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Ohio House of Representatives
77 South High Street, #12
Columbus, OH 43215

Chair Grendell, Chair Galonski, and members of the Criminal Justice Subcommittee on Criminal Sentencing,

Thank you for the opportunity for allowing me to testify in favor of House Bill 37.

I am a pediatric neurosurgeon at Dayton Children's Hospital, where we see victims of dog bites with the frequency of an epidemic. We treat over 300 dog bites a year in our Emergency Department, with about 40 admissions to the hospital, often because of the need for surgery or intensive care. I have been on call at the hospital when we have treated three separate victims in a single day, which I believe warrants the description of this problem as a public health crisis.

Throughout my training and career I have treated many severe injuries from dog attacks; in some cases they have been fatal. Within the last month our team was consulted on a young toddler who suffered a bite through the top of the head, resulting in massive hemorrhage from a vein over the surface of the brain, and the child went into cardiac arrest on the operating table, saved only by heroic efforts of many healthcare providers.

I believe that the public is not aware of the frequency and extent of the problem that we see as healthcare providers. I can attest that the impact on our communities is significant, and the impact on us as healthcare providers cannot be overstated. Several months ago, we took care of a child that was disfigured by over 50 bites covering her entire body, including her genitals. I have a daughter the same age, and I can only say that it is heartbreaking to see these cases day in and day out, with no end in sight.

Many of these injuries have resulted in life-changing complications, ranging from paralysis of the face or limbs, amputations, chronic pain, and psychological effects that last long after the scars have healed. Studies have shown that almost half of children suffer depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder even one year after an attack. Two-thirds of the bites involve the face or neck. When a child

is disfigured, it is impossible to know the extent of the psychological damage on the whole family and the community, but it is the same or even worse than what we see for victims of human violence.

Certain breeds can do extreme damage because of their incredible strength, but this is not about condemning a certain breed of dog. The science indicates that environmental factors are more likely to determine dangerous behavior than breed. Therefore, the dogs can be victims as well in these attacks, because in many cases they have been intentionally taught to be aggressive by their owner.

In my opinion, it defies all reason that we could potentially allow the same dog to injure multiple children without consequences to the owner. If we are going to reduce the number of attacks and keep Ohio children safe, there must be accountability when a child is injured by a dog as a result of bad human behavior.

Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Best regards,



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