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House Bill 552 (LaTourette)
House State and Local Government Committee
Corey Roscoe, Humane Society of the US
May 14, 2018

Chair Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes, and members of the House State and Local Government 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, I am here today to support House Bill 552, to prohibit the use of gas chambers as a form of euthanasia in animal shelters in accordance with the bill.

We are thankful to Rep. LaTourette for her leadership on this bill, the co-sponsors and to Teresa Landon with the Ohio SPCA for her tireless work over the years on this issue.

One of the most critical responsibilities of those in the animal care and sheltering field is to provide the most humane death possible for dogs and cats when euthanasia is necessary. It's an unwelcome task for shelter personnel that is only tempered by the fact that humane euthanasia is possible.

Gas chambers are inherently inhumane devices that cause needless suffering and are inappropriate for the types of animals typically killed in them. Shelters frequently house very young, old, sick, or injured animals who may suffer from physiological complications such as poor circulation, weak hearts, or a diminished lung capacity, which may delay the effects of carbon monoxide, causing the animals to experience increased distress. Even healthy animals may spend up to 25 terrifying minutes in a gas chamber before they expire. During this prolonged, panicked time, the animals will frequently claw and cry, looking for a way out, and may gasp for breath, experience convulsions, or suffer major organ damage before losing consciousness. These chambers cause death by lack of sufficient oxygen to the brain (asphyxia) and in the blood (hypoxia), respectively.

Carbon monoxide is also a danger to people in the animal care and sheltering field. It is a hazardous substance: it is highly toxic and has no odor, no color, and no taste. It is one of the leading causes of accidental poisoning in the United States and repeated exposure to carbon monoxide, even at low levels, can result



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in long-term effects, including impaired memory, breathing difficulties, muscle weakness, heart irregularity, and brain damage. Shelter personnel have been harmed and killed by malfunctioning gas chambers. And when shelter employees use gas chambers to euthanize animals, they report increased emotional stress and higher rates of compassion fatigue, and for good reason.

Gas chambers have a very negative public perception and their use has detrimental effects on the reputation of the shelter.

Thankfully, there is a humane alternative to gas chambers – it's euthanasia by injection of approved drugs or EBI. EBI is both pain free and stress free as animals euthanized by this method are not subjected to the strange and terrifying confines of a gas chamber, it's appropriate for all animals regardless of medical condition or age, and importantly, animals can lose consciousness in as little as 3-5 seconds. A 2009 study confirmed that EBI (euthanasia by injection) is as cost effective, if not actually less expensive, than use of a properly maintained gas chamber, which need to be routinely calibrated to ensure that proper amounts of gas are released.

The HSUS wants to remove any barriers to compliance for those who may need EBI certification should this bill pass into law. There are two upcoming classes, one in August and one in November both in Wyandot County. The HSUS will gladly offer to support any individual/agency who needs financial assistance in order to attend one of these trainings.

The AVMA has expressly stated that "euthanasia by intravenous injection of an approved euthanasia agent remains the preferred method for euthanasia of dogs, cats and other small companion animals." Many Ohio shelters have rightfully chosen to solely rely on this method. However, there are gas chambers currently in use in our state. This legislation will ensure that the inhumane practice will officially come to an end in our great state.

I respectfully urge the committee to vote in favor of HB 552.

Thank you for your consideration.

Corey Roscoe
Ohio, state director