February 12, 2026

Proponent Testimony for House Bill 148

Good morning Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Roegner, Ranking Member DeMora and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify for House Bill 148.

My name is Michelle Gonzalez, and I am a veterinarian providing affordable and accessible care to rescue, owned, and community companion animals throughout the State of Ohio. Veterinary care, primarily spay/neuter and wellness, is provided through the Rascal Unit mobile veterinary clinics that travel across the state to bring services to those in need, and we have been providing this service for 19 years.

Despite our organization's low-cost care, there is still a need for financial assistance beyond what we can offer. To further help our communities, we created Rascal Charities, an animal welfare non-profit, which relies on the support of grants like the Ohio Pet Fund to subsidize costs and make veterinary care available to pet owners in need. House Bill 148 can have a huge impact on our reach by increasing the number of animals we can help through additional funding.

Rascal Charities has been a recipient of the Ohio Pet Fund's spay and neuter grant. For 18 years they have been a resource and a partner to us and to other humane organizations as we work to improve pet health and control pet overpopulation and needless euthanasia due to the lack of space in our shelters. By helping animals we are also impacting the lives of the humans who care for them, and we are decreasing the risk that the animals will end up in a shelter. By helping animals, we are helping the community as a whole.

By increasing available funding, we are also helping Ohio shelters who are overwhelmed by the number of animals coming in daily. We cannot adopt our way out of shelter overcrowding, and pet overpopulation only worsens this problem as dogs and cats are entering our shelters faster than they can be moved out. The result is euthanasia due to space. By increasing funding, we increase the number of animals that can be sterilized and this has a direct impact in pet overpopulation. Less litters, less unwanted animals. There are also counties who lack the funds to provide spay and neuter services to all the animals they adopt out, and they themselves become a part of the problem by inadvertently allowing more litters that will likely end up back at the shelter.

House Bill 148 can help us and other animal welfare organizations help pet owners.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony today.

Alba Michelle Gonzalez, DVM, MS, MSL
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