

Heidi Brenegan
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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my support for the Companion Animal Board bill. I have been working with animals my entire life: as a veterinary employee, an Animal Humane Society employee, and a volunteer at both the Minnesota Zoo and Richardson Nature Center.

Of the Companion Animal Board's proposed duties, it is the Education and Communication role about which I am most excited. When I worked for the Animal Humane Society in 1995, my title was Humane Educator. One other full-time person and I comprised the Education department. It was our job to visit K-12 schools in Hennepin County and present animal-related programs on topics like bite prevention, pet responsibility, and animal-focused careers; we were always accompanied by at least two companion animals. We visited suburban and urban schools; in the urban setting, we were often told by teachers that those students rarely had the opportunity to interact with animals in a positive way. Many were fearful of dogs and hadn't been able to get physically close to a dog before.

We gave 4 programs each per day, Monday through Friday; between the two of us, we gave 1440 programs a year. After I left the Animal Humane Society, they revamped their Humane Education program and began charging for the service. The number of programs that AHS provides per year has plummeted since then because public schools don't have sufficient funds to cover an outside program like this. I can tell you from my experience that there is a huge need for Humane Education: to help children learn how to be good pet owners, keep themselves safe, and even to empathize with other living creatures. The Companion Animal Board would help meet that need, and for that reason, I am asking you to vote in favor of this bill.

Sincerely,

Heidi Brenegan

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