



NAIA Trust for the Protection of Animals, Animal Owners and Animal Enterprises

*Educating the Public about the Critical Difference between Animal Welfare and Animal Rights:
Supporting Animal Welfare Using Common Sense, Science and Reason*

January 9, 2006

Honorable Kurt M. Granberg, Chairman
House Agriculture & Conservation Committee
Illinois General Assembly
300 Capitol Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Re: Support, with reservation, of HB4238, a bill to hold accountable the owners of dogs that cause severe injury

Dear Representative Granberg and Committee Members:

The National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA) is a national organization of animal owners and public, private and commercial organizations dedicated to animal welfare. We promote responsible animal ownership and support the rights of owners to responsibly keep and enjoy pets. NAIA Trust deals with legislative matters affecting responsible animal owners and enterprises. NAIA and NAIA Trust members who reside in Illinois have asked that we review and comment on HB4238.

NAIA and NAIA Trust strongly support dangerous dog laws that hold irresponsible and negligent dog owners accountable for the actions of their dogs. We endorse categorizing dogs as "at risk" or "dangerous" based on their behavior, and we support an array of penalties ranging from remedial measures to euthanasia of dangerous dogs when necessary to protect public health and safety.

HB4238 as introduced by Representative Mike Boland provides severe penalties for dog owners who knowingly allow intact dogs to run at large if the dog severely injures a person. While we support language holding owners accountable for the actions of their dogs, we oppose limiting the penalty to intact dogs. Such language implies that all intact dogs are more likely to be aggressive, and conversely, suggests that sterilized dogs are less likely to bite simply because they are sterile. Pet sterilization is a worthy goal in itself, but a bite is a bite and accountability is accountability regardless of the reproductive capacity of the dog.

We believe that a law holding owners accountable for deliberate or negligent failure to confine their dogs should be triggered regardless of the reproductive capacity of the dog and should instead be based on the degree of owner irresponsibility and the actual

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propensity for the individual dog to attack. Therefore, we ask that the word “intact” be deleted so that the law applies to all negligent owners of all dogs who cause severe injuries.

NAIA has extensive experience in developing animal control laws that reward conscientious owners and hold irresponsible owners accountable for their behavior. Our *Guide to Building Successful Pet Friendly Ordinances* (www.naiaonline.org/body/pdfs/PetFriendlyGuide.pdf) may be helpful to the committee as you consider HB4238.

Sincerely

Patti L. Strand, trustee
NAIA Trust