

TESTIMONY ON OHIO S.B. 164

Presented by Kyle A. Silvers, Esq.

Before the Ohio Senate Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee

Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Chairman Schaffer, Vice-Chairman Huffman, Ranking Minority Member Fedor, and members of the Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee, I am Kyle Silvers, an attorney in Toledo who serves, on a pro bono basis, as the cruelty prosecutor for the Wood County Humane Society. To my knowledge, I am one of only two attorneys in the state who serve in this capacity, and the only to provide it on a pro bono basis. I thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony in support of S.B. 164, a bill to increase penalties for serious acts of cruelty towards companion animals.

I am very grateful to the bill's sponsors and cosponsors for recognizing the need to provide enhanced penalties for egregious forms of cruelty. I thus request that the Senate Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee supports Ohio S.B. 164, in light of the link between animal and human violence, and also amends Goddard's Law so that both county and special prosecutors, like myself, can pursue felony charges against animal offenders.

I write because S.B. 164, as drafted, effectively precludes me from prosecuting felonies, which could effectively limit the number of prosecutions of these often horrific crimes. Animal cruelty in and of itself is a heinous act against some of the most vulnerable members of society. As written, I could continue to prosecute only misdemeanors, but not felonies.

Ohio is to be commended for recognizing that the treatment of animal cruelty needs to be strengthened, and then moving to make those improvements by considering this bill. Animal abuse and human violence go hand in hand; a state that is safer for animals is a state that is safer for people too.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important piece of legislation.