

It was deeply disappointing when last year's Senate Bill 205 increasing the penalty for torturing companion animals failed to be enacted. Thank you for not giving up. I work with a volunteer group in Highland County, the Friends of the Highland County Dog Pound. Most of the animals we see are lost or abandoned, kind of skinny, kind of scratched up, glad to find a full meal, eager to be petted. But, we also get animals that have been grossly abused, dogs so terrified they actually cannot move, dogs so damaged they are reduced to crawling because they can't walk, dogs so wounded in body and soul, they still cower after months of loving foster care.

We applaud and embrace the revision in SB 164 identifying animal abuse as a violent offense. Indeed it is, and as volunteers who have witnessed the consequences of human brutality, we can only implore your fellow committee members to authorize the designation. Animal lovers cannot really conceive of the horrors endured by unlucky creatures who fall into the wrong hands- and there seems to be no cure for depravity- but we can make it possible to effectively prosecute and incarcerate the dregs of humanity who torture and starve animals. These perpetrators must answer for their unforgivable actions.

SB 164 is essential, and long-awaited, legislation for the decent human beings in our state who love animals and believe they should be protected from the worst of our citizens. It is not enough to cry when we see the terrible wounds, or dig the small graves or carry their broken bodies to the vet. If we cannot protect our companion animals from the horror of human behavior, surely we can, at the very least, enact legislation to prosecute and penalize it. We can properly, publicly identify the perpetrators who have always been able to commit their crimes over and over since their victims cannot identify them.

The animal lovers and Friends of the Highland County Dog Pound wholeheartedly support increased penalties for the predatory individuals who have abandoned any claim to humanity by their cruelty. We support giving law enforcement and legal agents directives that improve the chances those individuals will experience rigorous prosecution. We absolutely support labeling these monsters as the violent offenders they have proven to be.

We support SB 164, a significant step on behalf of the companion animals who suffer violence and an affirmation that Ohio intends to not only stand up for them, but stand up to the perpetrators of terrible harm.