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*Testimony of Representative Gerald Fox of Stamford  
Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee on Raised Bill 168, An Act Concerning  
Workers' Compensation and a Police Officer's Use of Deadly Force on an Animal*

Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, I would like to thank you for raising SB 168, AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND A POLICE OFFICER'S USE OF DEADLY FORCE ON AN ANIMAL. I would also like to thank Senator McDonald for recommending this legislation.

Under the current law, police officers are eligible for workers' compensation coverage when they use deadly force on people threatening them with a serious injury. SB 169, if enacted, would amend the workers' compensation statute to allow claims for mental or emotional impairment when police officers are required to use deadly force on animals that attempt to injure them. It is important to note that the purpose of this bill is limited to those instances of immediate danger. To be eligible for compensation benefits, an officer would have to be at imminent risk of serious physical injury or death from an animal.

All of us are familiar with the incident last year in Stamford when a police officer acting in the line of duty had to defend himself and the lives of others by shooting a chimpanzee. The police officer acted promptly and heroically. There can be little doubt that he reasonably believed his life was at risk. We simply cannot imagine what he must have gone through. The incident exposed a gap in coverage in certain situations where police officers can be confronted by very dangerous animals.

Police officers put their lives on the line every day to protect the citizens of the State of Connecticut. Current law recognizes that police officers, by nature of their positions, are subject to emotional or mental impairments that are unique to their employment. By enacting this bill, we take another step toward better protection of our officers.

Thank you very much for this opportunity today and I urge the committee's favorable report.