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To the Environmental Committee of the CT State Legislation
Re: Bill Number 5446

I am writing to express my support for H.B. #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 have been a registered voter in the city of Hartford for over 30 years and a resident of Connecticut for over 50 years. I am also the Director of the Ferret Association of Connecticut, a nonprofit humane and educational organization dedicated to helping domestic pet ferrets, both by educating current and prospective owners and providing shelter for lost or abandoned ferrets.

As we at the Ferret Association enter our 21st year of operation, we have worked with a number of animal control officers. Many are caring individuals who go above and beyond the confines of their town mandates to help every animal possible, sometimes at their own expense. Alas, some others appear to be stuck in time in the days where each town's mayor or selectman hired a crony to "catch dogs." They will only work with dogs, may shelter them in substandard conditions, and euthanize them as soon as they can. Called to investigate cruelty, hoarding, or abandoned cats or other animals, these latter individuals couldn't care less and are prompt to say so.

The profession of animal control officer, overall, has long progressed beyond this limited scope. It is well past time that a progressive, animal-friendly state such as Connecticut require that each officer who deals with animals and the public have adequate training to do their job effectively and humanely.

It is also vital that no animal be adopted out of a pound in our state without being altered. If we ever hope to stem the tide of cat and pit bull overpopulation, allowing unaltered animals to reenter the general population is senseless and only ends up costing us all even more as they breed more problems, literally and figuratively.

While our organization deals with domestic ferrets, our members also own cats and dogs and are extremely interested in the welfare of all animals. Funding a requirement that all animals adopted from municipal animal shelters be altered is smart, humane, and frugal. Obliging those who handle our non-human companions be properly trained in animal care and humane education is only sensible.

I ask you support H.B. 5446 and thank you for your time.

L. Vanessa Gruden, Director
Ferret Association of Connecticut