



**State Representative Brian D. Hill
H.B. 506 Sponsor Testimony
February 20th, 2018**

Chairman Blessing, Vice-Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony today on HB 506. This bill expands the scope of Ohio's already strong regulatory framework for commercial dog breeding. HB 506 addresses cage sizes, food and water, socialization, exercise, and other animal care standards necessary for healthy dogs.

The standards in this bill were largely derived from veterinarians and nationally recognized animal care scholars, and are reflective of the most current and relevant science available. Some provisions regarding the standard of care in this bill include:

- Providing daily, healthy food and potable water in accordance with a nutrition plan.
- Providing comfortable, safe, and sanitary enclosures that are cleaned daily and regulated for temperature, ventilation, and light.
- Ensuring that breeding females are declared healthy before having a litter of puppies.
- Providing daily exercise, access to the outdoors, human interactions and environmental enrichments in animal enclosures.
- Providing appropriate care and prompt treatment for any illness, disease, or injury.

My intent is to provide standards that commercial breeders can comply with, and that the Department of Agriculture can actually enforce. There are some items, like cage sizes, human interaction, and others, where precise science is not available to dictate a standard. For those items, commonly accepted animal care practices were

used as a guide. Instead of using emotion as a guide, the standards in HB 506 reflect the most appropriate and generally accepted animal care practices and are designed solely to promote the welfare of the animal.

Some of you listening to me stand here and talk about yet another dog bill may be thinking, haven't we already passed legislation on this very subject? My response to that would be, yes we have, in SB 130 of the 129th General Assembly. That bill created the current statutory framework for dog breeding in the state of Ohio. While the Ohio Department of Agriculture is doing a good job of enforcing their existing program, some deficiencies have been identified in current law. HB 506 will address these shortcomings by providing clear guidelines in the Revised Code where none exist now.

As you may be aware, the Humane Society of the United States is also attempting to address these shortcomings in current law by circulating petitions for a ballot initiative this November. They are pursuing a constitutional amendment on animal welfare, in violation of the agreement reached with then-Governor Ted Strickland and major livestock commodity groups that created the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board. To date, all other parties have kept their end of the agreement, which has extended to January 1st 2020. HSUS is refusing to live up to the agreement they signed by pursuing a ballot initiative pertaining to animal welfare prior to January 1st, 2020. I am very disappointed that the group has chosen to go against the terms of their agreement when they could have come to the legislature and worked with us on a fix to this issue. I don't know about you, but I feel that what HSUS is attempting to do with their ballot amendment is a grave misuse of the Ohio Constitution and an insult to the legislature. Just like human health, animal health is based on science and is constantly evolving. Placing specific animal care requirements in the state Constitution is simply not appropriate.

I thank all of you for your time today and hope you will join me in supporting this common sense approach to addressing issues in Ohio's already strong commercial dog breeding program. A statutory fix is the most appropriate path for handling items related to animal care. At this time, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.