

TESTIMONY OF SUSANNA RICHER
IN SUPPORT OF
L.D. 133 "An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Nuisance Dogs"
Committee On Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
February 6, 2025

Senator Rachel Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering my testimony regarding L.D. 133 "An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Nuisance Dogs."

I am grateful to Senator Bennett and the cosponsors of this bill for bringing it forward to the committee.

Uncontrolled dog barking is a serious issue in our state. Depending on the situation, it can negatively impact residents' quality of life, mental and physical health, and property values. Equally as important, continuous barking is often a sign that dogs are not being cared for properly.

While some municipalities have barking ordinances in place, and these ordinances can assist animal control officers in addressing barking complaints, sometimes local ordinances are not enough to address habitual and repeat offenders. This bill would add an additional enforcement tool that would allow both animal control officers and state humane agents to intervene in barking complaints that are not resolved using an existing ordinance.

I live in Portland, a municipality that has a barking ordinance in place. My neighbor has multiple dogs that are left outside in the yard unattended for long periods during the day and often well into the night. We have an excellent animal control officer in Portland who has visited this house on multiple occasions in response to barking complaints. Unfortunately, while the situation improves in the short term, the barking issue always recurs, making it difficult to sleep or have peace and quiet at home.

To allow dogs to bark continuously for hours on end is inconsiderate of your neighbors and irresponsible as a dog owner. If you're going to have one or 100 dogs you must be responsible and have a plan in place to keep the peace within the community and to ensure the well-being of your own dogs.

As someone who operated a dog rescue in Maine for over a decade, I know barking is the way dogs communicate. However, ongoing barking can be a sign that a dog is lonely, in

distress, bored, or scared. Additionally, dog owners who live near others have a responsibility to keep their dogs from disturbing the peace.

When I operated my dog rescue, I held a kennel license on my home which allowed me to have up to 10 dogs. In 10 years, I never had a single barking complaint. This took a lot of work, but I understood that it was my responsibility as a good neighbor and dog owner to not disturb my neighbors. To accomplish this, I would never leave the dogs outside alone. I would bring them inside at the first sign of ongoing barking. In the house I would provide treats, toys, and calming music to ensure that the dogs were quiet most of the time.

While I am uncertain whether the nuisance dog law is the best statute to address this issue, I truly hope that this committee will use this opportunity to add an enforcement option to address ongoing barking. There needs to be a way to escalate habitual nuisance dog barking to a state level when municipal barking and animal control ordinances fail to correct the problem.

Lastly, while I am aware and grateful that the Animal Welfare Advisory Council submitted a bill to provide better oversight for municipal kennels, this bill does not specifically address unresolvable, ongoing barking complaints. Additional legislation is needed.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Susanna richer
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