



**Date:** March 29, 2017

**To:** **House Committee on Judiciary**  
Representative Jeff Barker, Chair  
Representative Andy Olson, Vice-Chair  
House Democratic Leader Jennifer Williamson, Vice-Chair  
Representative Chris Gorsek  
Representative Mitch Greenlick  
Representative Ann Liniger  
Representative Bill Post  
Representative Tawna Sanchez  
Representative Sherrie Sprenger  
Representative Duane Stark  
Representative A. Richard Vial

**From:** **Sharon Harmon**  
CEO, Oregon Humane Society

**Re:** **House Bill 2637**

Established in 1868, the Oregon Humane Society is the state's largest and oldest animal welfare organization with over 50,000 supporters statewide. We are not affiliated with any local or national organization. **We are here today to ask for your support of HB 2637.**

In January of 2016, a woman filed a report with the Investigations Department of the Oregon Humane Society after she witnessed her boyfriend punch her dog, "Hoover," in the throat. She reported that Hoover was restless, not eating, had labored breathing and reduced energy. Oregon Humane Society Special Agent Austin Wallace responded to the call and interviewed the suspect, who confessed to hitting Hoover. The suspect demonstrated the way he closed his fist and punched Hoover, like a person slamming a fist on a table. He stated that he punched Hoover because he was under stress, and Hoover had not done anything to upset him. Hoover was temporarily released to the Oregon Humane Society for medical evaluation. Dr. Kris Otteman, a forensically trained veterinarian, examined Hoover and found bruising consistent with blunt force trauma. Special Agent Wallace cited the suspect for Animal Abuse in the Second Degree (ORS 167.315); however, the suspect was never charged with animal abuse.

Oregon's current animal abuse statutes (ORS 167.315, ORS 167.320 and ORS 167.322) all require prosecutors to prove "physical injury to an animal" as an element of the crime. Unfortunately, when physical injury is not obvious, there is no Oregon law to protect animals like Hoover from being assaulted during unwarranted violent outbursts. In this case, the prosecutor was unable to show that Hoover suffered physical injuries as a result of the violent behavior, even with support from a forensically trained veterinarian. The Oregon Legislature has already recognized that animals are sentient beings capable of experiencing pain (ORS 167.605(1)), but they cannot tell us why, where, or how badly they hurt.

During Special Agent Wallace's investigation, he discovered that the suspect's violent outbursts were not always directed towards Hoover. The suspect's girlfriend, who reported the incident, also reported that she had been physically assaulted by the suspect in November of 2015 while she was pregnant. The OHS investigators see the connection between animal cruelty and human violence on a regular basis. We urge you to **vote yes on HB 2637** in order take action to protect vulnerable people and animals from physical abuse while holding people accountable for their violent behavior.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sharon Harmon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sharon Harmon  
CEO, Oregon Humane Society  
sharon@oregonhumane.org  
(503) 416-2992