



Representative Kevin Miller

Ohio House District 69

HB247 Sponsor Testimony

Chair Abrams, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the House Public Safety Committee. Thank you for allowing me to give sponsor testimony on HB247, important legislation to update Ohio's dangerous dog laws.

This legislation was brought to me by the Licking County dog warden earlier this year. After speaking with him, I quickly noticed the need for reforms in our dangerous dog laws. We have all been made aware of the deaths and serious injuries including disfigurement caused by unprovoked dogs attacks in Ohio...many in our own districts. As this legislation moves forward, you will hear compelling testimony from many victims and advocates who will tell you it's way past time for change.

I have worked very closely with the Ohio County Dog Warden's Association on this comprehensive legislation to make meaningful changes. But before I outline the changes, I would like to emphasize HB 247 applies only to **unprovoked attacks**. Dogs that act in defense of themselves, their owners, or their property are explicitly protected under this bill. The intent is not to punish responsible owners or protective dogs. Conversely this legislation aims to address cases of negligence where irresponsible owners of dangerous and vicious dogs fail to keep their animals from harming the public.

The first thing his legislation does is gives the local dog warden the authority to seize a dog immediately following an attack where a victim was killed or seriously injured. Under current law, this is prohibited unless the dog has previously been designated as dangerous or vicious. This seizure triggers a probable cause hearing which must be conducted within 10 days of the seizure. If probable cause is found that the attack was **unprovoked**, the dog must be euthanized. The probable cause hearing is a very important aspect of the bill that provides a check and balance and ensures due process.

This bill also holds irresponsible dog owners accountable when they fail to adequately control dogs already designated dangerous or vicious. Penalties for these individuals have

been increased to better reflect the seriousness of their negligence. Basically, these individuals have previously been put on notice they possess an extremely malicious animal but continue to fail to ensure the safety of the public. This is simply not acceptable. In the most severe cases of a serious injury or death, the penalty will raise from a felony of the fourth to a third-degree felony.

Once again, it is important to reiterate these changes would not increase penalties for dog owners whose animals have never shown or demonstrated a history of aggressive behavior...those penalties remain unchanged.

Additionally, penalties for dangerous and vicious dog owners who allow their dogs to run at large are also increased under HB 247. We know these dogs have a history of bad behavior so owners who shirk their responsibility to contain these animals should face appropriate penalties.

The bill also makes several housekeeping changes and deletes unnecessary and obsolete language throughout the Revised Code 955 Sections.

In closing, dog ownership is a privilege that comes with real responsibility. While most owners take this seriously, the law must provide a strong framework for those who neglect this responsibility. HB247 ensures public safety, strengthens local enforcement, and brings needed clarity to outdated sections of law—all while respecting the rights of responsible dog owners.

Chair Abrams, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Ohio House Public Safety Committee, thank you allowing me to provide testimony on HB247. I'd be happy to answer any questions you have.