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Committee: Senate Judiciary
In support of: SB 285 and SB 286
Date: April 16, 2013

Dear Chairman Jones and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the nation's largest and most effective non-profit animal protection organization, supports SB 285 and 286 to increase penalties for large-scale animal cruelty cases, address repeat offenders who violate the state's cruelty or pet shops law, and to recognize the correlation between animal abuse and domestic violence.

Increasing these penalties will help address the clear danger that animal abusers pose to society at large. A number of studies have drawn links between the abuse of animals and violence against people. A 2001-2004 study by the Chicago Police Department "revealed a startling propensity for offenders charged with crimes against animals to commit other violent offenses toward human victims." Of those arrested for animal crimes, 65% had been arrested for battery against another person.[i] And of 36 convicted multiple murderers questioned in one study, 46% admitted committing acts of animal torture as adolescents.[ii] Of seven school shootings that took place across the country between 1997 and 2001, all involved boys who had previously committed acts of animal cruelty.

Pet abuse is one of four predictors of domestic partner violence, according to a six-year "gold standard" study conducted in 11 cities.[iii] Researchers have found that between 71% and 83% of women entering domestic violence shelters reported that their partners also abused or killed the family pet. And another study found that in families under supervision for physical abuse of their children, pet abuse was concurrent in 88% of the families.[iv] In both domestic violence and child-abuse situations, abusers may manipulate and control their human victims through threatened or actual violence against family pets. SB 286 recognizes the importance of this by penalizing acts that cause serious psychological injury to the owner of a companion animal, or acts in which the abuser used the animal to manipulate the victim.

Reporting, investigating, increasing penalties for, and prosecuting animal cruelty can help take dangerous criminals off the streets. Police know that in homes where animal abuse is a problem, other issues are often concurrent. Acts of

animal cruelty are linked to a variety of other crimes, including violence against people, property crimes, and drug or disorderly conduct offenses. [v]

We thank the sponsors of SB 285 and 286 for bringing forth this important legislation to help make our Michigan communities safer, and request its swift passage by the committee.

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[i] Degenhardt, B. 2005. *Statistical Summary of Offenders Charged with Crimes against Companion Animals July 2001-July 2005*. Report from the Chicago Police Department.

[ii] Cohen, W. (1996). Congressional Register, 142(141), Oct. 3.

[iii] Walton-Moss, B. J., Manganello, J., Frye, V., & Campbell, J. C. (2005). "Risk factors for intimate partner violence and associated injury among urban women." *Journal of Community Health, 30*(5), 377–389.

[iv] DeViney, E., Dickert, J., & Lockwood, R. (1983). "The care of pets within child abusing families." *International Journal for the Study of Animal Problems, 4*, 3321–3329.

[v] Arluke, A., & Lockwood, R. (Eds.). (1997). *Society & Animals, Special Theme Issue: Animal Cruelty,5*(3). Society & Animals Forum (formerly Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals): Washington Grove, Md. 301-963-4751.