



Safe Children, Stable Families, Supportive Communities

House Criminal Justice Committee
Proponent Testimony on Substitute HB33
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Good morning Chair Lang, Vice-Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the Committee. My name is Mary Wachtel and I am the Director of Public Policy for the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO). PCSAO is a membership driven association of Ohio's county Public Children Services Agencies (PCSAs) that advocates for and promotes child protection program excellence and sound public policy for safe children, stable families, and supportive communities.

On behalf of our member agencies, PCSAO is pleased to provide proponent testimony for Substitute HB33. Requiring cross-reporting of abuse between social services professionals and law enforcement/animal control officer (or equivalent) is good practice because of the documented link between child abuse/ domestic violence and animal abuse. Consider the following:

- Research has documented a relationship between childhood histories of animal cruelty and patterns of chronic interpersonal aggression.¹
- Witnessing animal abuse in the home is being recognized as toxic stress and some are working to include it as Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE). Exposure to abusive events in early childhood can harm developing brain architecture and result in lifelong negative physical and mental health issues.²
- Those who witness animal cruelty are more than eight times as likely to subsequently become a perpetrator of violence.³

This, and additional, research very clearly shows that animal abuse is correlated with family dysfunction including intimate partner violence, child abuse, and elder abuse.

Sub HB33 provides an opportunity for animal protection and human protection – both child protective services and adult protective services – to work together to help families and prevent future violence. For many of our agencies, this is already built into their practice. For others, this legislation will provide a framework and the impetus for doing the same.

We appreciate that Rep. Lanese and Rep. Carruthers have brought forward this legislation. And that they have listened to and addressed our concerns by amending the as-introduced version to the substitute bill that is before you. For these reasons, PCSAO and our member agencies, the PCSAs, support Sub HB33 and urge the Committee to do the same.

Thank you.

¹See Kellert, S.R., & Felthous, A.R. (1985). Childhood cruelty toward animals among criminals and noncriminals. *Human Relations*, 38, 1113-1129. Hensley, C., Tallichet, S.E., & Singer, S.D. (2006). Exploring the possible link between childhood and adolescent bestiality and interpersonal violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 21, 910-923. Merz-Perez, L., Heide, K.M., & Silverman, I.J. (2001). Childhood cruelty to animals and subsequent violence against humans. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 45(5), 556-572. Becker, F., & French, L. (2004). Making the links: Child abuse, animal cruelty, and domestic violence. *Child Abuse Review*, 13, 339-414.

² Phillips, A, J.D. (2014). *Understanding The Link Between Violence to Animals and People: A Guidebook for Criminal Justice Professionals*. American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the National District Attorneys Association, 16.

³ DeGue, Sarah & DiLillo, David. (2008). Is Animal Cruelty a “Red Flag” for Family Violence? Investigating Co-Occurring Violence Toward Children, Partners, and Pets. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 24. 1036-56. 10.1177/0886260508319362