



**Senate Agriculture Committee  
Proponent Testimony  
House Bill 60, Companion Animal Torture  
April 12, 2016**

Chairman Hite, Vice Chair Hackett, Ranking Member Gentile and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The Humane Society of the United States is the nation's largest and most effective animal protection organization. We provide free training and other resources to local shelters, municipalities and law enforcement and support our friends in the sustainable agricultural community. We have thousands of dedicated volunteers and supporters and welcome working with all stakeholders to strengthen protections for animals in Ohio. My name is Corey Roscoe and I am the State Director for The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). I am testifying in support of House Bill 60, the companion animal torture bill.

House Bill 60 is reasonable and balanced. This bill targets only malicious acts of torture upon companion animals and allows for more prosecutorial and judicial discretion. This bill seeks to address ONLY torturous acts of companion animal cruelty by a depraved individual. And as research indicates, that individual is likely to go on to commit further violent crimes with human victims.

Current statute possesses no penalty gradation on first-offense acts of companion animal torture. An individual who kills and mutilates a family dog can receive the same penalty on a first-offense as someone convicted of a less egregious act. Meaning, an individual that harms an animal resulting in no serious injury to the animal receives the same penalty as an individual who maims, tortures or even kills a companion animal. Not every violation of our state's animal cruelty codes should carry a felony penalty on the first-offense. And a vast majority of daily animal cruelty complaints received by law enforcement are acts of neglect or failure to care. But, by making the penalty change as outlined in HB 60, the discretion to leverage a higher penalty for first-time acts of companion animal torture is available as another tool for prosecutors.

Research has shown animal cruelty to be a "red flag" for other future violent crimes. Intentional animal abuse is often seen in association with other serious crimes including assault, weapons violations, sexual assault, and child abuse. This future predictor is so strong that the FBI is now tracking animal cruelty as its own category and including it in the Uniform Crime Report and cites a history of animal abuse in childhood as one of the most reliable predictors of future violence as an adult.



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
OF THE UNITED STATES

Under a certain condition, Ohio law does allow for felony level penalties on a first-offense act of egregious animal cruelty if any person or facility holds a commercial kennel license, whether that is a boarding, training, breeder, or rescue facility. This same penalty should be applied to similar acts of companion animal torture committed by anyone regardless if the person doing the harm holds a commercial kennel license.

Despite our enthusiastic support for the concept of House Bill 60, we do not support the amendment added to this bill to prohibit humane societies to employ an attorney to prosecute a felony violation (of 959.131). A large portion of our state's humane societies rely on that provision -which has been part of our ORC for decades - to bring swift justice to their pending companion animal cruelty cases. We urge you to consider striking out amendment 0681 contained within House Bill 60. This specific amendment language is currently being discussed in another bill, House Bill 278, where it is being fully evaluated.

We support the passage of House Bill 60, the companion animal torture bill, and feel strongly that it protects not only animals, but potential human victims from serious, violent crimes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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