



November 29, 2022

Re: Senate Bill 164 Proponent Testimony

Chairman Koehler, Vice-Chair Creech, Ranking Member Brent and members of the House Agriculture and Conservation Committee:

My name is Mark Finneran, Ohio state director for the Humane Society of the United States. The HSUS has a long history of service in our state. We advocate for better laws to protect animals and communities, provide direct care to animals during emergency rescue, and provide training to animal care professional and law enforcement officials.

On behalf of HSUS and our supporters in Ohio we submit this testimony today in strong support of Senate Bill 164 , which would effectively end the use of gas chambers as a form of euthanasia in animal shelters and upgrade specific sections of our state’s animal cruelty code.

A gas chamber is a manufactured device for killing animals consisting of a sealed chamber into which a poisonous gas is introduced, such as carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide. Under the provisions of this bill, a narrow path was carved out to prohibit gas chamber euthanasia of domestic animals within a shelter setting while not affecting animals in laboratories, in agriculture, or for wildlife.

In a gas chamber, domestic pets may spend up to 25 terrifying minutes before they expire. During this prolonged, panicked time, the animals may frequently claw and cry, looking for a way out, experience convulsions or suffer major organ damage before losing consciousness. If you’re sensitive to animal suffering, its operation cannot help but disturb you.

When gas chambers are used in a shelter setting, they can not only cause animal suffering but add risk to people who can potentially be exposed to carbon monoxide, a leading cause of accidental poisoning in the United States. Gas chambers, like other devices, must be maintained and calibrated. Beyond that, there is always room for operator error or misuses.

Despite gas chamber being a lethal apparatus, to my knowledge there is no state training required for an operator of a gas chamber. In contrast, those shelter workers who perform euthanasia by injection of a shelter pet are require to complete a minimum of 16 hours of training approved by the Ohio veterinary medical licensing board to become a certified euthanasia technician.

A more humane method of euthanasia exists for domestic animals referred to as euthanasia by injection, or EBI. EBI is both pain free and stress free as animals euthanized by this method can lose consciousness in as little as 3-5 seconds. The American Veterinary Medical Association has expressly stated that “euthanasia by intravenous injection of an approved euthanasia agent remains the preferred method for euthanasia of dogs, cat and other small companion animals.”

Additionally, the HSUS strongly supports the provisions of SB 164 that classify the most egregious fifth-degree felony offenses of knowingly causing serious physical harm to a companion animal as “violent offenses.” We believe this reflects the values of most Ohioans and is vital to public safety for humans and animals alike.

For all our stated reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to vote in favor of Senate Bill 164.