TESTIMONY BEFORE THE OHIO SENATE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE ON H.B. 148 MARCH 24 BY PEGGY KAPLAN, DIRECTOR, OHIO PET FUND

Good morning Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Roegner, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 148. My name is Peggy Kaplan, and I serve as a Director of the Ohio Pet Fund.

Through the sale of the Pet Friendly license plate, we provide spay and neuter grants to county-run dog shelters and nonprofit rescue organizations across Ohio. While we are proud of that work, the reality is that costs have risen, and what we provide is only a small fraction of what is now needed to address the scale of pet overpopulation in our state.

Shelters consistently report being at or near capacity, and intake numbers remain high year after year. This isn't a temporary issue; it's ongoing and costly, placing a heavy burden on county budgets, shelter capacity, and staff and the problem grows quickly because one unspayed animal does not stay one for long. A single unspayed cat can lead to hundreds of kittens over time, and a dog can produce dozens. These numbers quickly overwhelm shelters and drive up costs for taxpayers.

If unaltered animals are adopted and reproduce, their offspring often end up back in the shelter system. This "revolving door" drives up costs for taxpayers and contributes to dog bites, property damage, overcrowding in shelters and, too often, euthanasia.

A veterinary technician at a local shelter shared with me that one of the hardest parts of her job is having to euthanize a healthy, adoptable puppy—as it's wagging its tail—simply because there is no space.

We can do better.

House Bill 148 offers meaningful support to address this problem.

By creating the Companion Animal Fund within the State Treasury, Ohio taxpayers will have the option to voluntarily contribute a portion of their income tax refund. This approach does not impact the state's General Revenue Fund, yet it creates a dedicated funding stream for spay and neuter

services—one of the most effective ways to reduce shelter intake and long-term costs. HB 148 simply gives taxpayers the option to support a solution.

This is not just an animal welfare issue—it is a fiscal responsibility issue. The Bill simply scales what we know works, a way to reduce a problem counties are already paying for. We can pay on the front end through prevention—or on the back end through shelter costs, staffing, and euthanasia.

I respectfully urge your support of House Bill 148. Thank you for your consideration.