



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Senator Stillman, Representative Dargan, Honorable members of the Public Safety and Security Committee, my name is F. Philip Prelli, Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding **Senate Bill No. 786, "An Act Concerning the Establishment of a Training and Certification Program for Municipal Animal Control Officers"**.

The Department of Agriculture is the state agency charged with enforcement of general statutes that pertain to domestic animals and also Sec 53-247 Cruelty to animals. State animal control officers inspect pet shops, kennels, animal grooming facilities, dog training facilities, investigate animal cruelty complaints, dog bites and rabies exposures when domestic animals are involved. The agency has historically worked very closely, and in tandem with, local animal control officials in the enforcement of these statutes. It has long been evident to the agency that professional training is needed as local animal control officers are the first responders in cases of dog bites, rabies exposures and other domestic animal related issues. Towns often do not require any particular expertise or experience other than a love of animals when hiring an animal control officer. This situation puts the officer in a position where they are often ill-prepared to deal with the public health and safety issues that arise with regard to animals and their owners.

The Police Officer Standards and Training Council have an excellent record of providing quality training for the state's police force. *However, when it comes to Animal Control Officer training, quality animal control officer training programs already exist. Because the Department of Agriculture is the agency charged with animal control, the Department should have final approval on the courses and course outlines and should administer the issuance and revocation of certificates and tracking of officer certification status. This would necessitate additional unbudgeted costs to the Department. With this in mind, we would say, as in the past, we support the concept of developing training, but can not support the legislation due to the unavailability of funds.*

Thank you again for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you have any further questions, or require additional information, please contact:

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