

Testimony Concerning Proposed Bill 6320
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Members of the Education Committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of **Raised Bill 6320, AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF HUMANE EDUCATION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM.**

Humane education teaches kindness, respect and responsibility for people, animal and the environment. It teaches empathy and sensitizes children to the feelings of other living creatures. It has been documented that children who embrace a healthy respect for animals are more inclined to transfer these caring attitudes toward all living things- including people in their lives.

Conversely, studies have shown that cruelty toward animals can lead to violent behavior toward people. This link underscores the importance of humane teachings for the benefit of animals and people.

I have been working in the animal protection field for over 15 years and for many of those years I have been developing and delivering humane education programs to students throughout CT.

I wanted to share an experience I had with a young boy in a Hartford public school at a recent visit. After my presentation on empathy and responsible pet ownership, this child approached me and gave me what could only be described as a confession about something that he witnessed that clearly disturbed him. He told me that his mother's boyfriend's dog had puppies and the "boy dogs" killed all of them. He gave me some graphic details which I care not to recount.

Initially when I would hear these stories from children I was shocked and horrified. Not only by the brutality of the situations but that there are young children who witness to this type of suffering. But over the years I became used to the stories.

I've heard about the child's older brother who shoots the cats living in the dumpster with b.b. guns. I've heard the stories about the litters of dead puppies the children discover in dumpsters and the kittens that are set on fire and run around in flames while the kids throw rocks at them.

In many of our communities there is a backdrop of animal neglect, cruelty and suffering. Children encounter violence and the suffering of those animals who, like them, are powerless.

I feel fortunate that I was raised in a family that was capable of teaching me the values of empathy. The animals in my family were well cared for and respected. And, my companion animals taught me about companionship, love, trust and responsibility. But for many children these lessons are not available at home. School is the only option for them.

Animal welfare is not just about caring for animals. It's about social change and kindness to all living creatures. It pains to know that many children never experience the important lessons of kindness to animals and the meaningful relationships we have with our pets.

Through the years of working with children I have learned that they are extremely observant. Humane education is not just necessary for character building in all children, but for many children it is a critically needed balance to counter the images of violence and animal neglect that bombard children in our communities on a regular basis.

On behalf of the animal welfare and protection community, I urge you to support this piece of legislation.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony.

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