



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

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The Michigan House of Representatives
PO Box 30036
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Dear Members of the Michigan House Committee on Ways and Means,

As a leading expert on animal management policies and breed-specific legislation (BSL), the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) applauds the Michigan legislature's decision to move toward a more humane state by prohibiting discriminatory ordinances regarding pit bull-type dogs. The HSUS understands what a large responsibility it is for the state of Michigan to create safe communities for its residents and supports consistent and reasonable regulations for all dogs and their owners as a critical tool in maintaining public safety. By enacting HB 4035, communities throughout the state will implement more effective approaches to community dog management using breed-neutral policies.

BSL is fundamentally flawed and has failed everywhere it has been implemented, in large part because it relies solely on arbitrary, subjective criteria. Based on a recent study, in the thirty-one years since Denver, Colorado first enacted BSL, it has cost the city at least \$5.8 million to enforce BSL and \$107 million in lost direct and indirect economic activity for the pet care industry. Jurisdictions with BSL are often challenged in court. Litigating these ineffective and discriminatory policies wastes valuable taxpayer funds that could be better spent offering statewide resources that positively affect pet owners.

Many states have animal control policies with long histories. Often these decades old policies were first enacted to address managing dangerous dogs and prevent the spread of rabies. Local ordinances are meant to supplement those state mandates, however, a patchwork of BSL makes it impossible for dog owners to navigate where to live or even how to drive through a state. Without statewide guidance, towns end up with a piecemeal approach and often fall short of properly ensuring public safety and effectively avoiding the spread of zoonotic diseases.

It has been well-established that the physical appearance of a dog has no basis in determining whether a dog is likely to harm someone. Instead, breed-neutral factors such as an unsocialized, unsupervised dog are significantly more predictive of the likelihood that a dog may be dangerous. Experts in policymaking, scientists, and animal welfare professionals recommend using concrete, observed behaviors and criteria instead of any single-factor approach when developing community animal management legislation. The most effective animal management strategies center



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around basic laws applied consistently to all dog owners. These laws, such as proper restraint and confinement ordinances, create standardized rules, norms, and expectations in the community and create a safer environment.

We urge the legislature to pass HB 4035 so that cities across Michigan can enforce existing breed neutral laws for dog owners. When there are limited resources, it's important to develop an approach which ensures that dog owning residents are aware of standards and have access to the pet care services, information, and resources conducive to meeting them. Everyone wants to live in a safe community, and we should do everything possible to prevent harmful dog-related incidents from occurring. HB 4035 is a strong step in that direction.

Sincerely,

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