March 13, 2025

Senator Ron Latz
Chair, Judiciary and Public Safety Committee
3105 Minnesota Senate Building
St Paul, Minnesota 55155

RE: Support for SF1163 – Establishing the Office of Animal Protection

Dear Senator Latz,

As a veterinary pathologist and professor at the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine, I am writing to express my strong support for SF1163, the Minnesota Office of Animal Protection bill. At the Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, we see animals with disturbing frequency that were victims of animal cruelty.

This legislation is critical to ensuring that law enforcement, prosecutors, and veterinarians have the necessary tools, training, and expertise to investigate and prosecute crimes of animal cruelty—crimes that are often linked to broader public safety concerns.

A critical yet overlooked aspect of enforcing animal cruelty laws is the need for forensic veterinary science. Properly identifying, documenting, and analyzing animal injuries and cause of death is essential to building strong legal cases against perpetrators of abuse.

Law enforcement officers are already stretched thin, and expecting them to investigate animal cruelty cases without the necessary forensic expertise is akin to asking them to investigate a homicide without a coroner or forensic pathologist. The Office of Animal Protection (SF1163) will fill this gap, ensuring that science-based evidence supports the enforcement of animal protection laws.

This bill is not just about protecting animals; it is about improving public safety through stronger investigations and prosecutions. The science is clear—those who commit acts of cruelty against animals are more likely to harm people. By supporting SF1163, you are supporting law enforcement, forensic science, and the safety of our communities.

As a veterinary pathologist who has conducted numerous necropsies in animal cruelty cases and testified in quite a few trials, I urge you to support this critical legislation and help ensure that Minnesota becomes a leader in the forensic investigation of animal cruelty cases.

Thank you for your time and dedication to public safety.

Sincerely,

Arno Wuenschmann, DVM
Professor, Department of Veterinary Population Medicine
University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine
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