

**Testimony of Dr. Mark Mansfield, MD
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**Submitted to the House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife**

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Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Bentz, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity for me to provide testimony concerning Canyon's Law (H.R. 4951), a bill to ban the use of deadly M-44 "cyanide bombs" on our nation's public lands.

I have lived in the American West for my entire life; I have worked as a family physician for nearly three decades; and, for the past five years, I have advocated for an end to the use of a deadly wildlife poison device—the M-44 sodium cyanide ejector—that killed our family dog and nearly took my son's life.

In 2017, my family lived a nightmare. My youngest son, Canyon, was spending time outdoors near our home with his beloved hunting dog Kasey, a playful and loving, yellow Labrador who had quickly become Canyon's constant companion. While the pair was enjoying the day near our home, they encountered an unmarked and innocuous-looking device protruding from the ground. Little did they know that this device contained a deadly poison, to which they were both exposed; Kasey died before Canyon's eyes, and Canyon immediately began experiencing severe symptoms of cyanide exposure. In a single moment, our lives were changed forever. This M-44 cyanide bomb, set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services program, stole a cherished member of my family, an irreplaceable piece of my son's innocence, and my entire community's sense of security.

To Wildlife Services "Animal Damage Control," our beloved dog was just a "non-target take," and our heartbreak merely a public relations problem. Rather than evaluating how to make communities safer so that other families would not have to suffer the painful aftermath of M-44 encounters, the agency quickly began a messaging campaign to derail policymakers, public health advocates, and others who called for removal of these deadly devices from our communities and our shared public lands. Brushing off our horrific experience, they made—and continue to make—unsupported claims about the need for "every tool in the toolbox to remain" and the supposedly "targeted" nature of M-44s. I assert that public lands managers do not need any so-called "tool" that can indiscriminately poison children, kill pets, and devastate families; nor does it need a "tool" that does not know its "target."

Our dog Kasey's death remains a painful memory for my family, and the heartbreak and trauma of witnessing his death remain with my son Canyon. But we are fortunate that Canyon survived exposure to the dangerous poison released from the cyanide bomb. As a physician and a parent, I believe it is important for the Subcommittee to understand the profound, long-term impacts of cyanide exposure on my son's wellbeing.

Canyon experienced excruciating headaches for over a month, all day and through the nights without relief for five weeks with nausea, vomiting, numbness in his hands, and crushing insomnia. For years he experienced new onset of weekly migraines. In our efforts to alleviate his symptoms, we consulted countless experts, including a toxicologist, neurologist, and radiologist. He underwent a range of tests, from a brain MRI to comprehensive blood panels and cyanide levels. We did everything we could to bring him comfort, but there are no tests for a sublethal dose of sodium cyanide and there is no effective treatment for the irreversible physical effects of cyanide poisoning, much less the accompanying emotional and psychological trauma; yet another reason to protect the public from cyanide bombs and their devastating impacts.

Sadly, my family's story does not represent an isolated incident. Many others have shared our pain, including a Waverly, West Virginia family who lost their beloved husky to an M-44; a Texas couple whose dog was killed by an M-44 placed in an unmarked area where their sons and pets regularly played; and an eight-year-old Wyoming girl who had to watch helplessly as two of her dogs succumbed to cyanide poisoning after encountering M-44s during a family hike. Particularly disturbing is the experience of a Utah man who was poisoned by an M-44 while out exploring nature; after years of suffering from the debilitating impacts of this poisoning—which cost him his mobility, his career, and nearly everything that he held dear—he passed away, with cyanide listed as a cause of death.

Wildlife Services "Animal Damage Control" has been afforded countless opportunities to rein in its own deadly practices, yet the public has not been made safer. The agency has repeatedly updated M-44 use guidance and restrictions, adding new, ineffective guidelines on top of existing requirements that were already subject to widespread noncompliance. It is clear that legislative intervention is necessary.

Indeed, we must ask ourselves, how many families must be harmed before Congress acts to make meaningful change? What "collateral damage" will we accept when it comes to efforts to kill so-called "nuisance" animals? Have we simply conceded that hikers, hunters and outdoor recreationalists should fear for their safety while trying to enjoy our public lands? How many pets must be killed, how many children poisoned, and how many families traumatized before meaningful federal action is taken?

My son will always carry with him the deep pain of losing his best friend far too early, and the distress of having to watch his loyal pet cry out in agony, experience seizures, and die. The devastating memories will far outlast his physical pain. I am powerless to change what happened to my son—but Congress can ensure that it does not happen to others. Is it going to take the death of a child to ban this antiquated, indiscriminate device?

I respectfully urge the Subcommittee to advance Canyon's Law this session for the sake of people, pets and wildlife across the U.S. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter.