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Testimony presented to the Environment Committee
of the Connecticut General Assembly by
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Good morning Chairman Meyer, Chairman Roy, Ranking Members McKinney, Chapin and Members of the Committee.

My name is Phil Prelli and I serve as Connecticut's Commissioner of Agriculture.

I am here this morning to emphasize the serious concern the Department places on this proposed bill. There are several points that no one disagrees with. Obviously, all dogs should be able to lie down or sit without obstruction as well as being in easy reach of their food or water. These go without saying but those are not the main points of the bill and other points need addressing.

To begin, a change would occur in the law from what is considered an unreasonable time frame to tether a dog to what is considered an unreasonable manner. That is a significant change for enforcement purposes. I have heard it said that our present law is too open to interpretation. I would submit to the Committee that the proposed bill as written is even more so.

As I read the bill there is no exemption for veterinarians. That is not workable. A vet should be able to confine a dog based on the rules of veterinary practice not by the wishes of a well meaning animal rights advocate.

There is no differentiation between dog's sizes and breeds. Chihuahuas and St. Bernards would all need 100 square feet of space. Would that be 10 feet by 10 feet or 50 feet by 2 feet? The Department currently has regulations concerning the size of pens and the weight of dogs for commercial kennels. Perhaps those standards would make more sense in this bill.

To define a dog as "unattended" because of an obstruction in a sight line is unexplainable. The dog could have acres to run right around the corner of a house but his owner becomes subject to penalties for giving the pet plenty of room to run outside of his sight line. So as we read this you can tie your dog up as long as you can see it from your kitchen window and then it doesn't matter how long the dog is tied. The owner cannot leave the property, not even for a short trip to a neighborhood store, without being in violation of the law for not being on the "subject premises". Many of the items addressed in this section of the bill are

already covered in Sec. 53-247(a) CGS which states in part *“Any person ... who having impounded or confined ... fails to give such animal proper care ... shall be fined not more than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than one year or both.”*

In addition, there is an exemption given in 4 (D) for “any facility utilized for the temporary boarding of any dog in need of a new owner”. What defines a “facility used for temporary boarding”? There is no current definition of such a facility. And why should they be excluded? This could make it difficult to enforce current nuisance laws in the state as they could be in conflict. If not changed this would prevent any future ability to regulate this significant and dangerous source of animals imported into the state. As we speak animals carrying diseases are entering Connecticut, endangering Connecticut companion animals, being transported, housed and placed into homes in a completely unregulated manner, by so called non-profit “rescue groups”. Isn’t this really an unregulated pet store? The recent *parvo* outbreak in Southern Connecticut is thought to have entered the state in this manner. To attempt to regulate responsible Connecticut pet owners while ignoring this gaping hole in our pet protection laws is shameful and dangerous.

Other exemptions which should be considered are dogs quarantined for on the property dog bites as per section 22-358 CGS and enclosures for dogs under strict confinement or quarantine as per the rabies protocol.

In closing, for years animal control officers have been telling people to tie their roaming dogs up for the safety of the public, livestock and other animals. In the larger cities many dog owners rent and are allowed to only house their dogs out of doors. Responsible owners have been securing their dogs safely, supplying them with necessary sustenance, exercise and adequate shelter and veterinary care. Is it a perfect life for dogs? By no means is it perfect. With this bill, as written, I fear that dog owners will turn their dogs loose as a roaming dog violation (\$92.00) may be less of a fine than a tethering violation. People unable to keep pets will be flooding municipal pounds with dogs. Because of this bill there will be a decrease in adoptions of larger breed dogs especially, and an increase in euthanasia numbers. This is not the way to help tethered dogs.

While the Department agrees on many points of this proposed legislation it is too flawed in too many areas to receive our support and consequently we ask to be listed in opposition.