Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Roegner, Ranking Member DeMora and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of HB 148.

My name is Annette Volk and I am a Board Member for Heartt Animal Refuge. Last year, we were recipients of the Ohio Pet Fund Grant and are grateful for the funds to continue our mission. We believe strongly in spay-neuter programs because we see their great benefits.

As an organization, our belief in spay-neuter is so strong that we will not offer any animal for adoption until they are fixed.

As an organization, we see the impacts when spay and neuter programs are not available. Every year we see the suffering of kittens born to stray, malnourished, or too-young mother cats. While we intake these animals and do everything we can to try to ensure their survival, the odds are stacked against them. This suffering we see time and time again could be prevented by better access to spay and neuter programs.

For many members of the areas we serve, the cost to fix their pet (or strays they are willing to care for in the area) is simply outside of the budget. This lack of resources is adding fire to the already burning crisis of large stray populations and over-population at shelters. While we are a no-kill shelter, we are aware of the high levels of euthanasia that must be performed to maintain other shelter populations, a sad reality in this over-population crisis that only appears to be getting worse.

Our shelter is doing all we can to provide spay-neuter access, and the Ohio Pet Fund grant is crucial to us in this effort. Any additional funding, to our shelter or to the many other hardworking animal shelters in Ohio, will pay dividends in the future by working towards a controlled population of pets in our area.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Annette Volk