers an animal patient to an animal chiropractor is not:

- required to supervise the animal chiropractor during the provision of animal chiropractic care; or
- liable for the animal chiropractic care provided to the animal patient by an animal chiropractor.

If a veterinarian denies an animal patient a referral for animal chiropractic care, within 14 days, the veterinarian must provide the animal chiropractor and the client the clinical basis for the denial.

**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: Animal chiropractic does not replace veterinary medicine but is a complimentary tool. Chiropractic is a non-invasive, drug-free tool to address pain and mobility in humans and animals. Work was done by members of the Veterinary Board of Governors and the Chiropractic Quality Assurance Commission to develop this bill. Current laws and regulations for animal chiropractic are incomplete leaving humans and animals vulnerable. Animal chiropractic education covers the science of chiropractic, along with courses such as diagnosis, performing adjustments, veterinary pathology, zoology, physiology, and pharmacology. Animal chiropractic education teaches that veterinarians and chiropractors work together to provide care that treats the whole animal.

CON: The current bill does not require a veterinarian referral for chiropractic care putting humans and animals at risk. Conditions that potentially can be treated by a chiropractor could come from an underlying disease that could be transferred to humans. If Washington wants to expand chiropractor access to animals, then state law should be consistent with the best practices followed in other states which requires veterinary supervision or referral.

OTHER: Right now, human chiropractors are working on animals in Washington with no oversight. There should be a referral process, continuing education, and a certification process before someone is allowed to work on animals.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Shelly Short, Prime Sponsor; Susan Jensen, Chiropractic Quality Assurance Commission; Dr. Heidi Bockhold, Options For Animals;

Gene Giggleman, DVM, Parker University Animal Chiropractic Program; Matt Waldron, DC, Chiropractic Quality Assurance Commission; Marko Lias, Senator.

CON: Eddie Haigh DVM, Washington State Veterinary Medical Assoc.; Greg Hanon, Washington State Veterinary Medical Assoc..

OTHER: Dr. Liane Sperlich.

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