

## Testimony Concerning Raised Bill 6303

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Coalition for Change

Senator Cassano, Representative Gentile, members of the committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Raised Bill 6303, An Act Concerning Municipal Animal Shelters.

I am the founder and spokesperson for the Coalition for Change, the group responsible for the recent reform efforts at the CT Humane Society. I have worked as a municipal ACO during the 1990's (for Berlin and South Windsor) and very recently have been extremely involved with New Britain's animal control facility, currently run by the NB Police Department.

While working as an assistant ACO for the Town of Berlin (1993-1995), there were many serious and upsetting examples of impounded animals not receiving the medical care they so desperately needed.

### **The first example involves a cat that I picked up on a side road in East Berlin.**

The cat was near death. Seriously injured with her abdomen split open. She could not stand or walk, she could barely lift her head. Due to recent changes in the department of agriculture's animal control policies (because of the rabies virus re-entering the state), municipalities were now expected to pick up cats (and other rabies vector species). Unfortunately, the town's head ACO continued to ignore sick/injured cats. We had many conflicts over all of this. I was not allowed to take the cat directly to one of the town's veterinarians to be euthanized. I was forced to take the cat to the pound and wait for the head ACO to arrive to 'examine' her (to make sure my claims were legitimate). He did not come to the pound until the next day. Even then it was a struggle to get him to allow me to bring her to be put down. My job was threatened repeatedly for this and many other incidents.

**Another example involves a beautiful black Labrador, found sitting in a pile of leaves by the side of the road.** She could barely stand or walk. I took her to the pound where once again, it took days before I was allowed to bring her to the vet. She was a lovely, young, highly adoptable dog. The town wanted her euthanized immediately. Myself and another assistant ACO refused to have that done. Instead we had her x-rayed. She had a fractured pelvis and other injuries. At that moment we began the Injured and Homeless Animal Fund. I took her home. We named her 'Autumn' and made sure she received all of the medical care that the town and the head ACO denied her. Thanks to the local newspapers running her story, donations poured in. She stayed with me until fully recovered and was finally placed in a loving home.

I am happy to say that much has changed in Berlin since then and animals picked up by the town's current ACO all receive medical attention immediately if needed. However, there are still many cities and towns in CT that simply do not provide the necessary medical care to the animals in their municipal shelter. New Britain is one of those.....

**I have been extremely involved with the on-going conflict at the NB dog pound.** I was approached this past summer when the small group of volunteers (FONBAC=Friends of NB Animal Control) reached out to the Coalition for advice and support. After many discussions with volunteers, as well as personally visiting the NB pound on numerous occasions, it was obvious that there were many problems at this facility. **The most upsetting of all is the fact that dogs frequently go without appropriate medical care for days at a time. The volunteers have documented numerous cases (including photos). I have witnessed a number of these myself.** The city's excuse is money even though the volunteers have a fund in which people donate specifically for this reason. Volunteers also pay out of pocket frequently. They also provide transport to and from a number of vets. The city only has to allow them to do it. All we are asking is to obtain permission to get the dog the care it needs.

It is hard to imagine that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are still at odds over such basic humane issues. There is no excuse for any city or town, any ACO/Mayor/ or Chief of Police to deny any animal in their shelter necessary medical care. This includes humane euthanasia. It is shocking that good ACO's are regularly threatened with termination for trying to get the animal to a vet. It is truly appalling that dedicated volunteers are no longer allowed to assist with the dogs at the pound, simply because they brought these concerns to light. Something needs to be done immediately. I hope that passing this law will be the beginning of REAL CHANGE for our state's injured/sick/ and homeless animals.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony.

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