

January 26, 2012

The Honorable John Walsh  
Chairman  
House Judiciary Committee  
Michigan House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Walsh,

I am writing in regards to Senate Bills 356, 357 and 358, which would toughen penalties for dogfighting under Michigan's racketeering laws. The Michigan Humane Society, the state's oldest and largest animal welfare organization, strongly supports these bills and urges their swift passage.

The Michigan Humane Society's Cruelty Investigation Department, as the chief animal cruelty investigation arm in the cities of Detroit, Hamtramck and Highland Park, responds to more than 5,000 reports of animal cruelty, abuse and neglect every year. We partner with Detroit police, the Wayne County prosecutor's office, and other animal care and control agencies to investigate some of the worst crimes committed against animals. But when it comes to dogfighting, these brave men and women are waging war with a very limited arsenal.

Michigan's laws are not sufficient to deal with the scope and scale of the criminal enterprise involved in dogfighting. This is a national problem that reaches into communities across Michigan, bringing with it other criminal elements like drugs, illegal gambling, tax evasion, guns and violence. Dogfighting is big business. Magazines and websites devoted to the practice detail champion dogs and match results like the sports page of the Free Press or News. Pups with a good fighting pedigree can be sold for thousands or tens of thousands of dollars because of the potential financial rewards for the dog's owner – tens of thousands of dollars can change hands as result of a single fight.

Last year, at a dogfighting bust in Monroe County, more than two dozen people from across the United States were apprehended. More than \$40,000 was seized, along with guns and drugs, as well as the dogfighting ring, soaked with the blood of animals that have been trained with only two purposes in mind – to kill, and to make their owners rich. This organized criminal enterprise damages our communities and neighborhoods, and it must be stopped.

Adoption of these bipartisan bills will send a strong message that Michigan is cracking down on dogfighting. It will arm our law enforcement personnel with the tools they need to shut down dogfighters and keep them – and the related criminal activities that come with – out of our Michigan communities. It will give law enforcement the ability to seize property involved with dogfighting, which can help in recouping the costs of the painstaking hours of investigation and collaborative effort across organizations that are required in dogfighting cases. And of course, it will help prevent this form of organized butchery that injures or kills thousands of animals every year. Dogfighting has no place in a civilized society, and these laws will help ensure that this practice is left to history, where it belongs.

I appreciate the committee taking up this critical legislation and for hearing my views on this matter.

Sincerely,

Cal Morgan  
President and CEO  
Michigan Humane Society

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