

The Ohio Senate Agriculture Committee
c/o Ruben Hernandez

Re: Proponent testimony to SB 232

Dear Chairman Hackett and Honorable Members of the Senate Agriculture Committee,

I submit this written testimony regarding Senate Bill 232 (“SB 232”), a bill currently under your guidance that would allow licensed Ohio veterinarians to choose whether or not to perform free spay and neuter services for Ohio county and municipal dog shelters, humane societies, and animal welfare related nonprofits in order to receive a small amount of their required biennial continuing education credits.

I am an attorney that serves as a prosecutor for animal cruelty cases, as well as practicing animal law generally. I also act as a board member for several animal welfare and rescue organizations. I agree with the sentiments of this bill’s sponsor, Senator Thomas, that SB 232 is an important bill for our state.

Every day Ohio humane societies, county dog shelters, municipal animal shelters, and rescues care for shelter pets—stray, neglected, abused, sick, and otherwise unwanted animals. Every day they work toward the ultimate goal of placing these pets into permanent homes, but the stream of pets coming through their doors is truly never ending. Tragically, despite the best efforts of our shelter workers and volunteers, Ohio is still euthanizing friendly, adoptable shelter pets because there are simply too many and not enough homes open to taking them in.

Some shelters and rescues are fortunate enough to receive discounted services from kind, caring veterinarians who understand that resources to care for shelter and rescue pets are extremely limited. Those veterinarians currently don’t receive anything in return for providing those discounts other than gratitude.

SB 232 is a piece of the solution. If a veterinarian desires to provide free spay and neuter services, they can finally receive something in return—a small amount of continuing education credits that the veterinarian would otherwise need to pay for. In addition, SB 232 provides a public benefit when veterinarians choose to participate. Counties in Ohio are required to supply dog care services, including a facility to house dogs. Some localities also supply dog control services beyond what counties provide. A higher number of spayed and neutered dogs results in a lower dog intake rate to these taxpayer funded facilities. The lower the intake of dogs, the lower the burden to taxpayers. And, of course, when the services are provided free of charge by veterinarians, that is yet another cost that need not be borne by the community.

SB 232 provides an allowance to veterinarians that is similar to what I, as an attorney, would receive if I chose to perform pro bono legal services as part of my biennial continuing education requirement. This bill is truly a win-win for veterinarians and Ohio. I encourage this committee to support SB 232.

Yours truly,
DanaMarie K. Pannella
Attorney at Law