

Committees

Public Safety – Ranking Member



Committees:

State and Local Government
Veterans and Military Development

Cecil Thomas

State Representative, Ohio House District 25

Sponsor Testimony HB240
House Public Safety Committee
Reps. Lawson-Rawe, C. Thomas

Representative Thomas – Joint Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 240

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, and members of the House Public Safety Committee—thank you for allowing me the opportunity to offer joint sponsor testimony on House Bill 240, also known as Avery’s Law.

When an animal has a history of aggression, especially when it causes serious injury or death, that is not just a tragic coincidence—it’s a warning sign. And when those warning signs are hidden, ignored, or unreported, we are setting the stage for the next innocent victim. Avery’s story shows us the consequences of inaction. But it also provides us with a clear opportunity to improve safety, accountability, and justice.

House Bill 240 addresses multiple gaps in our current dog laws. It ensures that repeat-offender dogs and negligent owners can no longer slip through legal cracks. It strengthens containment requirements. It demands timely reporting by those most likely to witness or treat bite injuries. It gives local authorities the tools they need to intervene early and decisively. And it finally gives judges the power to impose stronger penalties and humane outcomes when a dog poses a clear threat to public safety.

Importantly, this legislation does not target any one breed. It targets behavior—and the responsibility of those who own dogs. Responsible dog owners who properly train, contain, and care for their pets will have nothing to fear under this bill. But those who neglect or conceal their dog’s violent history must be held to account—because the cost of doing nothing is simply too high.

We are proud to bring this legislation forward not only for Avery but for every Ohioan who has been hurt by a dangerous dog and left with nowhere to turn. House Bill 240 brings fairness, transparency, and compassion to an area of law that desperately needs all three.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. We respectfully urge your support of this bill and are happy to answer any questions.

