

## TESTIMONY ON OHIO H.B. 277

Presented by Dr. Janet Hoy-Gerlach, PhD, LISW-S  
Before the Ohio House Ways & Means Committee  
Tuesday, October 31, 2023

Dear Chair Roemer, Vice-Chair Lorenz, Ranking Minority Member Troy, and distinguished members of the House Ways & Means Committee:

My name is Dr. Janet Hoy-Gerlach; I am a licensed clinical social worker in Ohio, a human-animal interaction bond author and researcher, was a tenured full professor at the University of Toledo with a joint appointment in psychiatry, and am currently consulting through my business OneHealth People-Animal Wellness Services LLC and am an adjunct faculty member at Case Western Reserve University. I strongly support Ohio H.B. 277, and ask that your committee please support this bill as well. Ohio H.B. 277, referred to as “The Pet Friendly Rental Act”, will incentivize rental property owners to reduce barriers (such as pet deposits, fees, breed and size restrictions) to affordable pet-friendly rental housing for Ohioans, which is a much needed resource across our state.

In a veterinary outreach/pet service fair for homeless individuals held in Toledo Ohio in 2017 in collaboration with My Dog is My Home (a national nonprofit dedicated to reducing housing barriers for people and pets), we interviewed attendees and found that affordability of pet-friendly rental housing was a primary barrier that they were experiencing.

**The research on physical, emotional, psychological, and social benefits of having pets is well-established and should be supported as a public health strategy;** pets help support human mental and physical health. HB 277 will help keep Ohioans and their pets together through increasing safe and affordable pet-friendly rental housing; this bill is good for both individuals with pets, rental property owners (through tax credits), and public well-being.

Because of my expertise in human-animal bond issues related to social work, I am contacted multiple times a month by social workers and other health and human service workers across the state of Ohio, who are seeking affordable rental housing resources for their clients who have pets. The need for affordable pet-friendly rental housing is increasing, and there is a dire need for strategies to increase such housing.

I am in strong support of HB 277, and respectfully ask that the House Ways & Means Committee please support this important legislation. Please don't hesitate to reach out if I can be of further assistance.

Janet Hoy-Gerlach, PhD, LISW-S  
Owner/CEO, OneHealth People-Animal Wellness Services LLC  
Adjunct Faculty, Case Western Reserve University