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House Bill 552 (LaTourette)
Senate Agriculture Committee
Corey Roscoe, Humane Society of the US

December 3, 2018

Chair Hackett, Vice Chair Hoagland, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the Senate Agriculture 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 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 which passed the House in June 2018 but has been discussed in Ohio for many years.

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 small, dark, hot boxes that are filled with carbon monoxide (CO) or carbon dioxide (CO₂) still used by a few shelters to kill dogs and cats. Once inside these boxes, it takes minutes before an animal loses consciousness, during which time they may experience a state of terror, clawing and calling for a way out. They may struggle for air or begin convulsing before finally losing consciousness. For young, old, ill, injured, or highly stressed animals, death can take even longer.
- Gas chambers pose physical and psychological harm to staff, as they force fractious animals into the small chambers and expose themselves to fatal gas. It is a hazardous substance: it is highly toxic and has no odor, no color, and no taste. Repeated exposure to carbon monoxide, even at low levels, can result in long-term effects, including impaired memory, breathing difficulties, muscle weakness, heart irregularity, and brain damage. And when shelter employees use gas chambers to euthanize



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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. When animals are injected with proper euthanasia drugs, they can lose consciousness in as little as 3-5 seconds and lose ability to feel stress or pain almost immediately, making the process completely painless, safe, and humane. The other element of this bill goes hand in hand with euthanasia best practices. By allowing trained and certified dog wardens to use chemical capture, they can safely sedate a fractious dog prior to handling him for euthanasia by injection.

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 gladly offers to support any individual/agency who needs financial assistance to attend a Euthanasia by Injection training in order to transition away from gas chamber euthanasia.

Most Ohio shelters have rightfully chosen to solely rely on this method. However, there are gas chambers currently in use in Ohio. 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.