

# SUPPORT THE MINNESOTA OFFICE OF ANIMAL PROTECTION BILL

March 14, 2024

Representative Kelly Moller  
Chair, House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee  
509 State Office Building  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

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

Dear Chair Moller and Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee members,

We, the undersigned individuals, respectfully urge you to support the Office of Animal Protection (OAP) bill (H.F. 3799). This bill has been referred to the House Public Safety Finance and Policy committee. We ask the bill be granted a hearing and approved so reforms for animal protection can be established.

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 considering this request to support the Office of Animal Protection bill (H.F. 3799) and granting this bill a hearing. 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 Pohlad

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