TESTIMONY BEFORE THE OHIO SENATE WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE ON H.B. 148
TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2026, BY DR. LEANNE BERTANI, PRESIDENT, OHIO PET FUND

Good day Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Roegner, Ranking Member DeMora and esteemed Members of the Senate Ways and Means Committee. My name is Leanne Bertani, current President of the Ohio Pet Fund, and I appreciate the opportunity to testify as a proponent of House Bill 148.

The good news today is that we have the opportunity to facilitate good works for Ohio. We have an organization in place that operates efficiently and with significant oversight, without the need for additional bureaucracy.

Here are some details of oversight of the Ohio Pet Fund:

1. The Ohio Pet Fund has an all-volunteer Board of Directors (no salaries) that represents humane societies, shelters and rescues, and includes a veterinarian and a physician. In addition, there is an advisory board that includes a second veterinarian and an attorney.
2. The Ohio Pet Fund is advised by a legal consortium that specializes in the governance of nonprofit organizations.
3. The Ohio Pet Fund files 990 income tax returns with the IRS every year, and is advised by a respected accounting firm. Over the past ten years, we have actually given more in spay-neuter grants than we received from the license plate income.
4. The Ohio Pet Fund files a yearly report of income and expenditures with the Ohio Attorney General.
5. House Bill 148 requires that the Director of the Ohio Pet Fund shall report to the Ohio General Assembly on the effectiveness of the income tax contribution system, and that the report shall include the amount of money contributed to the fund in addition to or independently of the income tax refund contribution system in each of the previous five years, and the purposes for which the money was expended.

House Bill 148 will allow us to improve funding to the dog wardens, shelters and nonprofits that depend on us for spay and neuter funds, so that they may in turn assist homeless pets, cats and dogs belonging to disabled veterans, and those belonging to families with incomes below 150% of the poverty line. In addition, the Ohio Pet Fund makes money for the state with its plate sales and saves money by decreasing intake and increasing adoptions at county shelters.

We attempt to assist every county. For some of our dog wardens, especially those in the smaller counties, our grants may be the only source of spay-neuter funds. If we can't help a county dog warden directly, then we attempt to assist the nonprofit groups and mobile clinics that provide support in the surrounding area. In addition, we've started an educational program to help fledgling veterinarians become more familiar with special techniques and procedures for high volume, high quality spay-neuter surgeries.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions.