



**Best
Friends
Animal
Society**

SAVE THEM ALL

Testimony of Richard Angelo, Legislative Attorney in support of SB 239

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Richard Angelo and I am an attorney with Best Friends Animal Society and also a resident of the State of Michigan. Best Friends is an animal advocacy organization that works throughout the country to support legislation like SB 239. Our mission is to protect the interests of companion animals, such as dogs and cats, and the responsible people who care for them.

Senate Bill 239 is an important piece of legislation because it would put an end to breed based discrimination in the State of Michigan. Breed discriminatory laws are a bad public policy solution for 3 primary reasons. (1) They infringe on all responsible pet dog owners' individual property rights. Any responsible Michigander should be allowed to own and care for any type of dog he or she wants. (2) They are completely ineffective at protecting the public. Ordinances should always focus on individual dogs and reckless owners. Irresponsible dog owners of any breed should be held accountable for their actions and those of their animal. (3) They are a waste of taxpayer dollars. It would cost almost \$15 million annually if Michigan enacted a statewide law similar to the ones in place in some of its counties and local municipalities.

For all these reasons, a wide range of organizations have all come out against breed based discrimination, including the American Bar Association, the American Veterinary Medical Association, the National Animal Care and Control Association, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the American Kennel Club, and countless others. In addition, according to a nationwide poll conducted by the Luntz Global group, 84% of Americans believe that a responsible pet owner should be permitted to own any breed of dog he or she wants. That's why 19 other states have passed laws similar to SB 239, including most recently Utah and South Dakota in 2014.

It's also important to note that under the provisions of this bill, every local municipality in the state will continue to be permitted to regulate dogs in their communities. In fact, we would encourage our municipal partners to strengthen their current ordinances by increasing penalties for reckless and irresponsible dog owners. Individual dogs and irresponsible owners should be held accountable for their conduct- no excuses and no exceptions. Bad owners lead to bad dogs and that puts everyone at risk.

SB 239 is a win-win for Michigan. It will end breed based discrimination throughout the state, enabling responsible pet dog owners to care for whatever type of dog they choose. At the same time, it will help us focus attention on strengthening our current dog laws to make them more effective at protecting the public. For all these reasons, Best Friends and I urge you to vote yes on Senate Bill 239. Thank you for your time and consideration this morning, and with that, I am open to any questions you may have.

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