May 3, 2019

RE: Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine

Dear Members of the Texas Legislature,

As 16 Chambers of Commerce representing job creators in West Texas, we write to respectfully ask your support for efforts related to the Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine, including full funding from the Texas Legislature in the amount of $17.4 million for the FY 2020-2021 biennium.

The State of Texas is facing a serious workforce need, and the Texas Tech School of Veterinary Medicine has a plan to address that need. Currently, 40 percent of Texas veterinarians are over the age of 60. Many rural Texas counties – largely concentrated in West Texas – have fewer than a handful of veterinarians; some have none at all. As we face this veterinarian shortage as a state and with looming retirements of practicing veterinarians, it is clear that the demand for this profession far exceeds the current supply in Texas.

Many qualified students leave the State of Texas or even go overseas to obtain a veterinary education. In fact, the number of Texas seeking a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) out of state increased from around 30 students in 2012 to nearly 150 students in 2017. During this time, the number of veterinary students who were able to remain in Texas to receive their DVM remained flat (133-142 per year).

The proposed location of the Texas Tech School of Veterinary Medicine in Amarillo is a perfect fit for current workforce needs. Geographically, not only would a vet school in Amarillo serve an area of the state that is in desperate need of more veterinarians, but would also be central to the agriculture, ranching, and livestock industries that are vital to the Texas economy.

All of this information adds up to one simple fact: the veterinary needs of the State of Texas cannot be met by just one higher education institution anymore. The unemployment rate for Texas veterinarians is less than half of one percent. Qualified vet school applicants are leaving Texas in droves to get their education and practice elsewhere, which harms industries that are foundational for our state’s economy.
The Texas Cattle Feeders Association, Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, Texas Farm Bureau, and Texas Veterinary Medical Association have all acknowledged this workforce need. The Texas Tech School of Veterinary Medicine offers a strong and viable solution for the State of Texas, which is why we are asking you to support this initiative.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the great State of Texas.

Sincerely,

Eddie McBride, President and CEO
Lubbock Chamber of Commerce

Abilene Chamber of Commerce

Amarillo Chamber of Commerce

Brownfield Chamber of Commerce

Crosbyton Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture

Deaf Smith County Chamber of Commerce

Dumas/Moore County Chamber of Commerce

Floydada Chamber of Commerce

Lamesa Area Chamber of Commerce

Levelland Chamber of Commerce

Lorenzo Chamber of Commerce

Odessa Chamber of Commerce

Olton Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture

Ralls Chamber of Commerce

San Angelo Chamber of Commerce

Seminole Chamber of Commerce