

HB 1298 -- REPORTING OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

SPONSOR: Jones (88)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Special Committee on Urban Issues by a vote of 6 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Administrative by a vote of 9 to 0.

This bill requires animal control officers and animal humane investigators to be mandated reporters in cases of abuse and neglect of children, the elderly, and other vulnerable persons.

The bill requires animal control officers and animal humane investigators to receive one hour of training within the first 60 days of employment to recognize the signs of abuse or neglect in children, the elderly, and vulnerable persons, while certain professionals who offer support or advocacy services for children in foster care, Children's Division personnel, and protective services employees with direct contact with children, the elderly, and vulnerable persons will be required to receive one hour of training within the first 60 days of employment to recognize the signs of abuse or neglect in animals.

This bill creates a mandated reporting requirement for certain mental health, educational, protective services, and law enforcement personnel to report cases of animal abuse or neglect to a hotline established by the Missouri Animal Control Association (MACA). MACA must provide the report of abuse or neglect to any duly-authorized law enforcement official, county or municipal animal control officer, or animal cruelty investigator. If the mandated reporter is an employee of an agency or political subdivision of the State and fails to make a report as required under this provision, the employer must send a written notice to the employee noting the failure and providing a reminder of the requirements of reporting animal abuse or neglect. Additionally, a mandated reporter who fails to make a report will be subject to discipline by his or her professional licensing board, as well as a fine, as described in the bill.

This bill is the same as HB 1513 (2025) and SB 65 (2025).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that there is a significant link between domestic partner abuse, child abuse, and animal abuse. If both animals and children are present in an abusive home, it is very common for both to experience abuse. Especially for very young children, a hotline tip for animal abuse could be one of the only times a person from outside the home could observe signs of child abuse. The cross training and reporting would create an

early detection system for all types of abuse and help get vulnerable people and animals help before an abusive situation worsens.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Jones; Arnie C. Dienoff; Missouri Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; Missouri Network Against Child Abuse; MO Alliance for Animal Legislation; Ashley Stanley, Wayside Waifs; St Louis County Police; Claire Wyatt; Humane World for Animals; Devon Tarantino; Richard McIntosh, Animal Legal Defense Legislation; and Kids Win Missouri.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that investigators trained to recognize child abuse are not adequately trained to recognize animal abuse and would likely mistake normal animal conditions for signs of abuse. Reports of animal abuse should be made only to law enforcement, not nonprofits contracted through local governments to provide animal control services. Only animal companions, not working animals, should be covered by the bill.

Testifying in person against the bill were Missouri Animal Husbandry Association (MAHA); Missouri Federation of Animal Owners; and and MO Pet Breeders Association.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.