

M. Jenny Edwards

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To: Minnesota Senate and House of Representatives

Re: In Support of Office of Animal Protection bill (S.F. 1163, H.F. 1816)

Dear Legislators:

I am a criminologist, field researcher, and subject matter expert on the sexual abuse and exploitation of animals writing in support of the bill to create the Office of Animal Protection (OAP – S.F. 1163 Marty, H.F. 1816 Norris).

Much of my work over the past 20+ years has been assisting members of law enforcement and prosecutors directly when investigating and charging for animal sex abuse crimes and working with legislators nationwide when considering changes to existing laws. In my experience, **sexualized animal cruelty is vastly under-investigated and prosecuted**. There are many reasons why, but chief among them is a lack of understanding of complex offender behavior and the nature of the crimes being committed.

Sexualized animal cruelty (SAC) involves a **spectrum of behavior**. At one end are offenders who have a sexual interest in animals; at the opposite end are offenders who are sexually aroused by extreme and prolonged animal torture. Somewhere in the middle are offenders who coerce children or vulnerable adults to commit sex acts in order to control or humiliate them. ***Minnesota officials have investigated or prosecuted at least 28 cases covering this entire spectrum.***

Creation of a specialized, cross-department, cross-discipline unit would foster better outcomes for animal and human victims and establish Minnesota as a leader in understanding this complex criminal behavior and its impact on citizens.

Thank you for consideration of this Bill.

Sincerely,

M. Jenny Edwards

Criminologist

Sexualized Animal Cruelty