



Representative Margaret Ann Ruhl
68th House District

Thank you Chairman Landis, Vice Chair Hagan, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee for allowing me to speak today on behalf of House Bill 267, also known as Trooper's Law. This legislation looks to revise the law regarding deer rehabilitation facilities and sanctuaries.

There are two main parts to House Bill 267: It creates a new license under the Department of Agriculture for individuals to maintain deer sanctuaries; it also instructs the Department of Natural Resources to issue a wildlife rehabilitation permit, which already exists in law, to any individual who wishes to rehabilitate a deer and applies in good faith.

Deer sanctuaries are intended to house deer that have been severely injured and deemed unsuitable to return to the wild. A licensee would be required to establish proof of a relationship with a certified veterinarian to qualify for a sanctuary license. Male deer housed in sanctuaries are required to be sterilized, and no deer housed in a sanctuary would be permitted to be returned to the wild in their lifetime. The Department of Agriculture would be responsible for regulating and inspecting all licensed deer sanctuaries, and would use the revenue from license application fees to fund the inspections.

As I mentioned earlier, a wildlife rehabilitation license already exists in current law, under ORC section 1501:31. The Department of Natural Resources is permitted to issue that license to any applicant who applies and meets requirements set by the department. Trooper's Law would require DNR to issue the license to any applicant wishing to rehabilitate a deer if that individual qualifies according to DNR's standards.

Additionally, the bill would require training for Ohio Peace Officers in assessing and humanely euthanizing deer. The bill also instructs officers to make every effort to avoid euthanizing wildlife in the presence of any person under the age of sixteen.

Over the past few years, there have been several incidents that have brought the need for this legislation to my attention. I was especially concerned by the experience of the late Carol Deyo, a constituent of mine who resided in Knox County. Her long-term boyfriend accidentally injured a fawn when mowing their property. Ms. Deyo attempted to find a rehabilitation center to which she could send the fawn, but every facility that she contacted was already full to capacity and could not accept another deer. Ms. Deyo was a veterinarian technician, and was able to get in touch with a medical professional who walked her through the emergency procedure that ultimately saved the fawn's life, though he lost a leg. The couple returned the deer to the spot he had been left in the field and waited for several days, but his mother never returned for him. They decided to care for the orphaned, now three-legged deer, and named him Trooper. Years

later, DNR was informed that Ms. Deyo was keeping Trooper on her property without a license, and ordered him to be euthanized. Eventually, the Governor 'pardoned' Trooper, but incidents like this continue to occur across the state. I believe the administration of these licenses is necessary to allow compassionate Ohioans to care for the animals that share our borders.

Thank you again Chairman Landis and members of the committee for allowing us to speak to this bill. I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.