Testimony Concerning Raised Bill 5443

Gina M. Hoag, March 16, 2012
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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 Meriden, a volunteer and supporter of Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary and a member of Connecticut Votes for Animals.

This bill brings into focus the critical need for specific and measured training for Animal Control officers in every municipality in Connecticut. These animal control officers, often political appointees, some locally elected and often hired after other means of employment has ended or retirement are often ill prepared for the life and death decisions of their responsibilities.

It unconscionable that any person who holds "life" decisions within the framework of occupational responsibilities does not have a credential certifying that they are trained in the medical, ethical and legal context of animal welfare, care and home placement.

The National Animal Control Association (NACA) offers this type of training that is generally accepted across the United States, resulting in certification as an Animal Control Officer. However, CONNECTICUT does not require training for animal control officers or dog control officers.

Although NACA training is generally accepted across the United States, NACA certification is not specific to any state (although some states and agencies require NACA certification). Your state and/or the agency to which you are employed may require additional certifications or training per their own requirements. Since NACA courses are held across the United States, NACA courses do not address specific state laws and/or requirements. You should not assume that if you attend a NACA program that our training will fulfill all of your state's requirements. You may need additional training at the state level in order to comply with your own state's law. NACA does not promote any program as certification specific to any state.

We live in an era where pets, specifically dogs and cats, are being abandoned in vacated homes and apartments as occupants are unable to pay rents and mortgages. These animals are left to starve and/or die and within a few days of abandonment assume a demeanor of scared and desperate with no food or water. To approach such an animal requires more than a control noose and a weapon. To meet that former pet's emotional needs, most important at that moment of discovery or first meeting in that abandoned building or unit, requires special training, not the characteristic quick decision-making of a police officer. These pets did not break a law, they were summarily discarded.

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

Thank you,

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