

HOUSE BILL 60 – PROPONENT TESTIMONY OF
Steffen Evan Baldwin
Founder, President/C.E.O.-Animal Cruelty Task Force of Ohio
Chief Humane Agent-Union County
Executive Director - Top of Ohio Pet Shelter (Humane Society Serving Logan County)

May 26, 2015 – House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee

Good morning Chairman Hill and Members of the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee.

My name is Steffen Baldwin and my family and I reside in Union County where I am the Chief Humane Agent for the County, being a relatively unpaid position of law enforcement; I am sworn in by the local Probate Judge to protect animals from abuse, cruelty and neglect and bring their offenders to justice. I am proud to say that I have worked very hard with both local and specially appointed prosecutors as well as many other law enforcement officers within the Sheriff and Police Departments who I now brothers and friends, to obtain a 100% conviction rating of the animal cruelty cases we have prosecuted.

I am also the Founder, President and C.E.O. of the Animal Cruelty Task Force of Ohio, an organization I created after realizing how many rural Counties are lacking qualified and competent County Humane Agents, to provide animal cruelty support services to rural Humane Societies and rural County Humane Agents across the State through assistance, education and enforcement of the laws and penalties that we are here to discuss today. In 2014, ACT Ohio reached out to 15 Counties across the State, traveled over 100,000 miles and rescued over 215 animals while successfully prosecuting four cases of animal cruelty in our home County.

While House Bill 60 is seen as an important animal welfare bill that would bring Ohio in line with other states and the penalties allowed for animal cruelty; I strongly urge you to consider the human component of such a critical piece of legislation. Every Jeffrey Dahmer in the world, started out mutilating and abusing animals before moving on to human victims. We know that those who abuse animals can and often do abuse the elderly, children, women and others. We also know that egregious acts of animal cruelty, the type that would be addressed by House Bill 60, are almost always predictors of future, human abuse and we currently lack the sufficient tools to address these seriously sick acts when they happen at their base level and to hopefully deter them from happening in the first place with stronger provisions and more competent enforcement.

I will be frank and tell you that House Bill 60 would not apply to the majority of my cases, and that's a very good thing! I cannot fathom a massive backlog of felony cases for prosecutors to be left addressing when there are only a small handful of these egregious acts that hit the news each year. Furthermore, there is a world of difference between accidents, mistakes and lapses of judgement and the ability to mutilate a defenseless animal because you want to get back at your ex-girlfriend for leaving you after you hit on her one too many times and yes, I am talking I am talking about a real case here in Ohio.

I want to thank you for taking the time to hear proponent testimony on House Bill 60 and urge you to consider the points being made here by myself and others today. This is a sound piece of legislation that is not overreaching or overbearing but will put the right tools in the tool bags of people like myself who work tirelessly across the State with very few resources, particularly in the Counties I travel to and work in. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have for me at this time.

Respectfully,

Steffen Baldwin
President/CEO, Animal Cruelty Task Force of Ohio
Chief Humane Agent, Union County
Executive Director, Top of Ohio Pet Shelter (Logan County)