

HCS HB 2292 -- REPORTING OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

SPONSOR: Jones (088)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Special Committee on Urban Issues by a vote of 6 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 12 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 2292.

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 1.5 hours 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 1.5 hours 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 and, if appropriate, a county or municipal animal control officer or an 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 provide 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 similar to HB 1298 (2025).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that there is a strong correlation between child abuse, elder abuse, domestic partner abuse, and companion animal abuse. Early detection is key to preventing further abuse from occurring. In homes where animal and child abuse is occurring, animal abuse is more public and easier to identify. A majority of the people who will witness animal abuse won't be trained law enforcement but are teachers and animal control officers. 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; Humane World For Animals; Kids Win Missouri, Missouri Network Against Child Abuse; Arnie Dienoff; Aislinn McCarthy-Sinclair, Missouri Alliance for Animal Legislation; Ashley Stanley, Wayside Waifs Animal Shelter; Chris Schoeman, St Louis County Police Association; Claire Coughlin; Humane World for Animals; Richard McIntosh; Sara Spease, Missouri Animal Control Association; and Devon Tarantino, Jackson County Prosecutors Office.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that they don't want the government to empower animal rights groups to have pseudo-law enforcement capabilities. The bill does not make clear what the role and authority of non-law enforcement reporters will be. Livestock should not be included in the bill. The State veterinarian, rather than animal welfare associations, is the appropriate expert for determining abuse. People from urban and suburban areas often misinterpret the living conditions of rural pets as abuse. All parts of this bill that would actually address child abuse are currently happening voluntarily. The State needs to better prioritize scarce resources than would be allowed under this bill.

Testifying in person against the bill were Missouri Federation of Animal Owners; Missouri Cattlemen's Association; Missouri Pet Breeders Association; and Missouri Animal Husbandry 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.