

Testimony in Support of HB 247

Chair, members of the committee:

I have been a dog owner most of my adult life and currently share my home with a beloved 4-year-old rescue dog. I say this to make clear—I am not anti-dog. I am, however, deeply concerned about the number of dog attacks in Ohio and believe our state must take stronger, more effective action to protect its residents.

Approximately 17,000 dog bites requiring medical attention are reported annually in Ohio, and the actual number is likely much higher, as many attacks go unreported. That is unacceptable. We should all be able to walk our neighborhoods safely. Children should be able to play or ride bikes without fear. But for too many families, that peace of mind is gone.

Despite licensing requirements and laws requiring owners to keep dogs under control, dangerous animals continue to roam freely. When attacks happen, penalties for the owners are often minimal—and in many cases, the attacking dog is simply returned to the same environment.

Shockingly, under current law, a dog can kill a person and still be given a second chance. This is unconscionable.

I personally know people who have been attacked. I now carry mace when I walk my neighborhood, but I still feel vulnerable—because an aggressive dog may not be deterred. I worry for my grandchildren and urge their parents to restrict where they play.

Some neighborhoods are notorious for loose dogs. During new student orientation at Wittenberg University two years ago, three pit bulls roamed the campus area. A younger brother of a new student was attacked while taking out the trash. That same group of dogs went on to bite at least two more people, including a senior gentleman gardening in his own yard.

And I want to share one more personal example. About a year ago, my cousin witnessed a horrifying incident in her neighborhood. A man was walking his golden retriever puppy when a neighbor's dog—again, a pit bull—suddenly attacked. The puppy was mauled so badly that every rib in his tiny body was crushed. He was rushed to MedVet in Cincinnati for emergency treatment. Thankfully, he survived after suturing and care. The owner was also injured—bitten through both hands, requiring stitches and a series of shots. The attacking dog was ultimately euthanized. But the experience was traumatizing for everyone involved. My cousin described it as one of the worst things she has ever witnessed.

These stories are not isolated. They are becoming too common—and our current laws are failing to prevent them.

HB 247, introduced by Representative Miller, is a critical step toward protecting the public. It would allow courts to order the humane euthanization of a dog that has viciously attacked a person. This is not about being anti-dog—it's about being pro-safety, pro-accountability, and pro-community.

The law should stand with the victims—not with irresponsible dog owners.

Please, protect Ohioans. Protect our children, our seniors, our pets, and our peace of mind. I urge you to support HB 247—and I hope this is the first step toward even stronger legislation, including meaningful penalties and fines for those who allow their animals to become a danger to others.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Maureen Massaro