

**Testimony of Susan B. Linker
CEO, Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary
Vice President, CT Votes for Animals**

**In Support of Raised Bill 6226 – an Act Concerning Cross Reporting of Child Abuse and Animal Cruelty
Select Committee on Children
February 3, 2011**

Representative Urban, Representative Fawcett, members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify.

On behalf of CT Votes for Animals, Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary and the statewide coalition of animal welfare organizations with the Animal Welfare Federation of CT, we strongly support Raised Bill 6226.

This crucial legislation is long overdue and is essential for the welfare of our state's children and animals. In fact, it makes so much sense that many people are shocked when they learn that cross-reporting of child abuse and animal abuse is not already mandated.

Researchers have found that a batterer's first target is often an animal living in the home, the second—a spouse or child. Often, batterers are able to control their victims, such as a spouse, by threatening, torturing, and/or killing the victim's animals.

This bill will give officials investigating child abuse a critical heads up about violence in the home.

In a national study of more than 1,600 animal abuse cases in the U.S. (Lockwood & Ascione 1998):

- 21% of cases of intentional animal cruelty also involved some sort of family violence.
- 13% involved domestic violence, and in these cases, the perpetrator often forced victims, including children, to witness the animal cruelty.
- 71% of pet-owning women entering a shelter reported their partner had threatened, hurt or killed an animal, and 32% reported their children had hurt or killed animals.

A guidebook published by The Latham Foundation entitled, "Breaking the Cycles of Violence: A Guide to Multidisciplinary Interventions" reports that children who become accustomed to animal abuse or neglect and experience it as part of their "norm" have:

- Killed pets to rehearse their own suicide
- Killed animals before an abusive adult can do so
- Tortured or killed animals as a gang initiation rite or to gain status among their peers, or
- Transferred abuse directed at themselves upon pets.

Please support Raised Bill 6226 to assure that our animal control officers and child welfare agencies are better prepared to more quickly and effectively intervene in instances of family violence, abuse and neglect. This bill would greatly protect the most vulnerable members of our community- children and animals.