



Senator Joe Hune
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

May 29, 2013

Dear Senator Hune,

I am writing to strongly encourage a hearing to move forward SB 354 requiring euthanasia by injection for dogs and cats abandoned in Michigan's animal shelters.

The use of gas chambers to kill our lost and homeless pets is cruel, to both animals and people, and completely unnecessary. In fact, the term "euthanasia" does not apply to gas chambers. Euthanasia, by definition, means "good death". It is death without pain or fear. Gas chambers cause the shutdown of vital organs resulting in a slow, painful, and panic-filled death.

Euthanasia by injection (EBI), on the other hand, has long been established as a humane, safe, and affordable method for ending the life of a companion animal and supported by all major veterinary associations and humane organizations.

To our State's credit, we have some of the toughest animal cruelty laws in the country. But I would also put forth that the continued use of gas chambers stand in violation of those laws. Gas chambers intentionally cause pain and suffering, unnecessarily, which is according to MCL 750.50b a form of torture against an animal without just cause. With easy and affordable access to both the drug required to perform EBI and the training needed for staff, there is no justification for the continued use of gas chambers.

One need only to remember that there is no difference between the cats and dogs that die needlessly in shelters and our own much-loved pets, to realize this unnecessary and inhumane practice needs to end immediately.

Though we at the Humane Society of Huron Valley (HSHV) only euthanize a small percentage of those who come to us, those with the gravest conditions, we consider ending a life to be a huge responsibility – one that must always be done with compassion and skill. Every animal put down is treated with the greatest respect, as if the animal were a member of our animal family.

However, even under the best of circumstances, performing euthanasia on an animal can cause mental health problems among the responsible shelter staff unless they are provided with the right kind of training and support. Research shows that euthanasia technicians experience high levels of burn-out and PTSD-type symptoms, such as depression, anxiety, anger, and substance abuse.



Just imagine the harmful effects of the gas chamber on the people who work at an under-funded shelter. With not nearly enough staff, the same people who feed and care for the animals are also the same people who must then throw the animals into the gas chamber everyday and watch them die a slow, anguishing death.

At the Humane Society of Huron Valley, we make every effort to save the lives of the thousands of lost, homeless and abused animals that come through our door each year. We do this by valuing and respecting the life of every animal, and using our compassion, skill, and expertise to transition them into loving homes.

Each year literally tens of thousands of people visit our shelter; adopt from us; volunteer here; and donate to us because they -- the voting public -- truly value this level of care and want to see homeless and abused animals get a second chance at a happy life.

In fact, the majority of the residents of Michigan have decided that killing companion animals for no other reason than convenience or overpopulation is unacceptable. But even at shelters that have not yet developed the resources and commitment to be life saving, we should demand at the very minimum, that the animals (who become homeless through no fault of their own) do not leave this earth in needless pain and terror.

It is a nothing short of a disgrace that Michigan allows our beloved companion animals to leave this world in a suffering state -- unwanted, devalued, and in both physical and emotional distress. Please end it now!

The evidence is clear. The use of gas chambers is unacceptable for animals, shelter workers and a public who want to see our homeless and abused animals treated with care and respect. With the alternative of EBI easily within the reach of every shelter in Michigan, there is simply NO EXCUSE for the continued use of this barbaric practice.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions. I can be reached at (734) 661-3518 or Tanya@hshv.org.

Sincerely,

Tanya Hilgendorf
President and CEO