

Testimony of Patricia A. McGuiness
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To: Senator Meyer, State Representative Roy and all Members of the Environmental Committee.

As a registered voter in the Town of Manchester, Connecticut, thank you for the opportunity to comment on each of the following bills that are before this committee on February 9, 2009:

- CT HB 5493—"Puppy Lemon Law," Fines for Pet Stores and Breeding Kennels
- CT HB 5798—Dog Tethering and Confinement
- CT HB 5808—Rabies Vaccination Certificates (to increase spay/neuter funding)

As a consumer and a citizen who cares about the welfare of animals, I strongly urge you to support **HB5493**. This piece of legislation will improve the state's "Puppy Lemon Law" and institute a program for both pet stores and kennels, holding them accountable for neglect and poor standards of care. It would also provide additional measures to address puppy mills, which are cruel breeding factories that produce the dogs that are sold in many of our pet stores. This bill would also require that pet shops provide consumers with complete and true information regarding the origin of the cats and dogs they sell. Many pets are sold under the misrepresentation that they are from local breeders and not from puppy mills. Further this bill would require that pet shops could only sell animals that are from kennels that are licensed by the USDA and any other appropriate state agency.

I would also ask for your support on **HB 5798**, which would institute an enforceable ban on the unreasonable tethering and confinement of dogs. Currently the law that exists is very vague and animal control officers are not able to enforce it. As a result, dogs in our state can be chained or confined outside all day and all night with very little human contact and supervision. This not only is cruel to the animals, but it poses a public safety risk since chained dogs who have no supervision become much more aggressive and are three times more likely to bite people.

I personally experienced a neighbor's beloved Boxer who was chained to his doghouse during mid-summer and actually strangled himself while they were all out to work. The family was devastated to find him dead when returning home from work and the neighborhood felt that tragedy deeply, as he was such a friendly loving dog. All learned from that experience.

I also personally experienced a tied up dog suddenly turned aggressive toward children because he was harassed and stoned when the owners weren't home by a young unsupervised adolescent. That was in the 1960's... sadly, the dog was put down after going after several young children and that adolescent grew into a juvenile delinquent and later was serving time in prison.

For the safety and welfare of our animals and the safety of our citizens, I do hope you will support HB 5798.

Finally, I encourage you to support **HB 5808** which would allow animal control officers to request a listing from veterinarians of the dogs within their towns who have received a rabies vaccination. With this information, animal control officers can more efficiently enforce the current dog licensing law. Currently animal control officers must canvases door- to-door to identify citizens who have unlicensed dogs. Not only would this help enforce the dog licensing law (which is a public safety law), but it will also provide additional funding, that is desperately needed, to the state's animal population control program (APCP), as a portion of the dog licensing fees are deposited into the APCP fund.

I want to mention here that I personally experienced losing our "licensed" White Samoyed in the late 1970's during a major snowstorm... she wandered off, blending in with the white snow, got disoriented and just kept going. She was missing for three full days and it was her "License Tag" on her neck that provided identification to some caring people in a neighboring town who contacted their animal control officer. She decided to camp out in their backyard since they were breeding rabbits in outside cages. I will never forget that telephone call and the happy glow on my daughter's face! This is an example of another good reason to enable animal control officers to better enforce the current dog licensing law.

I strongly urge you to support these three important bills. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify.

Patricia A. McGuiness
Dated: February 8, 2009