

February 15, 2022

**RE: Proponent Testimony, Amended Senate Bill 164**

Chairman Schaffer, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Sharon Harvey. I am the President & CEO of the Cleveland Animal Protective League (APL) and the Vice President of the Ohio Animal Welfare Federation. Both of these organizations are mission driven to provide for safe and humane treatment and care of our animal. Also, the Cleveland APL is a county humane society that has appointed humane agents to enforce the section of the Revised Code impacted by this legislation – ORC 959.

I have submitted this testimony to you to express my support for the changes to SB 164 offered by Senator Hottinger.

My team and I have been working closely with Senator Hottinger on the policy considerations contained in SB 164 for quite some time. We have heard from a number of interested parties over the course of these conversations and have, with Senator Hottinger's encouragement, attempted to find a middle ground that would enhance the ability to enforce animal cruelty laws while addressing concerns about creating a new and overly punitive enforcement mechanism in the Revised Code.

I believe that this version of SB 164 accomplishes that goal. It provides much needed clarity for prosecutors and judges regarding the criminal implications of certain acts. It preserves the existing fifth degree felony and strength of Goddard's Law that is needed when prosecuting the most egregious acts of animal cruelty and torture. It mitigates concerns expressed by some that the originally proposed increased penalties were too severe and were not in alignment with those for similar crimes against humans. It is important to note that, while we do not necessarily subscribe to this perspective, we do understand the importance of negotiating, finding a common ground, and compromising. It makes the most egregious acts of cruelty and torture a violent offense that, in turn, gives judges discretion to align sentencing with the crime. Finally, it makes utilization of the gas chamber for euthanizing cats and dogs in Ohio animal shelters a strict liability offense.

SB 164, as presented with these amendments, is sound legislation that gives our enforcement and adjudication partners the structure they need to properly enforce key provisions of Ohio's animal cruelty laws. I encourage your support for this bill and ask for its favorable consideration by this committee.

Thank you.

Sharon Harvey

President and CEO, Cleveland Animal Protective League  
Vice-President, Ohio Animal Welfare Federation