

## **76<sup>th</sup> House District**

- Southeastern Geauga County·
- Western Geauga County·
- Northern Portage County·



**Sarah M. LaTourette**  
Assistant Majority Floor Leader

## **Committees**

- Finance·
- Health·
- Vice-Chair, Community & Family Advancement·
- Rules and Reference·

### Senate Judiciary Committee Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 349 November 27, 2018

Chairman Bacon, Vice-Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 349; legislation which passed the House earlier this year with strong bipartisan support.

This straightforward legislation has one purpose, to provide search and rescue animals (dogs and horses) the same protection from harm and interference as is provided for police animals. Our state is lucky to have a number of volunteer search and rescue volunteers who answer calls from law enforcement to assist in search and rescue activities. Whether these be missing persons situations, or a human remains detection search, these volunteers are an incredibly valuable resource to our state. While the majority of search and rescue missions are lower risk when compared to that of a police animal, there is always the possibility that an individual may wish to interfere with the search efforts or even bring harm to the animals performing this important task.

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Ohio law, as it currently stands, makes no reference to search and rescue animals, while a number of other states have laws prohibiting interference in the work of search and rescue animals, prohibiting bringing harm to search and rescue animals, or both. Please note, at least Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Montana, New Jersey, North Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming have laws relating to this.

Chairman Bacon and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify on HB 349. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.