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## **First-of-its-Kind Online Animal Care Course Looks to Help Animals and People**

PAWedu has become the first online animal care course in the nation to receive approval from a state government. Earlier this month the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) approved the course in accordance with the provisions of House Bill 162 which overwhelmingly passed the Texas Legislature in 2017.

The bill allows a state judge to require the completion of such a course in the sentence of a person granted community supervision for animal cruelty violations. The online approach is the same currently used for online defensive driving classes and online alcohol awareness courses.

Prior to its passage judges often had had few options to help ensure a violator convicted of animal cruelty could be educated about proper animal care to help prevent future abuse. The bill not only provides a source for that information, but it makes that information available to people whether in urban or rural parts of the state. The bill also provides flexibility to prosecutors who prior to its passage had little ability to seek penalties other than community supervision and/or a fine.

Ami Gordon is the founder of PAWedu and the developer of the course. “We are over the moon that we have received approval from TDLR,” Gordon said. “This is the culmination of years of hard work that will help save animals from unwarranted suffering and abuse,” she added

Such courses approved by TDLR at a minimum must last at least two hours and cover items such as responsible animal care practices, state and federal laws related to animal cruelty, bite prevention, the spaying/neutering of animals, as well as lawful tethering of animals.

HB 162 was authored by State Rep. Eddie Lucio III (D-Brownsville). “I’m glad to see Ami and her team get TDLR approval. Animal cruelty can happen anywhere. Having such courses available online can help prevent future animal cruelty in Brownsville, Amarillo or anywhere in between,” Lucio said.

The bill was ushered through the Texas Senate by State Sen. José Menéndez (D-San Antonio). “Research has shown that animal cruelty is often a first step before a person moves on to crimes against people like domestic abuse, rape or even murder. Having

these courses available online will make Texas a safer place by helping to stop that progression before it starts,” Menéndez said.

While PAWedu is the first animal care course to receive TDLR approval, Texas is the first state in the nation to authorize online animal care classes in connection with animal cruelty convictions with the passage of HB 162.

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