



December 7, 2015

Chairman Jones, Majority Vice-Chair Schuitmaker, Minority Vice-Chair Bieda and distinguished members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am Bobette Schrandt, the President and CEO for LACASA. LACASA was founded in 1981. We support and advocate for survivors of child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault. We provide prevention, education and awareness to strength families and make our community safer. LACASA was the first, and up to just this year, the only shelter to provide a "Pet Safe Shelter" for pets of domestic violence victims. Victims are able to bring their pets with them to LACASA's shelter. We know that animals are an integral part of family units. LACASA has seen firsthand the devastating effects of animal abuse on family pets. The violence that harms the child or the spouse is the very same violence that harms the pet. We see many families, children, and their pets suffering right here in our own community. Abusers will often use cruelty or threats of cruelty to a pet in an effort to control human victims. By extending protection orders to the pets of families suffering from violence, we can remove a potential weapon from the arsenal of an abuser. LACASA respectfully urges this committee to support **H.B. 4478** and join 28 other states, DC, and Puerto Rico in enacting per protective orders that will help protect Michigan families and their pets.

There is a substantial body of research showing that when a person is cruel to animals, they are more likely to be cruel to people as well, that animal abuse is more prevalent in homes in which domestic violence (DV) occurs, and that when any form of violence is present in a home, no one (including pets) is safe. Research clearly shows that offenders of domestic violence often have a pattern of abuse involving all members of the household – including children and pets. When victims of domestic violence seek to escape their abusive homes they're not only faced with the challenge of finding shelter for themselves and their children, but also for their pets.

Unfortunately, many shelters, unlike LACASA, do not have the means to house companion animals and many victims are left facing the difficult decision to either leave their pets behind or remain in the abusive environment. Sadly, many victims stay in abusive homes for fear of subjecting their animals to continued abuse, if left behind. Equally disturbing, animals are often left with their abusers to face torture or even death.

**Relevant statistics on domestic violence and animal abuse:**

- 52 percent of victims in shelters leave their pets with their batterers (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence)
- Up to 65 percent of domestic violence victims are unable to escape their abusers because they are concerned about what will happen to their pets when they leave (Carlisle-Frank, Frank and Nielsen, 2004)
- 71 percent of pet-owning women entering women's shelters reported that their batterer had injured, maimed, killed or threatened family pets for revenge or to psychologically control victims; 32 percent reported their children had hurt or killed animals (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence)

For all of the aforementioned reasons, LACASA respectfully urges the Senate Judiciary Committee to support **H.B.4478** and join 28 other states, DC, and Puerto Rico in enacting pet protective orders that will help protect Michigan families and their pets. Thank you for your time and consideration to this issue.

Sincerely,  
Bobette A. Schrandt  
President and CEO

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