



1255 23rd St. NW, Suite 450
Washington, DC 20037
202-452-1100
humaneworld.org

Formerly called the Humane
Society of the United States

May 27, 2025

Chairman Tim Schaffer
Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
Senate Building, One Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and members of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

On behalf of Humane World for Animals (formerly called the Humane Society of the United States), thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 60. SB 60 will increase access to veterinary care and allow more pet owners to utilize vital services to help ensure the health and wellbeing of their companion animals.

One of the primary barriers to accessing veterinary care is getting clients in the door. Many families have time constraints that are incompatible with the hours veterinary clinics keep or have transportation issues and cannot travel to an office. Others may have a pet who reacts poorly to visiting veterinary clinics. In these situations, virtual care could alleviate those problems by allowing a veterinarian to first establish a relationship with a patient and caretaker ahead of an in-person visit. SB 60 gives veterinarians greater flexibility in making clinical decisions about a patient's health.

Veterinarians have undergone rigorous education and training, and as pet owners we trust their judgement in their practice of veterinary medicine. Allowing VCPRs to be established via telemedicine with appropriate guardrails means that more pet owners - no matter their circumstances - will be able to access vital services and help assure the health and well-being of their pets. In this way, greater access to telemedicine could minimize prolonged illness, suffering and distress for pets and their owners.

Pets offer joy and comfort to our families, and it has been well-documented that companion animals also provide numerous physical and mental health benefits. However, without adequate access to veterinary services and pet resources, both families and pets suffer. In some instances, this results in the relinquishment of pets which negatively affects all parties involved.

We estimate that at a *minimum*, 852,215¹ pets are living with their families in poverty across Ohio. Additionally, an estimated 1,405,530² pets are living with families considered ALICE (asset limited, income constrained, employed). The ALICE threshold measures families above the poverty line but still struggling to meet basic needs like housing, food and childcare. These are pets that could benefit greatly

¹ This number was calculated by the number of households in Ohio living at or below the federal poverty line, 676,200 or 14%. Of these households, 45.5% own dogs and 32.1% own cats with dog-owning households, average of 1.5 dogs and for cat-owning, households average of 1.8 cats, per the American Veterinary Medical Association. This number is a minimum estimate.

² This number was calculated by the number of households in Ohio that are ALICE qualifying, 1,207,500 or 25%. Of these households, 45.5% own dogs and 32.1% own cats with dog-owning households, average of 1.5 dogs and for cat-owning households average of 1.8 cats, per the American Veterinary Medical Association. This number is a minimum estimate.



1255 23rd St. NW, Suite 450
Washington, DC 20037
202-452-1100
humaneworld.org

Formerly called the Humane
Society of the United States

from access to quality veterinary care. Policies and rules that prevent telemedicine services represent a barrier to that care in the form of the associated costs of getting a pet to a veterinary clinic. Transporting a pet to a clinic can involve the loss of wages due to taking time off work and possibly even the cost of childcare. The round-trip cost of transportation and fuel for travel can be significant, particularly for those who live far from clinics.

Additionally, our country - including Ohio - is experiencing a widespread shortage of veterinary professionals. Limited access and sparse availability of appointments has intensified an already-difficult situation for many Ohioans, especially pet owners in rural areas and underserved communities.

Telemedicine is one of the most effective methods for increasing veterinary access to care. It was utilized without incident in numerous states during the pandemic and has since been implemented permanently in multiple states. If SB 60 passes, Ohio pet owners will have greater access to quality veterinary care for their beloved animals and veterinarians will have the discretion to decide if they want to use telemedicine as a tool to reach more people and pets. Importantly, this bill does not mandate veterinarians to offer telemedicine services. Rather, it provides licensed veterinarians with the opportunity and freedom to exercise their professional judgement in their practice.

We thank the committee for your attention to this important issue and urge the committee to support SB 60 to better serve Ohio's pet owners and veterinary community. I would be happy to take any questions from the committee.

Mark Finneran

Ohio State Director, Humane World for Animals
mfinneran@humaneworld.org