

Testimony Concerning Raised Bill 5446
Barbara Rudnick, March 16, 2012
Member CT Votes for Animals

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the Opportunity to express my support of Raised Bill, 5446, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PAYMENT PROCEDURE FOR THE STERILIZATION AND VACCINATION OF CERTAIN DOGS AND CATS AND PROVIDING FOR ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER TRAINING.

I am a registered voter in East Berlin and a former volunteer with both the Berlin and New Britain Animal Control facilities.

For over 20 years I have worked with animal welfare and was a member of Compassionate Care Animal Center and the Underhound Railroad.

As a volunteer I soon discovered that dogs left in a cage did not do well when prospective adopters came to see them. Their behavior was simply a result of lack of human physical contact and exercise. Therefore we walked them, played ball etc. Some, but not all ACO's understand that the quality of life for a shelter dog is very important if we are to find them a loving home. Doesn't it make sense to make money in adopting a dog to a loving home as opposed to spending money to end their life? I have been told that all ACO's care about animals and although most of those I have worked with do, unfortunately for some it is just a job. In New Britain although many blankets were donated I was asked not to give them to the dogs because they could get wet if dragged to the outside of the cage in the rain. I also was asked not to give bones or balls because they could possibly go down the drains. I have listened to these dogs bark incessantly, seen the fear in their eyes as they cowered in the corner or under the bed, watched them lose weight and hair with a look of hopelessness in their eyes. Simple acts of compassion are so important to a shelter dog and should be required. This is why I support this bill.

I have witnessed dogs that did not get along placed in cages right next to each other, when numerous other runs were available. Would it simply not be common sense to separate them rather than antagonize them?

I have witnessed deadly Parvo outbreaks where appropriate protocol was not followed.

One dog I was not allowed to walk because the ACO stated he was "moody". The following week I was told he was going to be euthanized. I did ask if he had bitten anyone and again I was told it was because he was "moody". Fortunately a prospective adopter heard this and asked to meet with the dog. When the dog came out he was incredibly well behaved and went home with the young man and his wife. When I called regarding the dog at a later date I was told he was the best dog he ever had. Only someone with appropriate training should be making decisions regarding the life or death of a dog.

We were asked not to request applications because they were discriminatory. Adopting to the first

person who comes to the shelter without any kind of screening process is simply irresponsible and could result in the dog being returned to the shelter. New Britain has a large percentage of dogs that are Pit Bulls. Many had been used in fights and for breeding purposes. For years we requested that dogs that are to be adopted be spayed or neutered in order to break the cycle and lower the number of dogs brought or returned to the shelter.

I have seen dogs that required veterinary care but did not receive it. One dog Francis suffered for days with the worst case of mange I had ever seen. Again there should be guidelines and training regarding care that are consistent.

An officer with the DOA once informed me that I would be surprised to find out how many ACO's were not familiar with the statutes. I responded that if they were not, especially those in the position over 20 years then they should not be allowed to continue to do the job. Their job is too important to be left to those that are not trained or qualified.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,

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