

Testimony of Kerry Bartoletti

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Introduction

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and members of the Environment Committee, I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to speak to the Environment Committee. My name is Kerry Bartoletti and I am a registered voter in the town of Wolcott, CT. I am the co-founder of Friends of Feral Cheshire Cats, a trap-neuter-return program in Cheshire, CT, a member of the Animal Welfare Federal of Connecticut and Secretary for CT Votes for Animals.

Support of Puppy Lemon Law

First, I would like to thank Senator Meyer for introducing a puppy lemon law, SB499. As a consumer and a citizen who cares about the welfare of animals, I urge you to support a Puppy Lemon Law, especially HB5493. This is important to me as the bill provides for standards of care for the animals, while protecting consumers who may incur high vet bills and potential heartbreak if they unknowingly purchase a sick animal. Many consumers, such as my neighbor, are under the impression that pets sold in pet stores are from humane, local breeders, which is often not the case. My neighbor purchased a beautiful puppy who was at the veterinarian's office within days of purchase. They have spent large sums of money in an effort to resolve health and behavioral issues of this animal who has become a family member and whom they have grown to love. A puppy lemon law requiring that pet shops to provide consumers with full information regarding the cats' and dogs' origins and requiring that pet shops sell animals that are from kennels that are licensed by the USDA and any other appropriate state agency would address puppy mills, which breed dogs under cruel and inhumane conditions to be sold for huge profits in pet stores.

Support of HB5798, Unreasonable Confinement and Tethering of Dogs

I am also asking for your support on HB5798, which would institute an enforceable ban on the unreasonable tethering and confinement of dogs. The current law is very vague and difficult for animal control officers to enforce, resulting in dogs in our state being chained outside 24/7. I have experienced this first hand when I enlisted the help of the ACO in my town to help a dog who was outside 24/7. He expressed his frustration that he could only enforce that the dog had food, water and some shelter, but could nothing to force the owner to not leave the dog outside and isolated all the time. He continued to check on the dog until the dog's passing to ensure food, water and shelter, but could do nothing to improve the life of a forgotten family dog forced an isolated life outside.

Support of HB5808, Release of Rabies Vaccinations to ACOs

Finally, I ask that you support HB5808. This bill would allow animal control officers to request a listing from veterinarians of the dogs within their towns who have received a rabies vaccination, allowing animal control officers to become more efficient in enforcing the current dog licensing law. ACOs from one town would be able to share information with ACOs from other towns if an owner brings his/her dog to a veterinarian in another town. Obtaining dog owners' contact information from rabies certificates will enable animal control officers to license more dogs, which in turn will increase revenue to the Animal Population Control Program, which derives most of its revenue from dog license fees. As the founder of a feral cat trap-neuter-return program, I believe that continue to provide revenue to the APCP program is critical to ensuring the animals are altered and not contributing to pet overpopulation.