



Proponent Testimony – Sub Senate Bill 177

November 12, 2014

Chairman Jim Butler and honorable members of the House Judiciary Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony before you today in strong support of S.B. 177.

I serve as the President of the Board of Directors for the Ohio Federated Humane Societies. I am also the President & CEO of the Humane Society of Greater Dayton – a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) county humane society that serves Montgomery County. Humane societies that have been organized under ORC 1717 are granted the authority to appoint humane agents who, once they successfully complete state-mandated training and have their appointment approved by their county's probate court, are authorized to enforce Ohio's animal protection laws, specifically ORC 959. Each of the board members listed on our testimony also lead county humane societies organized under ORC 1717. In the course of carrying out our animal protection roles, it is common for us to encounter situations where people and pets have become the victims of domestic violence. Accordingly, and as a matter of law, we are also mandated reporters for child neglect and abuse.

In my testimony today, I am speaking on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Ohio Federated Humane Societies.

Abusers learn how to manipulate their victims and the system. They harm pets to demonstrate power and control over the family, to isolate and punish the victims, and to prevent them from leaving. They also know that threatening to harm or harming the family pet will carry a much lesser penalty than threatening to harm or harming a person. The end result is a continued cycle of violence that includes people and animals alike.

Including pets in domestic violence protective orders is a critical step toward combating human domestic violence and animal cruelty. Not only will providing such protection help animals who have become the victims of domestic abuse, but it will also remove a significant barrier for the human victims who are trying to leave their abusers – the fear of leaving their beloved pet behind. In a 2007 study, researcher Frank R. Ascione found that 18-48% of battered women delayed leaving an abusive home, or returned to their abuser, out of fear for the welfare of their animals.

Thank you for your time and attention in considering our comments on Sub S.B. 177. We implore you to pass this bill.

Respectfully,

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Approved by the Ohio Federated Humane Societies Board of Trustees

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