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Sponsor Testimony for Substitute House Bill 33
Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee
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Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Schaffer, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written sponsor testimony on Substitute House Bill 33. I'd also like to thank Representative Lanese for the opportunity to team up on this vital legislation.

Substitute House Bill 33 is critical, not only to protect companion animals from abuse, but also to add another tool through which domestic abuse can be identified and stopped. It is said that pets are often the canaries in the coal mine when it comes to abuse, and there is undeniable evidence demonstrating a link between animal abuse and violence towards humans. One study found that 70% of people charged with cruelty to animals were known by police for other violent behavior – including homicide. Another study found that 61.5% of animal abuse offenders had also committed an assault; 17% had committed sexual abuse; 8% had arson convictions. All of these statistics are troubling, and they highlight the critical need for this legislation.

Many of the most infamous school shooters and serial killers “got their courage” by first being violent towards animals. For example, Jeffrey Dahmer, The Son of Sam, and Ted Bundy, as well as the perpetrators in the Columbine and Parkland shootings all had extensive histories of animal abuse, with 50% of schoolyard shooters having been found to have such histories. This legislation will provide law enforcement with the opportunity to intervene in violent home environments before the perpetrator's actions escalate.

Furthermore, Substitute House Bill 33 will increase the flow of information and be an essential tool to stop family violence that is already taking place. Those who are willing to harm animals tend to harm others. By implementing cross-reporting mechanisms and procedures, law enforcement will be notified of more instances of violence against a companion animal, enabling them to catch and stop more instances of child abuse, domestic violence, and elder abuse. This legislation will also increase the ability of social service professionals to intervene in situations where a child or elder is present when animal abuse is occurring. This bill is about giving law enforcement and social service professionals the information they need to connect the dots and break the cycle of violence in the home.

Thank you again Chairman Hoagland and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify on Substitute House Bill 33.