Offered by Councilor Breadon, Arroyo, Baker, Bok, Campbell, Edwards, Essaibi-George, Flaherty, Flynn, Mejia and O'Malley

CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING
ACCESS TO LOW-COST VETERINARY CARE

WHEREAS,   Domesticated animals have increasingly become integral pet companions to individuals, families, and households, helping to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression by providing comfort, connection, and healthy routines for human caretakers of all generations; *and*

WHEREAS,   Pet care needs of working-class, low-income, immigrant, limited-English proficient, and communities of color are often unmet and underserved by for-profit, corporate veterinary clinics, yet low-cost options are often inadequately resourced despite increasing demand; *and*

WHEREAS,   Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics place Massachusetts among the top fifteen states with the lowest concentration of veterinarians; *and*

WHEREAS,   The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and human and veterinary healthcare professionals, have promoted a "One Health" approach to human-animal care that is collaborative, cross-sector, and interdisciplinary, while recognizing that the health of people is integrally connected to the health of animals and our shared environment; *and*

WHEREAS,   There are many reputable non-profit veterinary care clinics and providers in the Boston area, with many providing low-cost veterinary care and spay-neuter programs in high demand to income-eligible pet owners in partnership with the City of Boston; *and*

WHEREAS,   The COVID-19 pandemic's shift to remote work and learning spurred increases in pet adoptions, impacting a veterinary industry already struggling to meet pre-pandemic demand given national workforce shortages and low retention rates of veterinary students; *and*

WHEREAS,   Early pandemic conditions forced people out of stable work or housing, causing some pet owners to no longer be able to afford care or shelter for their pets, resulting in the difficult decisions to surrender their companion pets, or even euthanasia in extreme cases; *and*

WHEREAS,   The pandemic has had profound social and economic impacts on the field of veterinary care including challenges impacting the professional pipeline, backlog of urgent and non-urgent case loads, availability of appointments, longer wait times and limited capacity given safety protocols, and wellness of veterinary care workers; *and*

WHEREAS,   Veterinary professionals face heavy emotional burdens–supporting clients through financial stress, pet health conditions, end-of-life care, and death–contributing to increased burn out, turnover, and disproportionate rates of depression and suicide over other occupations; *and*

WHEREAS,   Displacement, income inequality, increased costs of living, and the proliferation of luxury housing development have also heightened prevalence of corporate-run, for-profit, upscale specialty clinics and subscription-based veterinary services, while demand for non-profit and public options for low-cost, affordable essential veterinary services continue to rise; *and*

WHEREAS,   An equitable post-pandemic recovery should consider holistic and interdisciplinary approaches to human-animal care policy, programs, and operations in public health, human services, and social welfare by ensuring access to low-cost and sustainable veterinary care for community members most in need; *NOW, THEREFORE BE IT*

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss access to low-cost veterinary care, stressors of the veterinary care industry impacting services in the City of Boston, adoption of holistic human-animal care approaches to health, and that representatives of City administration including Animal Care and Control, the Animal Control Commission, and the Boston Public Health Commission, veterinary care professionals, pet owners, and other interested members of the public be invited to attend.

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