



March 14, 2024

RE: Support of the Office of Animal Protection bill, S.F. 3542 (Marty)

Dear Chair Latz and Judiciary and Public Safety Committee members,

Animal Folks is an animal protection organization based in Minnesota. We conduct research on animal cruelty and animal law to support constructive and sustainable reforms of the criminal justice system that will enhance the protection of animals and people.

We strongly support S.F. 3542, which will establish an Office of Animal Protection under the Department of Public Safety.

Over the years, Animal Folks has found gaps in Minnesota's criminal justice system and how this system responds to crimes of animal cruelty. Our research comes from collecting and coding close to 2,000 animal cruelty cases (convictions) and interviewing multiple victims of animal cruelty as well as authorities involved with these crimes. With this data, we have seen a lack of statewide:

- oversight and guidance for enforcement of animal cruelty laws
- assistance and expertise in animal cruelty and law
- training and standards across disciplines, including investigations, prosecutions, veterinary forensics, animal care (for animal seizures), and human welfare (with social services)
- crime data and centralized animal cruelty reporting procedures
- resources, especially in economically poor communities

A failure to provide basic assistance, such as above, for authorities who are tasked to enforce animal cruelty laws has resulted in further harm to animals and also violence to humans. (Animal cruelty can be a "foot in the door" to other crimes against people and property.)

Animal cruelty is a public safety issue, and we firmly believe the state must assume a role in preventing and responding to these crimes.

We ask for your support of S.F. 3542, which will create an Office of Animal Protection. This office will bring attention to animal cruelty, providing the structure, oversight, and accountability needed.

Sincerely,

Ann Olson

Founder and executive director, Animal Folks

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NOTE: As of March 1, 2024, Animal Folks has also collected over 2,700 petitions in support of the Office of Animal Protection bill (SF3542) representing all areas of Minnesota.