

My name is Carol Miller, I am an Ohio resident, a Registered Nurse, and the survivor of a violent dog attack in 2007. I have followed the dangerous dog issue since that time. I am unable to be present to testify in person, I recently had major surgery in an effort to control the pain caused by the injuries from the attack. I am not yet cleared to drive as far as Columbus. There is no "return to normal life" for survivors of violent dog attacks. We survivors live with pain and disability, and pay the medical bills as well. Ohio residents deserve better. This is my written testimony as a proponent of SB 195.

Documents released by Representative Sears in response to my FOI request in 2011 revealed that the law that was passed in the Ohio legislature in 2012 was not carefully written by any Ohio lawmaker, it was written in Utah by lawyers employed by an animal welfare special interest organization, Best Friends Animal Society. In the five years since passage of this law it has become very clear that the law does not protect the safety and welfare of Ohio residents and must be revised with public safety clearly in mind. SB 195, thoughtfully written in Ohio by an Ohio lawmaker does exactly this.

Ohio citizens have suffered since 2012. There have been 14 dog attacks that were fatal to Ohio residents in the five years since passage of HB 14. As a comparison, in the decade prior to the passage of HB 14 there were five fatal dog attacks in our state.

There have also been hundreds of attacks on children and adults, peaceful pets and livestock in Ohio that ranged from bites to life changing maulings since passage of Ohio's current law. In 2017 alone there have been over 30 serious maulings and three fatal attacks. Ohio citizens pay for these attacks through their own insurance and through Medicaid. Owners of violent dogs are currently not obligated to insure them and suffer no consequence for the attacks.

Zainabou Drame, age 6, of Cincinnati was attacked by a neighbor's pit bulls in 2014 is an example of what has gone wrong since out of state animal advocates were permitted to write state law. Zainabou's injuries are truly life changing. Zainabou lost her tongue in the attack, her face was peeled from her skull and had to be sewn back in place. She is unable to speak or swallow. Zainabou is unable to eat. She is fed via tube inserted through her abdominal wall directly into her stomach. She was initially not expected to survive, homicide investigators were assigned to her case while she was kept in a medically induced coma. She was hospitalized for months. Zainabou's medical bills quickly soared to over a million dollars and those medical bills will continue as long as she lives. The owner of the dogs was never charged for her injuries, he went to jail for a drug offense but local authorities complained that Ohio law gave them no appropriate charges. There were no consequences for the dog owner but Zainabou's life is changed forever. She is one of many Ohio children and adults living with disability and disfigurement from dog attack injuries. Ohio residents deserve better.

Countless Ohio pets have been killed or seriously mauled; these maulings appear in the news regularly. Veterinarian bills for dogs, cats, and livestock attacked in our communities are paid by the owners of those peaceful creatures. Bills can run into the thousands of dollars with no guarantee that the pet will live, many do not. Violent dogs are returned to their owners, already proven irresponsible by allowing the attack. These irresponsible dog owners are not likely to change their behavior; there is no consequence for them. We read over and over "an investigation is ongoing and the (attacking) dog may be declared dangerous." A dog that has already killed someone else's pet has already made it clear that it is dangerous, but Ohio law allows these animals to be returned to their owners and back into our communities. Ohio residents deserve better.

Current Ohio law, passed in 2012, was promoted to Ohio lawmakers as “finally giving dog wardens the tools to deal with dangerous dogs” but has fallen far short of that goal. Due to weakness in state law, Dayton prosecutors could not even charge the owners of vicious dogs with a felony after they brutally killed Klonda Richey while she stood outside her own home; she had already installed an 8-foot security fence around her home to protect herself from these dogs. Prosecutors were left with charging woefully insignificant misdemeanors. SB 195 creates accountability with felony charges for the owners of dogs that kill. There is no accountability in current Ohio law. When there is no consequence for violation of law, there is no compliance. This is human nature.

SB 195 sets out clear procedures and requirements for dog wardens and demands responsible action from the owners of cited dogs. SB 195 protects Ohio residents in the following ways. While SB 195 protects the due process rights of dog owners, it also protects the rights of Ohio residents to file affidavits of complaint describing dangerous behaviors of dogs. SB 195 requires investigation of these complaints and a response by the dog owner. In many communities the response to complaints has been a sternly worded post-it note stuck to the front door of owners of menacing or attacking dogs.

This was the case with Klonda Richey. She died a horrible and predictable death in her own front yard after making dozens of complaints about the dogs that eventually killed her. The owners of these dogs simply ignored the post-it notes.

SB 195 declares that any dog that kills a human or a companion animal is a vicious dog per Ohio law and allows the humane destruction of vicious dogs after final determination by the courts. Ohio residents deserve protection from known vicious dogs.

SB 195 demands notification of the county dog warden and the county board of health when a known dangerous dog is to be relocated into a new community. In my own case the attacking dog was simply moved to new locations without notification. One of those locations was the bottom half of a rental property, directly across the street from a public school, by this time uninsured. Local authorities ordered the dog out of town but she was simply moved to yet another location without notification.

SB 195 requires registration, vaccination, neuter or spay, dangerous dog signage, safe containment of and insurance for known dangerous dogs. Ohio residents deserve this protection.

It is time to reform Ohio’s dog laws. Ohio residents have the right to feel safe on their property and enjoy the safe use of their communities without threat of dog mauling. SB 195 deserves your support and your vote. Thank you for allowing me to testify as a proponent for SB 195.