



Lawrence  
**Humane**  
SOCIETY

TO: Senator Wilborn, Chair  
Senate Judiciary Committee

FROM: Kate Meghji, Executive Director

DATE: March 19, 2017

RE: Support for HB 2032

Chair Wilborn and Members of the Committee:

I am the executive director of the Lawrence Humane Society, President of the Pet Animal Coalition of Kansas, a member of the Society of Animal Welfare Administrators, and I have been involved with animal sheltering and welfare for more than 10 years.

The Lawrence Humane Society has cared for nearly 200 animals from animal cruelty cases in the last eight years as the privatized municipal shelter for Lawrence and Douglas County. Depending on the type of case, the species of animal, and the number of animals seized, the cost of care can add up to tens of thousands of dollars per case. And while we are the contracting shelter for Lawrence and Douglas County, our space and resources are limited. For instance, when horses are seized under the cruelty statute, because we cannot house them, we are responsible for finding an individual to hold the horses during the prosecution of the owner. As such, we incur the cost of care for those horses.

This section of the animal cruelty statute not only bolsters our ability to seek the cost of care for the animal as the case is pending, it helps legally transfer the animals to us if we cannot find the owner of the animal. The changes to this statute will expand the ability of those caring for animals to seek the cost of care or disposition of the animal while the case is pending. Two thirds of the shelters in Kansas are municipal and currently unable to use the bonding law, and as such may not pursue prosecution for animal cruelty simply because they lack the space and resources to hold these animals during the case.

In the case of Gladys and Sienna, horses who were found starved and neglected, we incurred nearly \$6,000 for the care of the horses for a mere three months. Fortunately, as a private shelter, we are covered under subsection (e), and were awarded the horses after petitioning the court. Gladys and Sienna's case did not conclude for five more months after we filed the petition and were awarded the horses. That would have added up to a total of over \$20,000 in the cost of care.

We also support the change to subsection (h) of ensuring the animals do not return to their owner if the owner is convicted of felony or misdemeanor animal abuse under the statute. When a pet owner is convicted of a misdemeanor animal abuse they should not be allowed to reclaim the pet they abused

and the courts should not be charged with guessing whether or not the animal would face that kind of abuse again. We support changing this subsection to take the guesswork these situations and ensure that animals are not returned to their abusers.

I want to thank each of you for your service and dedication to Kansas, and I respectfully request that you support these minimal changes to the statute and vote yes on HB2302.

I am happy to answer any questions or provide any additional information that you may require.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kate Meghji', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kate Meghji

Executive Director, Lawrence Humane Society

President, Pet Animal Coalition of Kansas (PACK)

O: (785) 843-6835 ext. 8100 C: (217) 721-6986 Email: [director@lawrencehumane.org](mailto:director@lawrencehumane.org)