



Re: Ohio House Bill 277 – “Pet Friendly Rental Act”

October 29, 2023

Dear Representatives,

I am writing in support of House Bill 277, the “Pet Friendly Rental Act,” on behalf of the League for Animal Welfare, an animal shelter in Batavia (Clermont County) that was established in 1949.

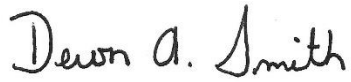
As the Executive Director of the League since 2020, I have seen the number of owners having to surrender their pets because of housing instability steeply rise, especially in the last year. It has been an incredible burden on our shelters, which simply cannot keep up with the need; but more devastating, is the effect on the loving pet owners who have had to lose the companionship of their pets. In a difficult economic time for so many of us, what a terrible consideration to have to make for struggling families.

To give you a sense of how serious this problem is, consider:

- 993 Clermont County residents called our shelter in the first 10 months of 2023 to surrender their pets.
- Of those requests, 170 needed to surrender pets because their living situation no longer allowed them to keep their pets (the issue HB 277 helps to address).
- Another 87 pets were being surrendered to our shelter due to financial instability.
- **In total, 26% of the pets – 257 pets in Clermont County in just 10 months - were being surrendered by owners to our shelter due to housing or financial instability.**
- Our area’s shelters are housing nearly twice as many animals in 2023 than we have ever seen before (83% more than in 2019, the highest recent year for animal intake).
- According to the 2022 American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)’s “Pet Ownership and Demographics” research, home ownership is predictive of pet ownership – homeowners were nearly 50% more likely to have a dog than people who rent. Families making more than \$100,000 were 34% more likely to own a pet than families making less than \$35,000.

HB 277 is an incredibly thoughtful, compassionate way to help treat all pet owners with respect and dignity; allow beloved pets to stay out of overcrowded shelters and with their families; and give everyone the opportunity to be loved by a pet. We strongly support this humane legislation, and hope you will, too.

With Appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Devon A. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Devon Smith
Executive Director