



## **Proponent testimony – H.B. 60**

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*President of the Ohio Federated Humane Societies and President & CEO of the Humane Society of Greater Dayton*

May 22, 2015

Chairman Hill and honorable members of the House Agriculture & Rural Development Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of H.B. 60.

I serve as the President of the Board of Directors for the Ohio Federated Humane Societies. I am also the President & CEO of the Humane Society of Greater Dayton – a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) county humane society located in Dayton and that serves Montgomery County. Humane societies organized under ORC 1717 are granted the authority to appoint humane agents who, once they successfully complete state-mandated training and have their appointment approved by their county's probate court, are authorized to enforce Ohio's animal protection laws, specifically ORC 959. Without county humane societies, this would fall to local law enforcement agencies. While nearly all of the humane societies in Ohio receive no funding from county or other government sources in support of this critical law enforcement role, it is a cornerstone of our missions and an important community service.

In this written testimony, I am speaking on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Ohio Federated Humane Societies (OFHS).

Currently in Ohio, unless an act of cruelty is knowingly committed by the owner, manager or employee of a dog kennel, animal abusers can only be charged with a first or second degree misdemeanor for a first act of cruelty, regardless of how egregious the act. Our humane agents are first responders in the field and our agencies are responsible for assisting with the prosecution of animal cruelty and neglect cases. As such, we can assure you that existing penalties for crimes of a more violent and truly disturbing nature against animals are soft, outmoded, and ineffectual. Considering the very strong link between animal cruelty and violent acts against people, these weak standards aren't just impacting animals, but also people. Current penalties for animal cruelty in Ohio are simply unacceptable in these more serious cases.

Citizens of Ohio have been outraged by stories of horrifically neglectful, malicious, intentionally violent, abusive treatment of companion animals. This is occurring across urban, suburban, and rural areas alike. Over the past two years, there have been cases in which animals were stabbed, beaten with hammers, set on fire, knowingly starved, shot with bullets or arrows, or otherwise tortured and left to suffer. These crimes were committed by first-time offenders, and as such, they are misdemeanors. There is a wave of public demand for Ohio to strengthen its companion animal protection laws and allow prosecutors to charge first-time offenders with a felony of the fifth degree for egregious acts of cruelty that result in serious physical harm to a companion animals. Being able to assign felony charges to such acts will better reflect the value society places on companion animals and set a higher legal and moral standard for how we hold one another accountable for such blatant cruelty.

While only time will tell if H.B. 274's felony-level penalty will serve as a deterrent for animal abusers who commit egregious acts, it will certainly provide our humane law enforcement teams with the tools they need right now to make Ohio a safer place for companion animals and people.

Thank you for your time and attention in considering our testimony on H.B. 60. We implore you to pass this bill.

Respectfully,  
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Approved by the Ohio Federated Humane Societies Board of Trustees

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