

Oct. 12, 2025 — Ohio House Bill 476: Legalizing Online Raffles for Nonprofits
Formal Testimony of Brock Yoder / PAWS for the Wayne County dog shelter

Speech in Support of Ohio House Bill 476

Good morning, Chairperson and members of the committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of House Bill 476—a focused and much-needed piece of legislation that will have a real, positive impact on nonprofit organizations across Ohio, including the many dog shelters that serve our communities.

House Bill 476 is not about creating something new—it's about preserving a long-standing, trusted way that nonprofits have raised funds for years. For decades, community organizations have held raffles to support everything from youth sports to veterans' groups to animal rescues. With the growth of technology, many of these raffles naturally moved online, making it easier for supporters to participate—especially after the pandemic limited in-person events.

However, recently the Ohio Attorney General's office issued cease-and-desist letters to several nonprofits, stating that online raffle ticket sales are not currently authorized under the Ohio Revised Code. These letters effectively shut down a vital fundraising tool and left organizations across the state uncertain, worried, and in some cases, financially paralyzed.

House Bill 476 addresses that issue directly. It codifies the legality of online raffle sales for nonprofit organizations. In other words, it restores clarity and stability to a process that has been working effectively for years—and it does so with transparency and accountability.

For dog shelters like ours, this legislation is not just about convenience—it's about survival.

For more than a year, our shelter has been operating over capacity, housing dogs in garages and other makeshift spaces just to keep them safe. Every week, new dogs arrive—abandoned, neglected, or surrendered by families who can no longer care for them. Each one deserves a chance, and we stretch every dollar to make that possible.

Medical expenses alone can be overwhelming. One of our recent intakes came to us with severe neurological issues. It cost over \$5,000 in diagnostic tests just to understand what was wrong, and that was before treatment even began. These are the realities shelters face every single day—life-and-death situations that depend on the generosity of our supporters.

Raffles have long been one of the most successful and community-friendly ways to raise funds. They're fun, they're inclusive, and they give people a way to contribute to causes they believe in. Moving these raffles online allows us to reach more supporters—people who may not be able to attend an in-person event but still want to help.

Right now, we're fundraising for a climate-controlled mobile adoption trailer that will allow us to bring dogs directly to community events—parades, marathons, and local fundraisers—anywhere people gather. We know from experience that when dogs are in front of people, their chances of adoption skyrocket. The estimated cost of this trailer is \$270,000—a steep but essential investment to help more dogs find homes.

Online raffles could be a game-changer in reaching that goal. They let us engage with supporters statewide, safely and efficiently, while maintaining compliance and transparency.

House Bill 476 gives organizations like ours the legal clarity and confidence to move forward—to focus on our mission instead of navigating gray areas of the law.

On behalf of our shelter, our volunteers, and most importantly, the animals who rely on us, I urge you to support this bill. HB 476 strengthens nonprofits, empowers communities, and ensures that the good work being done in every corner of Ohio can continue without fear of legal uncertainty.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.