

March 8, 2010

Dear Chairmen Myer and Roy and members of the Environmental Committee,

I am writing on behalf of sportsmen and dog owners in our state. As a foxhunter, I understand that welfare of our animals is very important, and it's a responsibility I take seriously. We are stewards of their well-being and they serve us loyally. However, nothing in S274 serves either owners or their animals. **Please do not allow the fringe element of animal "rightists" influence the governance or infringe the rights of normal, law-abiding citizens in their push for a meatless, petless society.** I urge you to vote AGAINST S274.

In the right hands, this bill is overbroad and unclear. In the wrong hands, this bill would be a cudgel to attack otherwise-lawful dog ownership.

This bill is aimed at kennels such as our kennel for foxhounds. As is natural with pack animals, hounds are kept communally in the packs they hunt with to encourage bonding and teamwork. Sometimes eight or more hounds occupy the same kennel run, and they usually get along swimmingly. If I read the statute correctly, it requires an enclosure no smaller than 550 square feet if ten hounds are to be housed together. *This arbitrary requirement is unrelated to the hounds' health and welfare and does not take into account any differences between types, ages, or activity levels of different breeds of dogs.* Suppose a hound has stepped on some debris and injured a pad. That hound would rightly be separated from his pack-mates and given veterinary attention and rest until he recovered. However, per the language of the bill, the person confining that injured hound would be doing so "unreasonably" unless the hound was in a room measuring at least 100 square feet, which would probably be contraindicated by the veterinarian due to the injury. I submit that the proposed square footage requirement defining an "unreasonable confinement" is de facto unreasonable in itself.

Furthermore, the tethering requirements interfere with normal training and exercise programs. There is no connection between spending an hour on a run line and inhumane treatment or neglect. This language reaches into the homes of law-abiding citizens who let their dog out for exercise, then the phone rings, or their kid trips and skins his knee, making that owner subject to a fine. What possible benefit can this bill offer to dogs? *It sounds to me like it is telling dog owners never to let their dogs outside.*

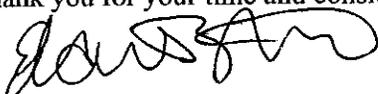
Subsection (4)(B) probably does not apply to most small breeders or foxhound kennels because we typically do not have more than two litters per year and so are not subject to inspection under CGSA §22-342 nor fitting the definition of a "commercial kennel" under CGSA 22-324(C) and so not subject to §22-344. It seems almost by design that this bill targets small breeders like foxhound kennels without overtly saying so. Hunting with hounds and dog breeding are still legal in the state of Connecticut. I hope the committee fully realizes the sweeping scope of this bill in the wrong hands: it will effectively criminalize the currently humane and lawful system of keeping dogs by imposing unreasonable, arbitrary standards on how the dogs may be housed.

In addition to the concerns specific to foxhound kennels and other small breeders, I am also concerned about the potential for abuse of this statute generally. For those of you who have raised children, I ask if at all times your houses were completely free of obstructions that "could reasonably result in injury, strangulation, or entanglement?" While I agree that dog owners should take responsibility for the welfare and health of the animals in their care, this kind of language invites exploitation against the dog owners. *Without ever harming a dog, owners could be subject to fines for the mere possibility of harm.* Realistically, this bill will do more harm to citizens of Connecticut than it could ever prevent from happening to our dogs.

In conclusion, **S274 deserves a vote of "NO."** It does not address a problem our state is facing and opens the floodgates to criminalize behavior that is not a threat the health and welfare of dogs. Please do not let this bill continue.

Lastly, I would also ask you to vote **"YES" on S207**, proposed reductions to hunting permit fees. I believe that an increase in volume would more than make up for any potential lost revenue due to reduced fees as far as income for the state, and will make hunting more accessible to more citizens of Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Elana Bertram, Newtown, CT