

Testimony before the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

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Ohio Wildlife Center

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Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Lori Williams, and I am the corporate treasurer of the Ohio Wildlife Center located in Powell, Ohio. I am testifying as a proponent of SB152.

The Ohio Wildlife Center is the largest wildlife rehabilitation hospital in the state, serving nearly 9,000 animals annually. For more than 40 years, we have provided free wildlife rehabilitation services to communities in central Ohio, with most animal admissions coming from Franklin and Delaware Counties. We are regulated by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife, the Ohio Department of Agriculture, and Franklin County Department of Health. Our center is on the front line of addressing wildlife and environmental concerns, including emerging diseases, pesticide exposure, lead poisoning, distemper, white-nose syndrome, chronic wasting disease, the avian flu and more.

We employ registered veterinary technicians and collaborate with veterinary practices throughout central Ohio. While lifesaving care is always our priority, there are times when it becomes necessary to humanely euthanize certain animals.

Currently, language in ORC 4729.01(T) prevents the Ohio Wildlife Center from obtaining an organizational license to administer specific medications. Types of practitioners who qualify for this type of license include veterinary hospitals and shelters. Historically, the wildlife center would have been categorized as a shelter, but we no longer fit within that statutory definition.

Access to euthanasia medications must be purchased and administered under an individual veterinarian's license instead of an organizational license. Although we work closely with many veterinarians, we are requesting that the center be allowed to maintain a license similar to that of a veterinary hospital or shelter to minimize operational disruptions.

The Ohio Wildlife Center administers Euthasol and Fatal Plus medications to humanely euthanize injured animals.

We are advocating for a minor change to the statute to include wildlife rehabilitators in the definition of “animal shelter,” akin to a humane society, enabling rehabbers to maintain an organizational license. Compliance with drug protocols and recordkeeping would be mandatory, just as it is for shelters and hospitals.

This change would provide the necessary operational flexibility to humanely euthanize injured and suffering animals. Without this flexibility, we might be forced to resort to inhumane methods, such as gas chambers, to end the suffering of these animals.

The proposed bill has been reviewed and drafted per recommendations from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife.

Please allow Ohio Wildlife Center to provide this community service of treating suffering animals in the most humane manner possible.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I am happy to address any questions that you may have.