



Date: April 17, 2019
To: Senate Human Services Committee, Chair Gelser and Members
From: Laurie Wimmer, OEA Government Relations Consultant
RE: *HB 2227 [Adding animal control officers to Mandatory Reporters Law]*

On behalf of OEA's 46,000 members, it is my honor to ask for your support and passage of HB 2227, a modest proposal to add animal control officers to the list of mandatory abuse reporters. Should it be signed into law, Oregon would join California, Colorado, Maine, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington DC in legislating this abuse-detection best practice.

HB 2227 would add animal control officers to the list of mandatory child abuse reporters who are required to notify authorities when, in the course of visiting the home of an alleged animal abuser, they suspect that children on premises are also being victimized. Other professionals called to people's property, such as EMTs and firefighters, are listed as mandatory reporters, and Oregon's teachers believe animal control professionals should be as well.

When our teachers came to us with this idea, I did a literature search to understand better the link between family violence and animal abuse and learned that it is well-known by experts that this "co-occurrence" is common. For instance, a 1983 study of 53 New Jersey families whose child maltreatment was known to the state showed that in 88 percent of the cases, a family pet was also abused. A 1997 study in Bucks County Pennsylvania found a 22.5 percent linkage. These are but two examples among many. In a review of the research, Becker and French (2004) found that

"animal abuse has come to be seen as part of a continuum of abuse within families. Animals may be used to coerce children into silence. Some abusers even kill animals in front of the child and threaten that the child or other family members will be next."

[These data points are found here:

<https://psychweb.chbs.jmu.edu/Graysojh/pdfs/volume101.pdf>.]

According to the experts, "enacting cross-reporting legislation is thought to be the most direct method to broaden protection for families, children and animals" [IBID].

Oregon's public-school educators care deeply about keeping students safe. As mandatory reporters themselves, they are on the front lines of this work. They believe that such intervention is everyone's responsibility. HB 2227's goal is to close a loophole in the effort to ensure that this goal is met.

Here to further detail the issue are the teachers who brought this matter to our attention and asked us to request the bill.

But before I turn it over to them, I'd like to thank the bipartisan and bicameral list of legislators who have stepped forward to sponsor this bill (Chief Sponsors: Rep. Jeff Barker, Sen. Floyd Prozanski. Sponsors: Reps. Williamson, Keny-Guyer, Gorsek, Sanchez, Stark, Nearman, Doherty, Piluso; Sens. Knopp and Roblan).

This bill passed the House unanimously; it is with this in mind that we thank this committee for what we hope will be your unanimous support as well.