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Committees:
Local Government
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HB 240 Sponsor Testimony
House Public Safety Committee
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Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, and members of the House Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 240, or Avery's Law.

This bill is inspired by the story of Avery Russell who, last summer while at a playdate in my district of Reynoldsburg, was viciously mauled by two pit bulls who were unconfined, unrestrained, and who had attacked before, which was unbeknownst to authorities because the owner refused to report the previous attack. Before police could intervene, the dogs chewed off most of Avery's ears, ripped into her nose, gouged above her left eye, and punctured her forehead and shoulder. Though Avery, just 11-years-old at the time, survived the attack, and endured the four facial reconstruction surgeries that followed, the physical, emotional, and mental scars of that day will last forever.

As all of you are aware, severe dog attacks have been on the rise across the state. Stories like Avery's are sadly becoming the norm in Ohio. And because our dog laws haven't seen a serious revision in several years, legal recourse for victims is limited and accountability for owners is low.

With this in mind, House Bill 240 would do the following:

- Change the definition of dangerous, nuisance, and vicious dogs to include dogs who attack, seriously injure, or kill companion animals, i.e., other dogs, cats, etc.
- Mandate that a health care provider, veterinarian, or owner of a dog report a dog bite or attack within 24 hours after they become knowledgeable of it.
- Stipulate that a dangerous dog must be contained in any locked enclosure with a top, or chained or tethered to a fence while on the owner's property, and not simply in a locked pen with a top, or unchained or untethered, but in a fenced yard, as in current law.
- Specify that an insurance policy that an owner has on a dangerous dog be at least \$100,000 in coverage costs.
- Up the time in which a person convicted of, or who pleaded guilty to any felony offense of violence or other provision established in this bill cannot own a dangerous dog from three years to five years.

- Create a notice mechanism for an investigatory authority to notify the owner of a dog suspected of attacking an individual or other animal and stipulates that the owner must respond to this notice within two days of receiving it.
- Increase the fines and penalties for owners whose dog are found to have bitten, injured, or killed people or other animals.
- Allow judges to order dogs like those in Avery's case who cause serious injury to a victim, or dogs who kill their victims, to be humanely destroyed.
- Make it a misdemeanor to commercially breed in residential areas, while specifically excluding recreational, unintentional, or accidental breeding.

Cities across the state have created ordinances regulating dogs and increasing penalties for owners of dogs who attack or even kill humans and other animals. It's time that we as a state do the same. Again, it is our hope that we can use House Bill 240, Avery's Law, to strengthen our dog laws statewide and to give families who go through these tragic incidents, adequate legal recourse.

Thank you and I will now pass it over to Representative Thomas to offer his remarks.