



Proponent Testimony on House Bill 33
Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
September 2, 2020

Chairman Hoagland, Vice-Chair Schaffer, Minority Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the committee, The Ohio Animal Welfare Federation's (OAWF) Board of Trustees thanks you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Sub HB 33, legislation to strengthen Ohio's animal, child, and elder abuse reporting laws.

My name is Lori Carlson and I am the President of the Ohio Animal Welfare Federation and also the Executive Director of the Licking County Humane Society. I also worked in child welfare for 26 years before transitioning to animal welfare.

The Ohio Animal Welfare Federation, formerly the Ohio Federated Humane Societies, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose purpose is to prevent cruelty to animals by coordinating and enhancing the activities of private, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) animal welfare organizations incorporated in Ohio and county, municipal, and local animal agencies; share information with lawmakers and policymakers about the humane treatment of animals and their value to humans; provide training, resources and information on humane principles that will enhance the welfare of animals in the State of Ohio; and encourage cooperative, supportive, and collaborative relationships among humane societies, animal control facilities, and other animal welfare organizations.

Under current law, humane agents employed by county humane societies are mandated reporters for suspected child abuse under O.R.C. 2151.421. Given the link between animal abuse and human violence, this is a critical responsibility and there are penalties for failing to appropriately carry it out. In HB 33, the reporting requirement is extended to include reporting suspected animal abuse to the appropriate social services agency when it is reasonably believed that a resident child or elder is being negatively impacted, directly or indirectly, by any allegedly violent or neglectful behavior. Also, of great importance, HB 33 creates a reciprocal mandate that requires veterinarian and social service professionals whose clients are at-risk children or elders to report suspected animal abuse encountered in the course of helping their clients. The creation of this new, cross-reporting mandate and associated protection from civil liability is a giant step towards increasing protections for the children, elders, and animals in our state and creating a safer, more compassionate Ohio.

I have a unique perspective, having worked in child welfare and animal welfare. The link between animal violence and human violence is well documented and I can attest that when I worked in child welfare, we often saw this connection firsthand.

In summary, the Board of Trustees of the OAWF is grateful to the bill sponsors for recognizing the importance of this issue. We believe Sub HB 33 effectively addresses the need to expand Ohio's abuse reporting requirements for the most vulnerable members of our families and society. We strongly urge the committee to support HB 33's passage.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our testimony and this important issue.

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