



**Written Proponent Testimony on House Bill 67**  
Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee  
Colleen Evans, Ohio Animal Welfare Federation  
December 7, 2020

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 67, legislation that will create a Veterinary Student Debt Assistance Program.

My name is Colleen Evans, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Animal Welfare Federation (Ohio Fed), formerly the Ohio Federated Humane Societies. Ohio Fed is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization whose purpose is to: prevent cruelty to animals by coordinating and enhancing the activities of nonprofit animal welfare organizations incorporated in Ohio and county, municipal, and local animal agencies; share information with lawmakers and policymakers about the humane treatment of animals and their value to humans; provide training, resources and information on humane principles that will enhance the welfare of animals in the State of Ohio; and encourage collaboration among animal welfare organizations.

Our members represent more than 60 animal welfare organizations across the state, including humane societies, dog wardens and animal control officers, and 501(c)(3) rescue organizations. Each year, our members assist tens of thousands of animals who are abused, neglected, abandoned or otherwise homeless and in need of care. Veterinarians who choose shelter medicine are prized members of their teams who often give more than they receive to help these animals. While the need for veterinarians in animal shelters is great, it can be a challenge for shelters, particularly from smaller, more rural areas of our state, to find the dedicated veterinary help they need.

Under HB 67, veterinarians who volunteer at least 12 hours of their service to a nonprofit organization, a humane society, a law enforcement agency or a state, local or federal government entity will qualify to enter a lottery for a grant of up to \$5,000 toward repayment of their student loans. HB 67 creates a win-win for veterinarians who are willing and able to volunteer for an eligible agency and for organizations that are in critical need of volunteer veterinarian support. Whether volunteer veterinary services support shelters by doing pre-adoption spay/neuter or by providing other veterinary services through shelters that are trying to help income-qualified pet owners who are struggling to keep their pets, HB 67 will help to improve the welfare of animals in Ohio and the people who love them.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Ohio Animal Welfare Federation, we ask for your support in passing this bill.

Lori Carlson  
President, OAWF  
Executive Director, Licking County Humane  
Society  
Licking County

Sharon Harvey  
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President & CEO, Cleveland Animal Protective  
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Rachel Finney  
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Cheryl Rakich  
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