

APLB

the association for pet loss and bereavement, inc.



Address:

PO Box 194
Kawkawkin, MI 48631

Telephone:

Tel. (718) 382-0690

Email:

aplb@aplb.org

Website:

www.aplb.org

Officers:

Colleen Rolland, MA
President

Debra Bjorling
Vice President

Laurie Koen
Secretary

Marsha Zimmer
Treasurer

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To whom it may concern:

February 10, 2020

From: Colleen Rolland, MA
President, Association for Pet Loss & Bereavement (APLB)

I understand that a bill has been proposed for employers to offer bereavement leave to include the mourning of pets, HB712, Family Bereavement Act.

On behalf of our Association, we are in full support of this bill.

Dr. Wallace Sife, our founder and chairman of the Board, set up this Association in 1997. As a pioneer in the field of pet loss, his book "The Loss of a Pet, 4th ed." is widely accepted as the handbook for dealing with animal companion loss and bereavement. Now entering our 24th year, we have been host to over 70,000 bereaving pet parents in our on-line chat rooms, hosted several times weekly. We were at the forefront of this very necessary service, and others now have followed suit.

The human-animal bond is one that can be traced back through the history of mankind. Today, more than ever, in our uncertain and fast-paced lives, more and more people are turning to animal companions as a source of unconditional love and companionship. Today, this is not restricted to one segment of society, but includes a wide-range of age groups, across all professions, ethnicities, religious groups, and is non-gender specific.

People love their pets and when they die they mourn them as they would a member of their own family. Indeed, as a pet loss grief specialist, I hear, without exception from clients that they are a) totally devastated by their loss and b) that some are grieving more for their companion than they have for a close *human* relative. This is not abnormal and speaks to the intensity of the bond.

Due to the unique love provided by animal companions, that bond is exceedingly strong. Research shows that it is underscored by the physical and mental health benefits which include, but are not limited to: reduced blood pressure through petting and holding the animal, reduced feelings of anxiety and isolation for those living alone,