



October 23, 2024

## Ohio Supreme Court Unanimously Rules in Favor of the State of Ohio in Kitten Abuse Case; Animal Cruelty Law Protects All Dogs and Cats

CLEVELAND - Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley announced that the Ohio Supreme Court unanimously ruled that Ohio's felony companion animal cruelty law, also known as Goddard's Law, applies to all dogs and cats.

"Thankfully the Ohio Supreme Court used basic common sense when reaching this decision," said Prosecutor O'Malley. "The 7-0 decision speaks volumes about the lower court's decision."

In October 2021, the Cleveland Division of Police responded to a call regarding a kitten in an apartment building basement floor that was doused with bleach. Alonzo Kyles was at the top of the stairs and admitted to pouring the bleach. The kitten was taken to a veterinarian who stated the kitten suffered chemically burned paws. Kyles was convicted of cruelty to companion animals and was sentenced to nine months in prison. The Eighth District Court of Appeals vacated the conviction stating the kitten was not "kept."

On July 23, 2024, Cuyahoga County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Tasha Forchione argued *State v. Kyles* in the Ohio Supreme Court. Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Tasha Forchione argued that R.C. 959.131(C) protects all dogs and cats regardless of where they are "kept." In addition, the following national and local organizations filed briefs in support of the State of Ohio – Animal Legal Defense Fund, Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, Animal Welfare Institute, David Braff Animal Law Center, Ohio Federation of Humane Societies, Ohio Animal Welfare Federation, Cleveland Animal Protective League, The Humane Society of the United States, Ohio Animal Advocates, Alley Cat Allies.

Today the Ohio Supreme Court in a 7-0 decision unanimously agreed with the State of Ohio's interpretation of the law. The Ohio Supreme Court ruled that R.C. 959.131(C) protects all dogs and cats. The Court concluded that "'Any' means all, and R.C. 959.131 defines 'companion animal' as including 'any' dog or cat."

The matter was reversed and remanded to the Eighth District Court of Appeals.

You can read the Ohio Supreme Court's decision [here](#).

