



ADVANCING ANIMAL WELFARE SINCE 1883

October 31, 2023

Proponent Testimony on House Bill 277—House Ways and Means Committee

Chairman Roemer, Vice Chairman Lorenz, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, my name is Rachel D.K. Finney and I thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 277, The Pet Friendly Rental Act.

I serve as the CEO for Columbus Humane, a private, nonprofit animal welfare and human service agency founded here in Franklin County in 1883. In service to our community for 140 years, Columbus Humane knows pets are family and we see first-hand the power of the human-animal bond. Nearly 70% of our neighbors have a pet in their household. Pets not only offer critical companionship, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness; but they also are proven to improve their human family members' cardiovascular health, reduce depression and anxiety, reduce blood pressure, and even increase the likelihood of making healthier choices like smoking cessation and increased physical exercise.

But pets aren't only a benefit for their owners—they can also be a burden. Pets can be a financial drain on family resources. Pet owners frequently forgo food or care for themselves in order to provide for their pets. It is also well researched that survivors of domestic violence will stay in a dangerous home if they are not able to escape WITH their pets because abusers frequently use pets as leverage and control over their victims. Columbus Humane offers free, temporary boarding and veterinary care for pets of survivors of domestic violence while human family members get safe through our Safe Haven program. We also staff the local domestic violence shelter, LSS Choices, and provide animal care and veterinary services at that location. We see time and time again, pet-owning survivors are ready to get reestablished in a new home far before pet-friendly housing is available. Columbus Humane even pays the first month's rent and pet deposit for our domestic violence survivors because we are so deeply committed to helping people and pets stay safe together.

For this reason, we enthusiastically support House Bill 277 which encourages landlords to offer pet friendly rentals by providing landlords with a \$750 per unit tax credit up to a cap of \$7,500 if they permit dogs and cats to reside in their units, do not restrict dogs by breed or size, and do not impose nonrefundable, one-time pet fees or additional monthly pet rent. Securing housing is already exceptionally difficult in Central Ohio. This bill will encourage, but not force, landlords to reduce an additional barrier on nearly 70% of our neighbors and will help to keep every family member safe.

Sincere thanks to Representative Brent and Representative Ray for helping to keep whole families, people **and** their pets, together. Thank you to the Committee for your consideration of this important legislation. I can be available to answer any questions you have.



Rachel D.K. Finney, CAWA
Chief Executive Officer