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House Bill 523 (Lanese, Perales)
House Community and Family Advancement Committee
Corey Roscoe, Ohio state director, Humane Society of the US

March 13, 2018

Chairman Ginter, Vice-Chair LaTourette, Ranking Minority Member Boyd and members of the House Community and Family Advancement Committee, my name is Corey Roscoe and I am the Ohio state director for the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) the nation's largest and most effective animal protection organization. On behalf of the HSUS and our Ohio members and supporters, thank you for the opportunity to provide Proponent testimony on HB 523 regarding animal abuse reporting requirements.

More than 64 million households in the United States have one or more companion animals. And more than half of U.S. households with kids also have pets. Pets are part of the family—and are often additional victims when there is family violence.

Protecting pets can help protect people.

Animal abuse may be the first sign of family violence—or the first indication to others that there is a family in trouble. Paying close attention to animal cruelty allows agencies to make earlier identifications and offer more effective interventions for the protection of families and the animals that live in them. As we know for the National LINK Coalition's findings, in domestic violence, child abuse and elder abuse cases, the threat of animal abuse can be a way for the abuser to silence victims about the incident or to prevent them from leaving a violent relationship.

Agencies benefit from cross reporting

92% of Adult Protective Services caseworkers found animal neglect co-existing with clients who were unable to care for themselves. (HSUS & National Center on Elder Abuse, 2003).

And 70% of people charged with cruelty to animals were known by police for other violent behavior – including homicide (Boat & Knight, 2000) and 48% of rapists and 30% of child molesters committed animal abuse in childhood or adolescence (Tingle, Barnard et al., 1986). No matter what violent crime is committed first, others may soon follow.

The HSUS recently hosted a week of free trainings in Ohio for the law enforcement community. In our five trainings, we hosted 258 law enforcement officers from 120 different agencies. We emphasized the connection of animal abuse and other crimes. House Bill 523 helps build on this knowledge and the awareness of the very real relationship of animal abuse and human violence.



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HB 523 allows for civil or criminal liability in connection with making the report if the person reporting acted in good faith. This will help protect professionals and remove hesitation to reporting.

Also, I am aware that the bill sponsors are looking to amend the penalty section to either civil or licensing penalties. Those type of sanctions seem more appropriate for in this situation and we would support those changes.

Training is the big piece here so that reporters understand exactly what to be looking for, what actually constitutes animal cruelty, as opposed to someone who may not be caring for their pet that stems from misinformation or lack of money, rather than intent to harm. The National LINK Coalition has conducted trainings in Ohio in the past on this topic and we are aware that the Animal Welfare Institute is looking at bringing them back in the near future. This should be a very helpful resource for agencies and individuals and we will gladly help promote it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,
Corey Roscoe

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