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Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 33
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House Criminal Justice Committee

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 33. And thank you, Representative Lanese, for the opportunity to join you on this vital legislation.

House Bill 33 is critical, not only to protect companion animals from abuse, but also to add another tool through which domestic abuse can be identified and stopped. It is said that pets are often the canaries in the coal mine when it comes to abuse, and there is undeniable evidence demonstrating a link between animal abuse and violence towards humans. One study found that 70% of people charged with cruelty to animals were known by police for other violent behavior – including homicide. Another study found that 61.5% of animal abuse offenders had also committed an assault; 17% had committed sexual abuse; 8% had arson convictions.

The link between animal abuse and violence towards humans is even stronger when animal abuse begins at a young age, with such behavior being an early warning sign of an individual's tendency toward violence, or that the child is also being abused. 63% of aggressive criminals were found to have deliberately inflicted harm on animals in childhood. 48% of rapists and 30% of child molesters committed animal abuse in childhood or adolescence.

Many of the most infamous school shooters and serial killers “got their courage” by first being violent towards animals. For example, Jeffrey Dahmer, The Son of Sam, and Ted Bundy, as well as the perpetrators in Columbine and Parkland all had extensive histories of animal abuse, with 50% of schoolyard shooters having been found to have such histories. This legislation will provide law enforcement with the opportunity to intervene in violent home environments before the perpetrator's actions escalate. Furthermore, it will increase the ability of social service professionals to intervene in situations where a child or elder is also present.

There is also a significant link between animal abuse and domestic violence. Studies have shown that over 70% of battered women reported that their pets had been threatened, harmed, or killed

by their partners, and women living in shelters were 11 times more likely to report that their partners had hurt or killed their pets than a similar cohort of women. Furthermore, a history of pet abuse is one of the four most significant indicators of who is at greatest risk of becoming a batterer.

All of these statistics are troubling, and they highlight the critical need for this legislation. Those who are willing to harm animals tend to harm others. The implementation of cross-reporting mechanisms and procedures will increase the flow of information and be an essential tool to stop family violence.

Thank you once again Chairman for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 33. We would be happy to answer any questions members of the committee may have.