

Testimony in Support of House Bill 4035

2/19/2020

Good afternoon, Chairman Lower and members of the Committee. My name is Lauren Saper and I am the director of advocacy for the Humane Society of Huron Valley. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in support of House Bill 4035. As you know, HB 4035 is a bill that ends the use of arbitrary and ineffective breed bans.

Legislation banning certain breeds of dog, or perceived breed, is ineffective at protecting people from dangerous dogs and is completely senseless. Breed does not determine dangerousness. Ownership does. Legislation banning certain breeds punishes innocent animals and good owners. These laws further mislead the public to believe certain breeds are inherently dangerous and give people a false sense of enhanced public safety.

Pit bull type dogs are often the target of these breed bans. Headlines would have you believe that this breed of dog is inherently vicious, but that is simply not the case. Pit bull type dogs actually suffer high rates of cruelty and are the number one type of dog that shows up abused and homeless in animal shelters. Any dog – from a miniature schnauzer to a golden retriever – can be dangerous. According to a study performed by the American Temperament Testing Society, a national, not-for-profit organization promoting uniform temperament evaluation of purebred and spayed/neutered mixed-breed dogs, “Pit Bulls are slightly less likely to show aggression than...the Golden Retriever, Beagles, Bull Dogs, Basset Hounds, Bichon Frise, Corgis, Chihuahuas, German Shepherds, Poodles,” and many others.

It should also be noted that “pit bull” is not a breed, but a label used to describe multiple breeds. The “pit bull type” refers to the look of a dog, not specific breeds. In reality, most dogs labeled as “pit bulls” are basically mutts with several breeds showing in their DNA tests. These “pit bulls” are not pure bred dogs, carefully bred for a particular behavior or characteristic. Rather, they are the result of backyard and accidental breeding.

About half of the local dogs taken into our shelter are “pit bull type” dogs. The Humane Society of Huron Valley has a 96 percent save rate; all dogs are temperament-tested by a certified dog behaviorist and are eventually placed into loving homes. In fact, over the last decade, literally thousands of pit bull type dogs have come through our shelter and have been safely cared for and loved



by staff and hundreds of volunteers prior to adoption. A variety of factors impact dog behavior and aggression, early socialization being one of the most important. It is unsterilized dogs living outside on a chain, kept as protection rather than family pets, who are likely to become a danger to the community.

We support passage of HB 4035 because it focuses on the individual dog behavior, and the owner's behavior, rather than breed or perceived breed. Judging a dog by their actions, not by their DNA or physical appearance, is the best way to keep our communities safe. Please support the passage of HB 4035. Thank you for your time.