

House Bill 175 Proponent Testimony
Submitted by Laurel Burnett, RVT
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Chair Hill, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Patterson and members of the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee: thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 175.

My name is Laurel Burnett and I am a Registered Veterinary Technician in the state of Ohio. I am also a homeowner in Beavercreek, a suburb of Dayton, with a little over half an acre in my name. I have been a vegetarian for almost 10 years and my love for animals is what drove me to make the choice to work in the animal field. I believe that we deserve to have the right to raise small livestock, even in suburban areas.

I purchased a home in Beavercreek mainly for the school district, which I thought would best suit my four-year-old son with Autism. I have been very pleased concerning that aspect of my home purchase. However, in my constant search to provide the best that I can for my family, I began researching urban homesteading and was disappointed to find restrictions in my area that put a halt to many of my aspirations.

I believe that the benefits of allowing small livestock in urban areas far outweigh any negative consequences. In the instance of chickens, most are seen as pets with benefits. I worked with a veterinarian that has chickens on his property and he brought one of them in to amputate her wing from an injury. This is just one example of how chickens can truly be seen as any other family pet. They meander the yard providing pest control and fertilizer. They also provide the obvious benefit of eggs or meat. Being a vegetarian, I can still get on board with meat that has been raised in good conditions and led a happy, healthy life.

I feel that as a property owner I should be able to use my land as I please as long as my home, pets and I do not become a nuisance to my neighbors. I do acknowledge that this can become the case, but strongly support the idea that I should be given the opportunity to prove I can properly maintain a homestead that includes animals that do not fall into the dog or cat category. I think that there is more of a chance of a complaint being filed by neighbors about a constantly yapping dog than that of the clucking of chickens.

This issue of chicken ownership was presented to the Beavercreek Planning Commission in July of 2016. The proposed zoning code would have permitted single-family homeowners with lots of 15,000 square-feet or larger to own up to six chickens. The Planning Commission approved this change, but it failed when presented to the City Council. One worry presented to the council was that the average citizen or household wouldn't want to deal with chickens. It was suggested that if an individual wanted to own farm animals that they should move to a farm.

I do not think I should have to relocate due to the fact that I want to add small livestock to my home to provide wholesome food for my family. HB 175 outlines the quantities of each species allowed on certain acreage and I feel it respects both sides of the table by placing restrictions so that properties do not become overcrowded and also gives freedom to homeowners to utilize their properties in more ways than currently allowed. I truly appreciate being given the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for HB 175. Thank you for your time.