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Where Legal Justice is Not an Endangered Species

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LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR OHIO H.B. 523

To the Ohio House Community and Family Advancement Committee

Tuesday, March 13, 2018

TO: Chairman Ginter, Vice-Chair LaTourette, Ranking Minority Member Boyd and distinguished members of the House Community and Family Advancement Committee

FR: Dr. Mark J. Bamberger, Ph.D., J.D., Owner/Attorney at Law, The Mark Bamberger Co., LLC

My name is Mark Bamberger. I am the Owner of my own law firm; based in Southwestern Ohio. TMBC opened in 2009 and, though we have focused on non-animal-related areas of law as bankruptcy, divorce and custody, criminal defense, and civil litigation, my true passion is and always has been animal law. Prior to going into law, I was an environmental geologist in Connecticut and Ohio for 18 years, along with an adjunct professor of geology at seven (7) universities. Although the nexus between the two fields appears nebulous, the tie has been a concern for the animals.

My goal in going into law was to work in environmental and animal law issues, and to some extent I have accomplished that. I serve as pro bono general counsel for several animal shelters in Central Ohio and also regularly do legal work for the Wolf Creek Wolf Habitat and Rescue in Brookville, Indiana. I have also had the privilege of serving as two-term Chairperson of the Ohio State Bar Association's Animal Law Committee, along with Vice Chairperson and Recording Secretary at various points in the Committee's young history. In that capacity, I also wrote the recent Report to the OSBA's Council of Delegates asking that group to formally support Ohio HB523.

In my various roles on the Animal Law Committee, I organized numerous presentations involving animal law issues. A common thread with those presentations was the "interdisciplinarity" between animal law and other areas of the legal practice in Ohio. To the point at hand, there is a close tie between animal law and criminal law or family law. Sadly, there is a close relationship between animal abuse and other criminal activity, including serial murder. As this group may well be aware, there is extensive research that indicates that many, if not most, known serial killers start as animal abusers. I will not bore this Committee with citations of that literature, but rest assured that it is extensive and conclusive.

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In short, HB 523 would: (1) add animal control and humane law enforcement officers to the list of professionals required to immediately report suspected child abuse; (2) require animal abuse reporting by veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and social service and certain other professionals; and (3) establish criminal prohibitions related to such reporting, among other things. In reviewing the proposed language of the bill, it appears clear that it does not impose significant additional responsibilities to the workload of officials already doing critical social good. Many other states, some here in the Midwest, have already taken similar if not identical measures not only to protect animals in and of themselves, but also identify and potentially stop future serial human abuse or murder in its infancy.

I would like to thank Representatives Lanese and Perales for their leadership on HB 523 which mandates cross-reporting by government officials of suspected animal abuse when investigating child or elder abuse concerns. I appreciate this opportunity to submit the foregoing letter of support on behalf of this common sense and important bill. For all the aforementioned reasons, I respectfully urge the House Community and Family Advancement Committee to pass H.B. 523, which will create another valuable addition to Ohio's laws that are making life better for the human and animal victims of violence.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Respectfully Submitted,

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