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## Testimony on

L.D. 962, *"An Act to Establish the Offense of Aggravated Operating Under the Influence Resulting in the Death of a Pet"*

Presented by

**Representative Russell P. White**

**District 13**

Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

Monday, March 31, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

I am State Representative Russell P. White, and I proudly represent District 13, Central Hancock, Ellsworth, and Waltham. It is an honor to appear before you today for the purpose of introducing L.D. 962, *"An Act to Establish the Offense of Aggravated Operating Under the Influence Resulting in the Death of a Pet."*

This bill is exactly the kind of work that I had hoped to do for my constituents when I first considered running for office. This is a nonpartisan bill that has the possibility to effect a great number of people; though, I hope that it never needs to be utilized.

The idea for this bill was brought to me by a very dear friend that I have known for 45 years or longer. Tragedy struck her little family on April 11 of last year (2024), when a driver who was operating under the influence crossed the center line and hit her fiancé's, Dave's, truck head on, killing him and Macy, the family pet.

*Over, please*

This bill is about holding people accountable for their actions. In this instance, it was not just the loss of her fiancé, but the loss of a family member that could have comforted her through this tremendous loss.

Those of us who have had dogs, know the true value of that relationship. At a time when my constituent really needed the comfort and joy a dog can bring, it had been taken away, as well. These family pets are more than just pets, they are family members. We spend a great deal of time and effort with them as if they are our children, and we grieve for them, much in the same way we would any family member.

All we are looking for is that a person responsible for taking a pet away through careless decision making and careless actions be held accountable. I believe that this bill could give judges the parameters they need to include punishment for such actions, helping to provide deterrence from those actions and helping a family gain closure.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to any suggestions that would help in getting L.D. 962 passed.