

SB 151 Interested Party Testimony

Dear Chairman Hite and Honorable Members of the Senate Agricultural Committee:

Purpose

My name is Jason Dean Cooke and I stand before you today to present interested party testimony on SB 151. As the owner of multiple dogs, as well as working with other people's dogs, I have encountered numerous situations which fall under Ohio's "dangerous dog" laws. I have been very displeased with these laws for quite some time and I look forward to them being revised to more adequately provide protection for dogs and their owners, the general public, and irresponsible dog owners. That being said, I do have some concerns with what SB 151 does and does not address. I will now begin my interested party testimony on SB 151.

Background

For six years now, I have worked in animal rescue, animal education, and animal advocacy. I am the former president of the humane society serving Mahoning County and currently serve on the Board of Directors for a local rescue in Austintown, Ohio. I am also a member of multiple grassroots organizations that strive to change animal laws in Ohio with regard to cruelty, neglect, tethering, and discrimination.

Declassification Concerns

As with many aspects of our society, commission of a crime deserves consideration for means to make amends and start with a clean slate. Unfortunately under current Ohio law, dogs are not afforded these opportunities. Whether a dog is classified as a nuisance, dangerous, or vicious dog, that classification is permanent. A responsible pet owner has no means, and therefore no incentive, to take the necessary measures to correct their dog's behaviors, which can result in at least two things: an uneducated owner and a dog with unaddressed issues. Declassification would allow owners of dogs who have been classified as a nuisance, dangerous, or vicious, to seek out recommended ways to remedy the situation, thereby greatly decreasing the chances of a repeated incident with that particular dog, or dogs they may own in the future. I respectfully request that this matter be looked into further and a declassification protocol be considered.

Vicious Dog Concerns

SB 151 has many beneficial provisions that certainly will benefit the State Of Ohio's "dangerous dog" laws, but it also introduces several provisions that serve as a detriment to these very same laws. One in particular is of great concern to myself: the killing of a companion animal by a dog. Under SB 151, any dog, regardless of its history, would be euthanized should it kill another companion animal. I feel that this is an unnecessary provision that would result in the needless death of dogs who, intentionally or accidentally, caused the death of one or more companion animals. Certain circumstances arise where a dog may have a high prey drive and perhaps kill the family bird. This should not be a death sentence for the dog, as the owners should have taken the necessary precautions to prevent such a tragedy. Another circumstance which often arises, is two dogs from the same household engaging in a fight over resources or other triggers, and one of the dogs is mortally wounded. Again, we have a dog or dogs with not uncommon behavioral issues, possibly being the aggressor or the victim, being punished for an act which I do not deem worthy of euthanasia. I respectfully request that this provision be reexamined and the recommendations of others with regard to this matter be given careful consideration.

Conclusion

I wish to thank Chairman Hite and Honorable Members of the Senate Agricultural Committee for affording myself the opportunity to give interested party testimony on SB 151, and will gladly answer to the best of my ability any questions the members of the committee may have.

Thank you,
Jason Dean Cooke
Animal Advocate
State Of Ohio