

December 16, 2024

Dear Chairman Heath,

My name is Dr. Damon Eastwood and I am a veterinarian with Westside Veterinary Service in Calloway County. I grew up on a small cattle farm in Hopkins County and am a graduate of both the University of Kentucky and Auburn College of Veterinary Medicine. I am also a member of the KVMA and AVMA.

I am in full support of Murray State University having the ability to offer doctorate degrees in Veterinary Medicine. As evident by the national data and trends of the profession - we are in constant need for veterinarians in our state, particularly large animal veterinarians in rural Kentucky.

This past summer, the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) published a study regarding demand for and supply of veterinarians in our country (<https://www.aavmc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Demand-for-and-Supply-of-Veterinarians-in-the-U.S.-to-2032-New.pdf>). The ultimate conclusion is that we will need at least 1600 additional veterinarian student seats by early in the next decade.

I live in Hazel, Kentucky and know firsthand that Murray State University is the perfect place and has the right infrastructure and key pieces in place, such as the acreage of farmland, the largest pre-vet/vet tech enrollment in the state, the highest-level certification veterinary diagnostic lab in the state (Breathitt Veterinary Center) and so much more. Most importantly, they are the only university - for over 50 years - to try to help with the veterinarian shortage in our state by building a School of Veterinary Medicine. This shortage will continue to grow, even with more Schools of Veterinary Medicine starting at places like Clemson University and Arkansas State University.

Auburn University is a wonderful institution but there are far too many Kentucky students who have the grades, work ethic and passion for being a veterinarian who either choose not to go out of state for vet school or are not accepted into Auburn who would make wonderful veterinarians! Having another option like Murray State University, in addition to the slots at Auburn University, for students is necessary for us to fill the veterinary shortage in our state currently and for the future.

I have faith that Murray State University can do this and will be highly successful for years to come if allowed the opportunity by the state to offer a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine. I would like for my endorsement to be distributed to all members of the Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture and read aloud at the upcoming committee meeting on December 19, 2024.

Sincerely,

Damon Eastwood

Damon Eastwood, DVM
Westside Veterinary Service. LLP