



March 20, 2024

OUR VISION IS  
to create a humane  
community for all  
companion animals.

Written Testimony for SB 503 "Bowie's Law":

Submitted by **Aaron Walker, President & Chief Executive Officer**  
Kansas Humane Society of Wichita, KS  
316-204-9079 (cell), 316-220-8701 (office)  
[awalker@kshumane.org](mailto:awalker@kshumane.org)

**I am writing to submit proponent testimony and ask that you SUPPORT SB 503, a bill to define torturing for the purposes of the crime of cruelty to animals ("Bowie's Law").** This bill amends K.S.A. 21-6412, the statute defining cruelty to animals. Currently, that statute classifies some conduct a felony while other conduct is classified as a misdemeanor. K.S.A. 21-6412(b). Conduct defined as a nonperson felony includes "knowingly and maliciously killing, injuring, maiming, torturing, burning or mutilating any animal." K.S.A. 21-6412(a)(1). "Knowingly abandoning any animal in any place without making provisions for its proper care" or "knowingly failing to provide such food, potable water, protection from the elements ... as is needed for the health or well-being of such kind of animal" is classified as only a Class A nonperson misdemeanor.

This bill, if passed, would amend the statute to allow additional conduct to be considered as a felony. It adds a subsection prohibiting maliciously abandoning any animal in any place without making provisions for its proper care and defines a violation of that section as a 'nonperson felony'. Section 1. "Maliciously" is already defined in the statute as "a state of mind characterized by actual evil-mindedness or specific intent to do a harmful act without a reasonable justification or excuse." K.S.A. 21-6412(i)(3). This amendment allows a prosecutor to charge a defendant with a felony, rather than merely a misdemeanor, if the defendant knowingly and maliciously abandons an animal in a particularly cruel or inhumane manner. Of note – this amendment will not impact ranching, farming, or efforts to control pests or predatory animals. Those activities are already excepted from the provisions of K.S.A. 21-6412 and this amendment does not eliminate or reduce the scope of those provisions in any way.

As the largest nonprofit, high-volume animal shelter in the State of Kansas, Kansas Humane Society stands in support of our partners in animal welfare in requesting this needed change to the statutory authority. As a joint partner with Wichita Animal Services and dozens of shelters and rescues throughout the state of Kansas, KHS serves thousands of stray animals every year often found under auspicious circumstances. We believe malicious and intentional abuse of animals should be taken seriously and punished more severely than mere neglect. We also believe this amendment will garner significant community support given the public outcry that occurred with the announcement that the animal for which this bill is named, Bowie, was unable to be charged with a serious crime.

We urge you to support SB 503. Thank you for your consideration.

**Aaron Walker**  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
Kansas Humane Society of Wichita, KS

The Kansas Humane Society is funded by private donations, is not a United Way agency, and is not affiliated with the Humane Society of the United States.

