TESTIMONY ON OHIO Sub H.B. 263

Presented by Vicki Deisner, Animal Welfare Institute

Before the Senate Health, Human Services, & Medicaid Committee

Tuesday, May 22, 2018

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares and distinguished members of the Senate Health, Human Services, & Medicaid Committee, I am Vicki Deisner, Government Affairs representative for the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI). AWI respectfully urges this committee to support Sub HB 263 and join California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, New York, Rhode Island, and Tennessee in allowing the owner of a dog to take the dog into an outdoor dining area of a retail food establishment.

Ohio has pet-friendly hotels, pet-friendly parks, and pet-friendly events. Yet based on current Ohio law the public is not allowed to take a pet dog onto an outdoor patio. This is a missed economic opportunity for Ohio. Many travelers want to bring along their pets when they travel. When I lived in Alexandria, Virginia, every Thursday night was doggy happy hour in town. It was the busiest night of the week for the restaurants in Alexandria – bowls of water and treats were on the patios and it was a competition to find a table. At Halloween, several of the restaurants held a Halloween costume contest for owners and their pets, and it was standing room only. In addition, Alexandria had a Canine Cruise on the Potomac, and this was such a popular event it took me a year and a half to get reservations. The waterfront of Alexandria was booming with customers and their pets. It was obvious that including dogs on patios, and indeed marketing to their inclusion in Halloween events and providing a canine cruise increased the amount of paying customers for restaurants in the city of Alexandria. It would be great to see that marketing opportunity happen here in Ohio.

The Animal Welfare Institute would ask the committee to take note of the fact that this bill does require sanitary protections for patio dining areas in order to provide protections for public health. Both the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Department of Agriculture were involved in interested party meetings and amendments were made to this bill to include their recommendations.

For all of the aforementioned reasons, the Animal Welfare Institute respectfully urges the Senate Health, Human Services, & Medicaid Committee to support Sub HB 263. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Government Affairs Representative

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