



June 6, 2023

Senator Sue Shink  
Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee

Re: Support for SB 148/149, Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee Meeting

Dear Senator Shink and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for Teddy's law. My name is Tanya Hilgendorf, President and CEO of the Humane Society of Huron Valley (HSHV). HSHV is a multi-service nonprofit in Washtenaw County serving roughly 24,000 animals a year and adopting out more animals than any other shelter in Michigan. We're an award-winning, no-kill organization with over 2000 volunteers.

I am also here as the Vice Chair of the Michigan Pet Alliance, an association of shelters, animal controls, rescues, and animal lovers striving to improve standards of care for homeless animals and to create better protections for the companion animals of Michigan.

Roughly 70% of households have one or more pets. Most are considered family members. We buy them Christmas presents, let them sleep in our beds, and refer to them as our "babies". They give us love and companionship, and research shows they improve our physical health, ease loneliness and depression, and teach children empathy and self-confidence.

Because of our close bonds with animals, most people are vehemently against animal cruelty and want to see all animals treated with kindness and respect. The public overwhelmingly supports the life-saving rescue of innocent dogs and cats and three out of four people say it should be illegal to kill a healthy or treatable pet.

Sadly, in the United States alone, tens of thousands of dogs and cats are used in experiments each year. Animals that have never had a name, walked on a leash, or been given a toy. Most are killed at the end of their "usefulness". Beagles are the most common dog breed used in lab experiments, largely due to their sweet and trusting nature.

While it is the federal government regulates the care of lab animals, adoption is an important requirement our state can make, and a way we can show our gratitude for the service they provided to human society -- as 15 other states have already done.

Adoption instead of death, a chance at a happy life, is the least we can do for animals bred for thousands of years to stand by our side.

Last year HSHV took in 35 Beagles from cruel conditions in the Envigo lab animal breeding facility in Virginia, rescued by HSUS. All were adopted on the same day they were made available to the public, with hundreds more interested.

All the adoption stories later spoke of fearful dogs unaccustomed to normal dog life slowly adapting and now thriving with loving families. One of those dogs was Ernie, whose new family said this...

*"The past 6 weeks have been amazing watching him come out of his shell and learn the world and how to be a dog. He went from having very little leg strength to flying up stairs, and running zoomies. Every day has been a new adventure as Ernie discovers new things...and he learns to play ... One behavior he knew from the first day was how to snuggle and be loved. He cuddled right into our laps at the end of what was likely a very stressful day, as if this little love was meant to be with us all along!"*

Like many other shelters, we stand ready to take in more deserving animals like Ernie. And, as with all other homeless and abused animals, we have the expertise and experience needed to provide great care, assessment, and placement into wonderful homes. We'll provide veterinary care, behavioral assessment, foster care, and placement services that match them with loving families equipped to handle their special needs.

The public is overwhelmingly supportive of this legislation and is eager for the opportunity to adopt. Michigan is filled with compassionate people who find saving an innocent life personally rewarding and know the power of the love and loyalty they will receive in return.

We wholeheartedly support these bills and believe Michigan can and should take this humane step.

We hope you will support them as well.

Sincerely,

Tanya Hilgendorf  
President/CEO