

Beth Sheehan
Interested Party Testimony for SB 151, Dog Law Revision
Senate Agriculture Committee
April 26, 2016

Dear Chair Hite, Vice Chair Hackett, Ranking Minority Member Gentile, and honorable members of the Senate Agriculture Committee,

I am Beth Sheehan from Cincinnati. I am here to present interested party testimony for SB 151, Dog Law Revision.

First, there are many valuable points in this bill, including extending the amount of time violent felons cannot own dogs from 3 years to 5 years and keeping convicted, child abusers from owning a dog for five years.

However, SB 151 offers neither incentive to rehabilitate the irresponsible owner nor common sense, bite prevention. Instead, the bill causes the dog to suffer penalties, sometimes with its life, because of its careless owner.

Practical preventions of future bites or injuries might include requiring the dog to be on a short (4 ft) leash or requiring the reckless owner to take attend behavior classes along with his dog. Upon successful completion of the dog training course, the owner presents his certificate to the dog warden.

Additionally, other states provide for declassification of the dogs after, for instance, a three-year period without a biting incident. So, the animal that was declared “dangerous”, that has completed three years without incident, may now be assigned a “nuisance”.

HB 151 leaves dog owners in the unhappy position of having to defend any injury the dog is alleged to have caused. Each time a report on the dog is filed, the dog warden is required to assign a label, “nuisance, dangerous, or vicious”, to the animal. Many owners will give up. The dogs will be surrendered.

Even worse, euthanization is mandated for any dog that kills a companion animal. This animal might be a pet hamster or a stray cat wandering through the dog’s back yard.

Finally, please consider adding language to SB 151 to make using a dog as a weapon during the commission of a crime an enhanced penalty. There was a case in Northern Kentucky where a woman was severely beaten by her boyfriend. The poor woman picked up a knife to defend herself. The male ordered her to put the knife down. When she did not comply, the male commanded his dog to viciously attack. Among the many serious injuries, requiring surgeries, she sustained, that woman was gravely scalped.

That man deserves an enhanced penalty for using his dog as a weapon.

I strongly encourage you to keep working on this important bill, SB 151, before you vote on it.