

Testimony Concerning Raised Bill 5446
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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 Mansfield, and I am both an Animal Control Officer (Windham) and a longtime animal welfare volunteer.

I support this bill from the perspective of both roles.

As an Animal Control Officer (ACO) who received essentially no training in the proposed topics of ACO instruction other than what I sought on my own, I strongly urge passage of this bill on the basis of the need for standardization in the profession. There is an enormous range of competence and motivation among ACOs and recent stories in the news regarding substandard personnel bear witness to the passion that the public has for companion animals and their treatment. Today's ACO is not just a "dog catcher," s/he is also a social worker, a psychologist, an advertising executive (marketing animals in need of homes), a fundraiser, a wildlife handler, a resource for medical care, just to name a few. Whenever standards are created to define and quantify a profession, the level of performance based upon these expectations tends to rise. I have been a dissatisfied "customer" of lackluster ACOs many times in my life and the cost of this training is far outweighed by the benefits. Any town official knows how animal issues can affect the quality of life for their residents and how lack of effective problem-solving on the part of Animal Control departments gets their phones ringing.

I also support the portion of the bill that would enable ACOs to sterilize pound animals with state vouchers prior to adoption, since that is the only way to ensure 100% compliance. We who have seen the cost of pet overpopulation to society as well as to companion animals do not want to see the animals from our facilities adding to the problem by going on to reproduce. The funding is there to be used; passage of this bill will help to ensure that it is not offered in vain.

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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