



Animal Welfare Institute

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TESTIMONY ON OHIO H.B. 433

Presented by Vicki Deisner, Animal Welfare Institute

Before the Ohio House Economic Development, Commerce & Labor
Committee

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Chairman Young, Vice-Chairman DeVitis, Ranking Minority Member LePore-Hagan, and distinguished members of the House Economic Development, Commerce & Labor Committee, I am Vicki Deisner, Government Affairs representative for the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI). AWI respectfully urges this committee to support and pass H.B. 433, a bill that would provide for continuing education credits for veterinarians performing free spay/neuter procedures.

According to the ASPCA, recent data released in 2017 show that approximately 6.5 million companion animals enter shelters in the United States, and approximately 1.5 million companion animals are euthanized. This sad reality comes at an enormous cost to taxpayers as local governments funding municipal shelters pay the price to end the life of healthy, adoptable animals.

Ohio is lucky to have so many municipal and private animal shelters as well as rescue groups that focus their efforts on finding permanent homes for thousands of cats and dogs each year. Most of these organizations require that their animals be spayed or neutered before adopting. This is considered to be “best practice.” Over 30 states require spay/neuter before adoption, including Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Maryland, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Nevada, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee,

Texas, Utah, and West Virginia. Indiana passed a mandatory spay/neuter bill in 2016 that will take effect in 2021. All of Ohio's surrounding states have mandatory spay/neuter laws except for Kentucky.

Increasing the spaying and neutering of animals before adoption will reduce the amount of money spent on the needless deaths of companion animals, thus allowing local governments to make better use of their limited resources. By providing limited continuing education credits for veterinarians committing to perform free spay/neuter procedures, you will be increasing the opportunity for more shelters and rescues in the state of Ohio to provide this life-saving service. We must decrease the needless euthanasia of healthy, adoptable animals in the state of Ohio, and increasing spay-neuter of healthy animals has been identified as the key strategy for making that can happen.

The value of this approach can be seen vividly in Indianapolis, Indiana. In 2000, considered the worst year on record for Indianapolis pets, area shelters euthanized 22,000 cats and dogs. Over the next 16 years, the euthanasia rate for dogs and cats plummeted by 90 percent—65 percent in the last five years alone—so that in 2016, just over 2300 dogs and cats were euthanized. The credit for this dramatic decline has been ascribed to an increase in the availability of spaying and neutering services, as well as in adoptions and education.

Clearly the decrease in unwanted pets, and the decrease in the killing of healthy, adoptable animals, is a positive development for the life of a community and its companion animals. Encouraging veterinarians, through the awarding of biennium CEU credits, to become more involved in providing these services to owners who might otherwise not have access to them, is a win-win-win.

An additional win of increasing spaying and neutering of animals is the additional protection to Ohio's communities. According to the ASPCA, stray animals that have not been sprayed or neutered are more likely to be dangerous and aggressive toward other animals and toward people, and to cause vehicular accidents and property damage.

For all the aforementioned reasons, AWI respectfully urges the House Economic Development, Commerce & Labor Committee to support and pass H.B. 433. National Spay/Neuter Month is February - let's get this bill passed out of committee, passed on the floor, and to the Governor's desk for his signature – so we can improve the plight of homeless animals in Ohio. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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