



House Bill 350  
Proponent

May 26, 2020

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on House Bill 350 to reenact current law provisions regarding animal fighting and bestiality. I am President and CEO of the Toledo Humane Society which is the humane society for Lucas County and among the larger animal shelters in Ohio. We are a private, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization organized under Ohio Revised Code 1717, and as such, are authorized to appoint humane agents who enforce Ohio's animal protection laws including those involving animal fighting and bestiality.

The Toledo Humane Society is in one of the eight counties where the animal fighting and bestiality laws were removed due to the court case. This bill is critically needed to correct a legal disparity and ensure that these important provisions are enforceable in Lucas County and in all the eight counties where these laws were stripped. Helpless, voiceless animals deserve protection under the law from these disturbing and depraved types of abuse and given the link between animal abuse and human violence, these laws can help to identify predators who are likely to violate and abuse people.

The amendment to HB 350 regarding humane agent residency is also vitally important to our mission at Toledo Humane Society. Like the provisions currently in HB 350, language was also included in SB 331 during the 131st General Assembly to remove the requirement that humane agents live in the county where they are employed. Under ORC 1717, humane agents are given enforcement authority of animal cruelty laws. Because of the legal challenge to SB 331, there is also inconsistent application of the removal of residency requirements for humane agents in Ohio and specifically in Lucas County where the Toledo Humane Society enforces Ohio's animal protection laws.

I ask for your support of House Bill 350 to reenact current law that allows humane agents to live outside of the county of their employment and to restore our ability to enforce the state's animal fighting and bestiality laws.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 350. I respectfully urge the House to consider swift passage so that Toledo Humane Society and other law enforcement agencies will not be challenged by the inconsistent application of law.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Heaven", written over a horizontal line.

Stephen Heaven  
President/CEO