



## *Monroe County Legislature*

**RACHEL BARNHART**  
LEGISLATOR – DISTRICT 21

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August 25, 2023

Chair Lina M. Khan  
Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Chair Khan,

I am writing to you about the decision of Thrive Pet Healthcare to close the only emergency 24-hour veterinary clinic in the Rochester, N.Y. metro area. Veterinary Specialists and Emergency Services (VSES) announced it would close in November.

Private equity owned Thrive Pet Healthcare operates many clinics in Rochester, leaving pet owners with few choices over prices and services offered. The FTC has recently acted against private equity firms' anticompetitive practices in the veterinary field. A review of the situation in the Rochester market, the third largest in New York State, appears warranted.

The loss of this clinic will cause pain for pets and their owners, as my own experiences illustrate. On East Sunday in 2018, my Neapolitan Mastiff, Pixie, experienced heart failure and rapidly declined. VSES advised she did not have long to live and helped us say goodbye. In the summer of 2021, my Beagle, Penny, suddenly could not walk. VSES staff said I brought her in just in time for surgery on her ruptured disc. She stayed for several days and walked out on her own and has made a full recovery.

Thousands of families have similar stories of the vital care they received at VSES. Being forced to drive more than an hour for emergency care will undoubtedly lead to additional suffering and loss.

VSES claims the clinic must close because of staffing issues. While the shortage of veterinarians nationwide is well-documented, so is the impact of private equity firms buying up practices. Private equity is notorious for squeezing every dime from companies over the short term, driving up consumer costs while limiting investment in staff and services. This crisis requires innovative solutions, and the kinds of investments private equity firms are unwilling to make.

VSES staff recently unionized, something its parent company fought tooth and nail, making the timing of this announcement disturbing and suspicious. One way to bust a union is to conveniently close shop.

At least two-thirds of households in the U.S. have a pet. With more than 1 million residents and more than 300,000 households, the Rochester area can surely support a 24-hour emergency pet clinic. The FTC is well-positioned to scrutinize Thrive Pet Healthcare over its decision to shut down VSES.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachel Barnhart".

Rachel Barnhart – Legislator District 21

cc: Michael Barnett, FTC  
Sen. Charles Schumer