



Animal Welfare Institute

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TESTIMONY ON OHIO H.B. 277

Presented by Vicki Deisner, Animal Welfare Institute
Before the Ohio House Ways & Means Committee
Tuesday, October 31, 2023

Chair Roemer, Vice-Chair Lorenz, Ranking Minority Member Troy, and distinguished members of the House Ways & Means Committee, I am Vicki Deisner, State Government Affairs Advisor for the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI). in Ohio, and on behalf of AWI, and our thousands of members and constituents in Ohio, we ask that your committee support Ohio H.B. 277. Ohio H.B. 277, also known as The Pet Friendly Rental Act, provides incentives to landlords who permit companion animals to reside with their families, without breed discrimination or the financial burden of pet deposits or additional monthly pet rent.

Scientific evidence compiled by the CDC shows pets proved intangible health benefits for their families, including decreased feelings of loneliness and increased opportunities for exercise and socialization. Most US households have at least one pet, and approximately 23 million households have acquired a dog or cat since the beginning of the COVID pandemic.

But not everyone has an equal opportunity to love and care for a pet, especially renters. In a 2021 inclusive housing survey, more than 70% of renters said that pet-friendly housing is difficult to find and 58% reported pet-friendly housing is too expensive. Studies have also shown that low-income housing is difficult to find and 59% reported pet-friendly housing as too expensive. Studies have also shown that low-income communities and communities of color pay disproportionately higher fees to keep pets in their homes. As a result, exorbitant pet fees can force some seniors and families to choose between their beloved pets and affordable housing – and at their worst, they can exacerbate housing insecurity for low-income pet owners who understandably do not want to part with their animal companions. In fact, some seniors and families choose to live on the street to keep their animals. Keeping pets and families together will reduce homelessness in Ohio as approximately 25% of the homeless are on the streets so they do not have to abandon their companion animals.

For the aforementioned reasons, AWI respectfully urges the Ways & Means Committee to pass H.B. 277, which will provide landlords with a \$750/unit tax credit up to a cap of \$7500 if the permit companion animals to reside in their units, do not restrict by breed or size, and do not impose nonrefundable pet deposits or monthly fees. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

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