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American College of Veterinary Hospice and Palliative Medicine Organizing Committee

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American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)

1931 N. Meacham Road, Suite 100

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Dear Members of the American Board of Veterinary Specialties,

We, the undersigned members of the Organizing Committee for the American College of Veterinary Hospice and Palliative Medicine, respectfully submit this letter of intent to petition the American Board of Veterinary Specialties (ABVS) for recognition of the American College of Veterinary Hospice and Palliative Medicine (ACVHPM) as a new Recognized Veterinary Specialty Organization (RVSO).

We affirm our full understanding of the standards and procedures required for AVMA recognition and are committed to meeting and exceeding the rigorous expectations set forth by the ABVS. Our committee has carefully evaluated these requirements and has developed a robust framework for a specialty college that will advance veterinary medicine while addressing an essential and currently unmet need. The American College of Veterinary Hospice and Palliative Medicine will manage credential review, examination development, examination administration, and certification decisions within their organizational structure and will not utilize an independent certifying body.

The scope of practice of the ACVHPM centers on the contextualized care of animals with chronic, progressive and quality-of-life limiting diseases. This specialty encompasses advanced pain and symptom management; multimodal palliative interventions; integrative and supportive therapies for comfort and well-being; guidance in complex medical decision making; comprehensive quality-of-life assessment; and emotional and psychosocial support for caregivers. Diplomates will be trained to deliver patient-centered, goal-concordant care that prioritizes comfort, dignity, and the mitigation of suffering, while supporting caregivers through their animal's disease progression, the dying process, and bereavement. This specialty spans

clinical expertise, communication, ethics, and coordinated interdisciplinary care, ensuring that patients receive the highest standard of evidence-based hospice and palliative medicine.

The distinctiveness of the proposed specialty is clear when compared with currently recognized RVSOs and their respective specialties. Existing diplomate programs appropriately emphasize diagnosis, treatment, and cure-oriented interventions. However, none of those provide formalized, in-depth training dedicated to the interdisciplinary, whole-patient, and whole-caregiver needs encountered when curative options are inadequate for symptom control, do not exist, or are no longer effective, desired, or appropriate. This speciality is unique in the degree of case coordination with all members of the interdisciplinary care team- caregivers, paraprofessionals, primary care veterinary practitioners, specialty veterinary practitioners, mental health professionals, and other allied healthcare professionals.

Hospice and palliative medicine require specialized competencies, such as advanced comfort-focused medicine, caregiver support, end-of-life planning, and comprehensive care coordination, which fall outside the purview of any existing veterinary specialty. This approach prioritizes interdisciplinary coordination that evaluates the entire clinical and psychosocial landscape of the patient and their caregivers, rather than the narrower, condition-specific perspectives of individual specialties. The ACVHPM represents a unique, ethically grounded discipline that integrates medical and psychosocial dimensions of care. Recognizing this specialty will fill a critical gap in veterinary medicine by formally preparing veterinarians to provide expert, patient-centered care for animals and comprehensive interdisciplinary caregiver support during the most challenging times of an animal's life.

Our Organizing Committee members are highly qualified and dedicated professionals who are leaders within the veterinary field of hospice and palliative medicine:

- Aja Senestraro, DVM, CHPV, CVPP, CCRP, CVA, CVTP, CVFT, CVCH, CTCVMP
- Alex Dahlgren, DVM, CHPV, CVA
- Alexis Tischler, DVM, CHPV, CPEV
- Amir Shanan, DVM, CHPV
- Beth Marchitelli, DVM, MS
- Caitlin DeWilde, DVM
- Catherine Pfent, DVM, PhD, DACVP, CHPV
- Christie Cornelius, DVM, MS, MBA, CHPV
- Diane Eigner, VMD, MBA, CVPM, CHPV
- Elke Rudloff, DVM, DACVECC, cVMA, CPEV
- Erica Sandberg, DVM, CHPV, CPEV
- Heidi M. Cooley, DVM, CHPV, CCXP
- Jenifer Gold, DVM, DACVIM (LA Medicine), DACVECC (Large Animal)
- Julia Spade, DVM, cVMA, CHPV, cVBMC
- KaLee Pasek, DVM, CHPV, CVFP
- Karen Whala, DVM, MPH, DACVPM
- Karin Christopher, DVM, CHPV
- Kathleen Cooney, DVM, MS, DACAW, CHPV, CPEV
- Kayla Hanson, DVM, DACVECC, CHPV, cVMA
- Kellie Littrell, DVM, MPH, MA
- Kerry Muhovich, DVM, MPH, CCRP, CAMVP
- Laurie Brush, DVM, MA, CHPV
- Lynn Hendrix-Chupa, DVM, CHPV
- Mary Gardner, DVM, CPEV

- Megan Coveyou, DVM, CVA, CHPV, CTPEP
- Page Yaxley, DVM, DACVECC
- Sara Hopkins, DVM, CVA, CHPV
- Sara Stoneburg, DVM
- Stacy Montgomerie, DVM, CHPV
- Stephanie B. Freed, DVM, cVMA, CHPV
- Tamara Grubb, DVM, PhD, DACVAA, CVMA, CVPP
- Tami Shearer, DVM, CVA, CCRP, CVPP, CHPV
- Tiffany Ma, DVM, CHPV
- Trish Hessel, JD, DVM, CHPV
- Tyler Carmack, DVM, CVA, CVFT, CHPV, CTPEP, CPEV

Recognizing the American College of Veterinary Hospice and Palliative Medicine as a veterinary specialty organization will fill a long-standing void in veterinary care and strengthen the profession’s capacity to meet the unique needs of animals and caregivers facing the end of life. The American College of Veterinary Hospice and Palliative Medicine would offer both the public and veterinary professionals a clear, reliable way to identify veterinarians with advanced training in hospice and palliative care. This RVSO would instill confidence that these practitioners deliver the most compassionate care while upholding the highest standards of animal welfare. We are dedicated to building a specialty that upholds the highest professional standards, advances scientific knowledge, and enriches the humane practice of veterinary medicine.

Thank you for your consideration. We welcome the opportunity to present further details of our proposal and look forward to the possibility of contributing meaningfully to the advancement of veterinary specialty practice.

Respectfully,





Dr. Aja Senestraro,
Chair

Dr. Sara Hopkins,
Vice-chair

Dr. Tyler Carmack
Vice-chair

American College of Veterinary Hospice and Palliative Medicine *Organizing Committee*