

The Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

Re: Proponent testimony to HB 67

Dear Chairman Hoagland and Honorable Members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee,

I submit this written testimony regarding House Bill 67 (“HB 67”), a bill currently under your guidance that would allow licensed Ohio veterinarians to choose whether to perform charitable veterinary services for Ohio county and municipal dog shelters, humane societies, and animal welfare related nonprofits in order to be eligible to enter a lottery and, through that lottery, potentially be chosen for a student loan relief program. The program then requires that the veterinarian complete additional charitable veterinary services in Ohio.

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 sponsors, Representatives Brinkman and Kelly, that HB 67 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 pets due to lack of resources and because there are simply too many pets and not enough homes open to taking them in.

Some shelters and rescues are fortunate enough to receive discounted services from kind 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. Some veterinarians choose to be employed directly by humane societies, county dog shelters, municipal animal shelters, and rescues. These veterinarians earn far less than their counterparts in private practice. Therefore, it is often difficult for these entities to attract veterinarians.

HB 67 is a piece of the solution. If a veterinarian desires to provide charitable services, they finally have an opportunity to receive something in return. It makes performing charitable veterinary services an attractive option to debt-laden veterinarians. In addition, HB 67 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 animal control services beyond what counties provide. When veterinary services are provided free or at a reduced cost, that is yet another cost that need not be borne by the community.

This bill is truly a win-win for veterinarians and Ohio. I encourage this committee to support HB 67.

Yours truly,
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Attorney at Law