



LICKING COUNTY  
**HUMANE  
SOCIETY**

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**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON S.B. 164  
Presented by Lori Carlson, MPA  
Executive Director of Licking County Humane Society  
President of Ohio Animal Welfare Federation  
Before the Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee  
May 25, 2021**

Chairman Schaffer, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on Senate Bill 164. This legislation will increase penalties for the most violent, cruel offenses against a companion animal and will also prohibit the inhumane euthanasia of a companion animal in a gas chamber.

I am Lori Carlson, Executive Director of the Licking County Humane Society (LCHS) in Heath, Ohio. LCHS was founded in 1966 and seeks to rescue animals to improve lives. This is accomplished through programming which includes sheltering homeless pets, investigating animal cruelty complaints, and much more. On behalf of our community and the animals we serve, LCHS respectfully urges this committee to support SB 164.

Part of our humane society's role is to assist with the prosecution of cases against defendants who have abused or neglected animals. My humane agents file complaints, seek emergency court orders, prepare cases for prosecution, and testify in these cases. We are an integral part of not only protecting animals but also in holding individuals accountable for their crimes against animals.

Most cruelty violations of ORC 959 are mitigated through education or the provision of resources to eliminate the concerns. In a small number of cases, these interventions are unsuccessful, or the infraction is severe enough to warrant filing misdemeanor charges in Municipal Court. In even fewer cases, the crime is so egregious that felony charges are filed (Goddard's Law) in the Court of Common Pleas. Under current law, a perpetrator can be charged with a 5<sup>th</sup> degree felony for animal cruelty.

Unfortunately, a conviction for a 5<sup>th</sup> degree Felony results in community control and not prison time. Those convicted of a 5<sup>th</sup> degree felony in Licking County will most often serve some limited time in the county jail and then be released to community control. This greatly compromises safety and severely under-estimates the risks the most egregious offenders present to the community.

I will not reiterate the changes proposed in this bill, as Senator Hottinger made these clear in his sponsor testimony. I'd prefer to provide an example of how this law will serve my community.



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In 2014, a case in Newark involved an offender who mutilated and dismembered a small dog. Pieces of the dog were found strewn across the property. It was highly suspected that the offender also ate part of the remains. The details are horrific. Of course, this preceded Goddard's Law, so the case was tried as a misdemeanor, with a maximum 6-month county jail penalty. The defendant spent about 90 days in jail before being sentenced in March of 2015. The judge released the defendant on the day of his sentencing to community control, in part because he wanted him to have time over his head while he attended court-ordered treatment. That was the last day anyone saw the defendant. He immediately left the state, receiving no treatment and no monitoring.

One might argue that the current law (Goddard's Law) would have found him guilty of a felony. However, the outcome would have been the same. With an F5 conviction, he would still have been released to community control and would still have abandoned the state and his treatment/probation. He is a serious danger in any community, not only to animals but to people as well. The link between human violence and animal violence is clearly documented.

Had we been able to try him under Goddard's Law and have his offense deemed violent (which SB 164 will enable), he would have most assuredly been sentenced to prison for a longer time. At a minimum, it would have given the judge discretion in sentencing and provided more appropriate accountability for his extremely violent actions. I urge you to support this much needed improvement to the law.

SB 164 will also allow us to move beyond archaic gas chambers in Ohio. They cause suffering for the animal at the end of their life, and there are humane methods of euthanasia readily available. Ohio's animals deserve better.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these important issues.

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