

WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

Date: January 13, 2021

To: Washington State Board of Health Members

From: Jill Wood, Board Member

Subject: Petition for Rulemaking – New Rule(s) to Address Zoonotic Illnesses Spread by Canines in the Workplace

Background and Summary:

The Administrative Procedures Act (RCW 34.05.330) allows any person to petition a state agency to request adoption, amendment, or repeal of any rule. Upon receipt of a petition, the agency has sixty days to either (1) deny the petition in writing stating the reasons and, as appropriate, offer other means for addressing the concerns raised by the petitioner, or (2) accept the petition and initiate rulemaking.

On November 28, 2020 the Board received a petition for rulemaking from Mr. Gregory Goldberg, requesting new rules to protect employees from zoonotic diseases in the workplace, particularly in those workplaces that allow employees to bring their dogs to work. The petition states there is an increased risk of transmission of zoonotic disease in workplaces due to an insufficient regulatory structure. In materials, Mr. Goldberg provided information regarding an instance in the state where suspected transfer of *Streptococcus Canis* occurred to a human from an infected canine encountered in the workplace.

The Board's authority under RCW 43.20.050(2)(f) provides for the ability to adopt rules for the prevention and control of infectious and noninfectious diseases, including food and vector borne illnesses.

Zoonotic diseases are pathogens carried by non-human vectors and subsequently transmitted to a human. Common zoonotic diseases include Lyme disease, Rabies, and West Nile Virus. Zoonotic diseases are transferred from their animal vector to humans in a variety of routes. For example, Lyme disease is transmitted through the saliva of an infected tick following a bite. *S. canis* has been documented to be transmitted from an infected canine, or other vector, through bite or through contact with an existing open wound on an individual (i.e. leg ulcer), however the literature provides limited examples of transmission. *S. canis* has also been identified as present in cows, rats, foxes, and rabbits.

In Washington, the Department of Labor and Industries (LNI) has the authority under chapter 49.17 RCW to set rules related to occupational health and safety. Under that authority, LNI has established general health and safety regulations related to

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workplaces in chapter 296-24 WAC. Currently, LNI does not have rules specifically related to canines or other animals in the workplace, with the exception of rules related to agricultural settings. In the event of a complaint regarding a workplace safety or health concern, LNI will notify the employer seeking response and if necessary, conduct an investigation.

Recommended Board Actions:

The Board may wish to consider, amend if necessary, and adopt one of the following motions:

The Board declines the petition to initiate rulemaking to address zoonotic diseases in the workplace, such as those carried by canines, for the reasons articulated by Board members, and directs staff to notify the requestor of the Board's decision.

OR

The Board accepts the petition for rulemaking to establish rules to address the spread of zoonotic illnesses spread by canines in the workplace. The Board directs staff to notify the requestor of its decision and to file a CR-101, Preproposal of Inquiry, under its authority in RCW 43.20.050(2)(f).

Staff

Samantha Pskowski

To request this document in an alternate format or a different language, please contact Kelie Kahler, Washington State Board of Health Communication Manager, at 360-236-4102 or by email at kelie.kahler@sboh.wa.gov. TTY users can dial 711.

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