

***Testimony in support of HB 5446: An Act Concerning the Payment Procedure for the Sterilization and Vaccination of Certain Dogs and Cats and Providing for Animal Control Officer Training***

Respectfully Submitted by Rosamund Downing, 39 Moss St., Pawcatuck, CT. 06379

Dear Honorable Members of This Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 5446. I am the guardian of four “rescued” rabbits and I am a DEEP wildlife rehabilitator for the State of Connecticut. It is vitally important that Animal Control Officers in our state have the proper training and certification to navigate an increasingly complicated profession. ACOs are not simply the local “dog catcher” of years past. Firstly, they must be familiar with the needs of a multitude of species (ACOs deal with farm animals, rabbits, birds, turtles, in addition to the usual dog and cat “clientele”). I can tell you from personal experience as a wildlife rehabilitator that ACOs must also respond to a variety of calls dealing with sick, injured, and orphaned wildlife – they are often the first person that a citizen will call for such issues. In addition, ACOs must be knowledgeable about state and federal laws, animal cruelty procedures, as well as zoonotic diseases (illnesses passed from animals to humans). They must also have tremendous public relations skills in order to help people - who are often distraught. I find it shocking that ACOs are not required to receive formal training or certification in our state! Even my hairdresser must be certified in order to work in Connecticut. How can this discrepancy be allowed to continue? The recent mishandling of cases by ACOs in Naugatuck, New Britain, and Colchester (regarding animal cruelty issues, the euthanizing of adoptable animals, and the neglect of animals in their custody), is further evidence of the need for formal ACO training.

Please ensure that the uniform worn by local ACOs means something. Please support passage of HB 5446.

Thank you.

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