

# **SUPPORT THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF ANIMAL PROTECTION BILL**

March 14, 2024

Senator Ron Latz  
Senate Judiciary and Public Safety committee  
3105 Minnesota Senate Building  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

**RE: Support of the Office of Animal Protection bill, S.F. 3542 (Marty) / H.F. 3799 (Norris)**

Dear Chair Latz and Judiciary and Public Safety committee members,

We, the undersigned individuals, respectfully urge you to support the Office of Animal Protection (OAP) bill (S.F.3542).

The OAP bill will create a state office under the Department of Public Safety to provide the structure and oversight needed to assist authorities in the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of animal cruelty, which will protect both animals and people.

## **Animal cruelty is a public safety issue**

Animal cruelty is an ongoing occurrence in Minnesota. All crimes against animals, including animal neglect, intentional animal abuse, organized animal abuse, and animal sexual abuse, are documented throughout the state.

Animal cruelty is also linked to human violence, including child abuse, elder abuse, sexual abuse, and other property and human-related crimes. The FBI recognizes this fact as does the United Nations. In August 2023, the United Nations, in efforts to protect children, adopted a policy decreeing that “children must be protected from all forms of physical and psychological violence and from exposure to violence, such as domestic violence or violence inflicted on animals.”

## **Benefits of the Office of Animal Protection**

Due to lack of standards, training, and resources, the current “system” has failed to support authorities in the enforcement of animal cruelty laws. Enforcement efforts throughout Minnesota are inconsistent.

The OAP bill will enhance public safety and protect animals and people by providing a comprehensive and measurable approach for the enforcement of animal cruelty laws. The Office will:

- be housed in and led by the Department of Public Safety under the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, as animal cruelty is a crime;
- hire a director with knowledge and expertise in animal cruelty and criminal law with authority to hire additional staff to execute duties;
- create an Advisory Council with subject experts in the crime of animal cruelty to assist staff and provide further leadership and accountability;

- work to build services to assist authorities in the enforcement of animal cruelty laws, to include cross-training over multiple disciplines such as investigations, prosecution, veterinary forensics, animal care, and human welfare;
- begin discussion on key topics pertaining to animal cruelty and law, identifying needs and challenges in communities throughout Minnesota; topics may include collection of crime data, reporting of animal cruelty, victim services, and cruelty prevention measures; and
- work to build financial resources and provide grants to assist counties, cities, and other designated entities in the care and keeping of seized animals.

**Please support the protection of animals and people**

Thank you for granting a hearing and considering this request to support the Office of Animal Protection bill (S.F.3542). As with any system reform, these efforts are incremental. The structure (office) must be established so the work may begin. Additional information at [www.mnoap.org](http://www.mnoap.org).

Sincerely,

Suzy Ahrens, DVM  
 Emily Aslesen, DVM  
 Phil Arkow, executive director, National Link Coalition  
 James C. Backstrom, retired Dakota County Attorney  
 Beth Beaman, prosecuting attorney  
 Marc Berris, prosecuting attorney  
 Stacy Bettison, vice president, board of directors, Minnesota Horse Welfare Coalition (MHWC)  
 Linda Challeen, executive director, Minnesota Humane Society  
 Barb Colombo, president, board of directors, Minnesota Horse Welfare Coalition  
 Colleen Crockford, MSW, LICSW, clinical social work director  
 Azure Davis, executive director, Ruff Start Rescue  
 Jenny Edwards, criminal justice consultant  
 Paul Flom, executive director, Minnesota Horse Welfare Coalition  
 Reese Frederickson, Pine County Attorney  
 Michael Goldstein, former Plymouth Police Chief  
 Megan Helling, public policy consultant  
 John Kingrey, former executive director, MN County Attorneys Association  
 Tim Leslie, retired Dakota County Sheriff  
 Karen Lundquist, attorney  
 Rachel Mairose, executive director, The Bond Between  
 Ann Olson, executive director, Animal Folks  
 Marit Ortega, executive director, Tri-County Humane Society  
 Rebecca Pohlada  
 Kristen Rice, attorney  
 Lisa Roberts, DVM  
 Christy Shannon, chief executive director, CornerHouse  
 Honorable Gordon Shumaker, retired MN Court of Appeals Judge  
 Marianne Settano-Shumaker, attorney (retired)  
 Rose Surma, human services, nonprofit executive director  
 Nancy Turner, MHWC member  
 Andrew Willman, board secretary, Ruff Start Rescue  
 Arno Wuenschmann, DVM  
 Kathleen Zurcher, systems thinking consultant