

**Testimony Concerning SB 253**  
**Susan B. Linker, March 7, 2012**  
**CEO, Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary**  
**Vice President, CT Votes for Animals.**

I would like to thank the Environmental Committee for the opportunity to express my support of **SB253, An Act Concerning Revisions to the Animal Importation Statutes**

As many of you on this committee know, the issue of creating fair and reasonable regulations for rescued animals that are imported into our state has been a priority of the animals rescue community and I thank you for all the time and consideration you have put into this issue over the last five years.

Last year we made great progress in passing a law that addresses many of our interests:

- To ensure that healthy animals are being adopted
- To protect imported animals from abuse and neglect
- To require that there is a CT representative from out of state rescues to create local accountability
- To provide a way for the Dept. of Agriculture to be notified of public adoption events
- To provide accountability for rescues who are not acting responsibly through a series of fines.

However, we have identified some issues that need to be addressed. First among them is the need to more clearly define what it means to be an animal importer, as the current language has created some ambiguity. **We support the proposal contained in lines 40-49 of the bill that amends the current definition of an “animal importer.” For example, this new definition clarifies that a Connecticut resident who adopts an out-of-state dog or a cat for his/her own family use (e.g., from *Petfinder*) would not somehow be considered an “animal importer.”**

Secondly, after the law went into effect for a few months, we surveyed those individuals and organizations who rescue out of state animals, and rescuers overwhelmingly cited the multiple vet visits that are required as the primary cause of limiting and even ceasing their rescue operations.

The current law requires that veterinary health checks are given for every animal entering the state within 48 hours of the animals' arrival, then again every 90 days. And there is also an added provision that the rescued pets need to have a veterinary health check within 15 days of adoption.

Not only is it difficult logistically to coordinate the multiple vet visits, especially the visit this is required 48 hours upon arrival, but the cost has become a huge hardship for many responsible rescue organizations.

In some cases veterinarians are charging \$75+ per animal for these health checks. We've been advised that some veterinary practices are even charging a fee for the free USDA health certificates that is made available through the Dept. of Agriculture. This specific USDA certificate is not required and our bill clarifies that. **We support the proposal contained in lines 69-82 of the bill that amends how the vet visits should work when a dog or cat arrives in Connecticut from another location.**

Senate Bill 253 keeps the structure of the regulation in place. Importing organizations are still required to register with the Dept. of Agriculture annually, they are still required to notify the Dept. of Agriculture of any public adoption events. The bill at lines 69-82 simply lessens the burden of the vet visits to one vet visit which is to occur 15 days before the adoption to help ensure that the animals that are being adopted are free from disease and are in good health.

I strongly urge you to support this bill which will maintain the goals we all have to protect animals and adopters. Our proposal will simply ease the impact on the responsible organizations who are working hard to save the lives of animals in desperate need.

Thank you,

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