



# Animal Welfare Institute

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## TESTIMONY ON OHIO H.B. 522

Presented by Vicki Deisner, Animal Welfare Institute  
Before the Ohio House State and Local Government Committee  
Tuesday, April 17, 2018

Chair Anielski, Vice-Chair Hambley, Ranking Minority Member Holmes, and distinguished members of the House State and Local Government 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. 522, a bill that would provide for the safe capture of stray animals and the elimination of gas chambers in the state of Ohio.

H.B. 522 would require the use of injection for euthanasia in Ohio animal shelters. Direct injection of the drug sodium pentobarbital (referred to as EBI for euthanasia by injection) is accepted by all national veterinary and humane organizations as the most humane method currently available for euthanasia. When performed properly by trained personnel, EBI is painless to the animal and takes effect within seconds. The use of other methods of causing death besides EBI, such as the use of gas chambers which take over 25 minutes to kill an animal, is unacceptable in any setting where proper euthanasia drugs can be legally obtained. Proper euthanasia drugs can be legally obtained by authorities in Ohio.

**Gas chambers are ineffective and inefficient.** The gas chamber cannot be humanely used for the majority of shelter pets that require euthanasia. Old, sick and injured animals have circulatory problems that delay the effects of carbon monoxide, causing them to experience significant distress prior to losing consciousness. Likewise, young animals have physiological make-ups that render a humane death impossible. And when animals are pregnant, the mother typically dies well before the unborn puppies, causing them to suffocate to death. The 25 or more minutes it can take to end that animal's life is agonizing.

**Gas chambers pose a danger to shelter staff.** Carbon monoxide is a hazardous substance that is highly toxic with no odor, color or taste. It is one of the leading causes of accidental poisoning in the United States. Repeated exposure to carbon monoxide, even at low levels, can result in long-term effects including impaired memory, breathing difficulties, muscle weakness, heart irregularity, and brain damage. In addition, animals that are handled when put into a small, dark confining gas chamber may become fearful and react more adversely than animals who are being gently restrained during EBI – thus increasing the danger for shelter staff. Shelter workers have been injured and even killed by malfunctioning gas chambers – in 2000 a Tennessee shelter worker was killed due to carbon monoxide exposure while in the process of euthanizing an animal.

**Gas chambers are more expensive.** A 2009 study has proven that death by injection, including the costs of permitting and acquiring euthanasia drugs, costs less than using a gas chamber.

**Training for injection is readily available.** Grants and training are readily available to help Ohio shelters with the transition to injection – including from foundations within the state.

**State action is needed.** Since 2013, approximately 70 chambers in 13 states have voluntarily closed their chambers, and outright bans on chamber use for pets have been passed, or loopholes allowing certain chambers to continue to operate closed, such as in Pennsylvania, Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina, California. There are 27 states with full bans in place, but gas chambers are still in use in at least 4 states, including Ohio. Statewide regulation is needed to ensure all Ohio shelter pets receive the same humane treatment if euthanasia is absolutely necessary.

For all these reasons, AWI respectfully urges the House State and Local Government Committee to support and pass H.B. 522. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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