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I understand that we should care about animals in our society. Acts of cruelty toward animals are deeply concerning and should not be ignored. But I have to ask—why, in 2025, are we still responding to harm in ways that do nothing to stop it from happening in the future?

Justice means that from the moment harm occurs, we are taking steps to ensure it doesn't happen again. That means addressing the root causes of cruelty—mental health struggles, childhood trauma, cycles of violence, economic instability—not just handing down harsher punishments. Yet this bill does nothing to prevent harm. Instead, it seems like just another way to funnel more people into the criminal legal system.

This bill would elevate animal cruelty to a **Category B felony**, punishable by **1 to 10 years in prison**. To put that in perspective, **child abuse is also a Category B felony, yet it carries a lower sentence of 1 to 6 years**. How can we justify punishing someone more harshly for harming an animal than for harming a child? What does this say about our priorities?

The current law already allows for **up to four years in prison**—a significant sentence by any measure. If four years of incarceration hasn't solved the problem, why would doubling or tripling that time suddenly be the answer?

Prison does not prevent cruelty. It does not provide meaningful education, mental health care, or intervention. It isolates people, exposes them to more violence, and makes it harder for them to rebuild their lives when they return home. A **decade in prison** means a decade of lost opportunities, severed family ties, and a future where housing and employment discrimination will follow them for life.

If lawmakers truly care about preventing cruelty, they should be investing in **education, early intervention, and community-based mental health resources**. They should be funding programs that address the **root causes** of violence, not just expanding punishment.

We already have harsh penalties in place. What we **don't** have are solutions that actually work. If we want real change, we need to stop relying on incarceration and start focusing on **prevention**. Because justice isn't just about reacting to harm—it's about ensuring it never happens again.