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**Public Hearing Statement to the Connecticut General Assembly**

February 3, 2011

In Favor of:

***HB No. 6226 An Act Concerning Cross - Reporting of Child Abuse and Animal Cruelty***

Legislators:

My name is Lisa Taylor-Austin. I am a Licensed Professional Counselor in Milford, CT. I am also a National Certified Counselor and a Board Certified Forensic Mental Health Evaluator. I fully support HB No. 6226.

People who abuse animals rarely stop there. <sup>i</sup> "Jeffrey Dahmer, one of the most well-known serial killers impaled frogs, cats and dogs heads on sticks" <sup>ii</sup> Carroll Edward Cole, executed for five murders, said his first act of violence, as a child, was to strangle a puppy.

Often people who abuse their family members also abuse the family pet, as a way to control family members from speaking out and getting help. A man in Stratford, CT was convicted of several crimes when he strangled the family pet rabbit, struck his wife very hard with an object, all in front of his three young children. <sup>iii</sup> A man in Hartford, CT stabbed his girlfriend's dog, threatening to kill the pet, if his girlfriend did not make him a sandwich. <sup>iv</sup> In Meriden, CT a puppy was thrown from a second story porch during a drunken rage. The perpetrator has two prior cases of domestic abuse charges against him. <sup>v</sup>

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) states the first criterion of the Conduct Disorder diagnosis is **Aggression to People and Animals** (DSM-IV-TR page 98). <sup>vi</sup> Often youth with Conduct Disorder are later diagnosed with **Antisocial Personality Disorder**, known to the general public as "sociopath." This personality disorder is characterized as a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others and includes a lack of remorse and failure to conform to societal norms (DSM-IV-TR page 706). <sup>vii</sup>

The research is clear that there are strong connections between animal abuse, child abuse and domestic abuse. Almost half, of women seeking shelter due to domestic abuse have delayed leaving because of the family pet.<sup>viii</sup> Up to 71% of victims entering domestic violence shelters report that their abusers threatened, injured, or killed the family pet. Research indicates that pet abuse may be a red flag for increased severity of domestic violence and more controlling behavior by the abuser.<sup>ix</sup>

Seventy-five percent of inmates charged with violent crimes also have a history of cruelty to animals.<sup>x</sup>

It is time to be proactive. Abusing or neglecting a pet, although wrong and possibly criminal in its own right, can be a symptom that something much more is happening within a home. Pets are often abused as a means of psychological torture and intimidation to tell the family members, "You will be next." Abusers also intimidate children into not disclosing sexual abuse by threatening to kill their pets.

***House Bill No. 6226 An Act Concerning Cross - Reporting of Child Abuse and Animal Cruelty*** is an essential tool for obtaining services for families who are suffering from domestic violence, child abuse and animal cruelty. It is imperative that these families receive the help they are unable to ask for themselves. By cross reporting to DCF, services can be put into place for these families. Cross-reporting ensures the safety of our families and pets from abuse and possibly death.

Legislators, please support HB 6226. Our families, children and pets do not have a voice. Let us be their voice now.

Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> (Daniel Goleman, "Experts See Parallels Between Dhamer, Previous Serial Killers," The New York Times Service, August 11, 1991).

<sup>ii</sup> Andrea Vance, "10-Year Old Luke Kicked a Lamb to Death Like a Football," News of the World (UK), January 23, 1998.

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.pet-abuse.com/cases/10370/CT/US>

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.pet-abuse.com/cases/14497/CT/US>

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.pet-abuse.com/cases/5628/CT/US>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2001/0415/p1579.html>

<sup>vii</sup> <http://pn.psychiatryonline.org/content/39/1/25.2.full>

<sup>viii</sup> Brigid Schulte, "Sheltering Women and Their Pets, Too," Washington Post, November 8, 2007.

<sup>ix</sup> [www.ahimsahouse.org/about-us/what-we-do](http://www.ahimsahouse.org/about-us/what-we-do)

<sup>x</sup> Chapter One: The link between Animal and Human Abuse, <http://familyvio.csw.fsu.edu/rural/animal-ch1-4.html>