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TESTIMONY ON MICHIGAN S.B. 386
Presented by Vicki Deisner, Midwest Legislative Director
Before the Michigan Senate Judiciary Committee
Tuesday, October 15, 2013

Chairman Jones, Majority Vice-Chair Schuitmaker, Minority Vice-Chair Bieda and distinguished members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am Vicki Deisner, the Midwest Legislative Director for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). The ASPCA, founded in 1866, is the first humane organization established in the Americas and serves as the nation's leading voice for animal welfare. The ASPCA's mission is to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States. As part of our national effort to assist local anti-cruelty efforts on the ground the ASPCA provides grants to local communities. In fact, over the last several years we have awarded over $600,000 to communities throughout Michigan. On behalf of our approximately 2.5 million members and supporters, including over 73,000 Michigan citizens, we **respectfully urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to vote YES on S.B. 386 – a bill that would prohibit ownership of animals by a person convicted of cruelty to animals for at least 5 years.**

Many states have demanded greater protections for animals in our communities by passing legislation to extend felony penalties to acts of cruelty; to establish bonding and forfeiture requirements in order to assist municipal shelters in caring for animals seized from cruelty situations during court proceedings; and to restrict convicted animal abusers from owning pets in the future. These kinds of protections help state and local criminal justice systems deal with abusers and prevent future animal abuse – these kinds of protections help strengthen our communities.

Greater protections for animals in our communities will also help reduce violence to people as there is a strong link between violence to people and violence to animals. Deliberate and brutal abuse of companion animals rarely occurs in isolated instances. A growing body of research demonstrates the undeniable link between those who are cruel to animals and violent toward humans. Animal abuse is often part of a vicious cycle of violence that often escalates to human abuse. Prosecuting and convicting animal abusers is the first step toward a humane society, but we must have laws in place to reduce the harm to animals that reside in violent households.

Anti-cruelty laws with future ownership restrictions allow courts to prohibit or limit ownership, possession or the custody of animals for a certain time period – often for abusers convicted of aggravated cruelty to animals. These laws are critical in the fight against animal neglect and cruelty by keeping offenders away from an animal that has already been abused or a potential new animal victim. In addition, it helps reduce the economic toll that repeat offenders oppose on their communities. Currently, 26 states and the District of Columbia have provisions to restrict future animal ownership.

For all of these reasons, **the ASPCA respectfully urges the Senate Judiciary Committee to support S.B. 386, a bill that would prohibit ownership of animals by a person convicted of cruelty to animals for at least 5 years.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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