

To: Environment Committee
Raised Bill 5446

In Support 2. Section 22-328 of subsections c,d,e,f - Providing for Animal Control Officer Training

The **Connecticut Municipal Animal Control Officers Association** supports subsections c,d,e,f, of the proposed Raised Bill **5446** regarding the training of Animal Control Officers. Animal Control Officers have long been overlooked as law enforcement personnel. This is possibly due to the age old vision of the classic “dog catcher”, and a misunderstanding of what the true role of an Animal Control Officer has evolved into today. Animal Control Officers not only catch and impound roaming dogs, but they can also rescue injured animals, investigate neglect/cruelty complaints, handle dangerous domestic and wild animals, deal with unpredictable people, implement animal adoption programs, and provide humane education to the public.

According to the National Animal Control Association, an Animal Control Officer is four times more likely to have contact with the public during their work shift than Police Officers. This means that municipal liability can be four times more likely. With Animal Control Officers also having the power of arrest, basic standards in training is not only a good idea, it is a necessity. Municipalities would consider it a potential, legal nightmare to send an untrained Police Officer to do his/her job. The same considerations should be made for Animal Control Officers.

Ensuring that CT Animal Control Officers are adequately trained, certified and required to continue their education, will improve the overall service to the communities that they serve, reduce liability for their municipalities, and finally improve the image of the Animal Control Officer to a respectable profession within the law enforcement field.

Again, the CT Municipal Animal Control Officers Association fully supports subsections **c,d,e,f**, of Raised Bill **5446**. We thank you for your time and consideration regarding this important proposal of training for Animal Control Officers.

Opposed Section 1. Subsection (a) of section 22-380f - Payment Procedure for the Sterilization of Certain Dogs and Cats

Section 1. Subsection (a) of Raised Bill 5446, as proposed, creates some realistic concerns for Animal Control Officers and their individual municipalities. The idea is to have the option for the Animal Control Officer to be responsible for completing the spay/neuter of the animal **AFTER** the animal is formally adopted. Although the concept of animals being spayed/neutered, before leaving the facility, is beneficial for curbing animal overpopulation , this proposal raises issues of liability.

If an animal is formally adopted, the voucher is suggested to be signed over to the ACO, and the animal then stays in the custody of the ACO/municipality until the spay/neuter is complete. Because the animal is now legally adopted, the animal, technically, is being boarded at the facility and is no longer impounded. Boarding animals, in a municipal pound, would be in contradiction of the definition of a **Dog Pound (CGS 22-336-13)**. This statute states (a) that a “Dog Pound” “means a building provided and maintained by a city or town which is used for the detention and care of impounded dogs”. By the animals now being “boarded” after adoption, this will also accrue costs for the municipality while the animal waits to be altered.

Since there is no legal or law enforcement reason for the impoundment and if the animal now becomes sick or ill, there is no protection for the Animal Control officer or municipality if the owner decides to take legal action for their sick/ill pet.

Also, it is proposed that the ACO is now responsible for the transportation and veterinary visit of someone’s legal property (adopted pet). Again, if the now adopted animal is injured or becomes ill during this process, the Animal Control Officer or municipality could become liable for damages to the pet. Veterinarians are free from liabilities when conducting spay/neuter under the Animal Population Program voucher.

It is uncertain who chooses the veterinary place, the adopter or Animal Control Officer. If it is the ACO, and there becomes a problem with the surgery, an adopter may choose not to accept the animal back or hold the municipality/ACO responsible for additional costs. How does the Animal Control Officer go about voiding the adoption and paying for surgical costs done thus far? Ultimately, a good intentioned deed may turn out costly for the Animal Control Officer and their municipality if this proposed option Raised Bill 5446 section 1 subsection (a) is accepted.

The CT Municipal Animal Control Officers Association opposes section 1 subsection (a), of Raised Bill 5446, as written.

Sincerely,

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President

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