

Good morning Chairman Domenick, Vice Chair Sayre, Ranking Minority Member Wagner and members of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. With me is Barb Knapp, President of the Ohio County Dog Wardens' Association, and my name is John Silva. I am the OCDWA Past President and liaison. Barb and I together have served 65 years in the animal welfare profession in Ohio. We represent an organization that has been an affiliate of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio since 1950.

Our state organization's role in Substitute House Bill 124 is best characterized as an interested party, which has tried to communicate with various stakeholders and the state legislature year after year to avoid having to oppose this type of legislation. We have never argued against the standards of care for animals, which is at the heart of HB 124. One of our chief points has always been that local government will inevitably be the first responders in enforcing these laws. This has even been publicized by the crafters of this legislation. But we are confused when the state legislature hears testimony downplaying our involvement.

Over the years our legislative labor has been in vain as we have witnessed over a dozen substitute bills, which ignored the County Commissioners recommendations. That is until just this summer when Representative Weddington invited us to the stakeholder meetings to hear our various objections to the bill. Mr. Weddington is an exceptional listener and he is equally interested in the local issues that are unresolved. You should know that Representative Hagan shared this same support for equity resolution when Barb Knapp and I met with him on this legislation around May of 2006.

I can say today that we may be only a few lines of legislation away from addressing our pivotal issues. I know that the County Commissioners Association of Ohio definitely has a problem with lines 864 through 872 of Substitute House Bill 124. As far back as 2007, CCAO has sought for the removal of this provision, which essentially relegates the duties of the state kennel control authority to the county commissioners.

This mandate issue is exacerbated by House Bill 124 establishing an inequitable funding formula between the state and local governments. Lines 521-537 results in county governments first receiving 33% of the new kennel fees collected by the state, which are related to funds originally received by county auditors. But as the size of the kennel operation and oversight increases, the local government's share of fees for enforcement of new regulations is reduced to as low as 7% of the states collections. As they say, that is fuzzy logic. It is no wonder why the County Commissioners in these hard economic times cannot support this concept.

Chairman Domenick, thank you for this opportunity to be heard. We too look forward to being able to help this cause. And we welcome any questions that the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee may have at this time or in the future.