

BETHLEHEM ANIMAL CONTROL

36 MAIN STREET SOUTH

BETHLEHEM, CT 06751

My name is Judy Umstead and I am here today to support HB 5027-an act prohibiting the sale of dogs and cats obtained from substandard domestic animal mills. I am asking for regulations to be established for standard of care for rescues. I am currently the animal control officer for the towns of Bethlehem and Woodbury. I also run a commercial boarding kennel and previously ran a very large dog rescue. Currently, I can be inspected at any time by state animal control, for the boarding kennel and the dog pound. The reason is that there are very strict guidelines for running both operations which I agree with. We are caring for dogs whether they are owned in the boarding kennel or strays picked up by animal control. Both deserve to be treated with respect which includes proper care, nutrition, temperature, cleanliness, and love. When I ran the dog rescue I could only be inspected because it was housed in a boarding kennel, not because it was a rescue. Therefore, if someone were just a rescue, they have no guidelines in place to follow. We all know that just like in anything else there are good and not so good.

We have a problem in this state of hundreds of dogs being transported into our state monthly from mainly the Southern states. They have too many dogs as strays and many unfortunately are euthanized and not always in humane ways. While I agree that these poor dogs do not deserve to die I question some of the practices of them being transported up here and their care when they arrive. If one is to rescue a dog I feel they should be placed in a better situation not worse. As an animal control officer I cannot just go in to check on these transported dogs-I need a complaint. Such was the case in Bethlehem in November. Some of you may remember the 63 dogs seized by myself and state police from a rescuer. Without going into much detail since this is an ongoing case this is a prime example of Southern dogs being placed in an unheated barn in crowded unsanitary conditions. The only way I got onto the property was when I received a call about a dog that has escaped their enclosure and was running loose. I always respond to roaming dogs and this was no different. For one month I tried to get the rescue to comply with what is right for the dogs, but after repeated verbal and written warnings they did not comply, so I executed a search and seizure warrant signed by a judge. To this day I still have all 63 dogs in my care. One reason is that we do not have a law in place to regulate rescues and their operations which has made it difficult in court. They seem to fall thru the cracks. The majority are wonderful good hearted people who truly want to do the right thing. Just as we welcomed training for animal control officers, these people would welcome regulations because they are already doing the right thing and anyone could walk into their facility at any time without an issue. There are others who have found this to be a very lucrative business which unfortunately changes how animals are treated. If you bring in 100 dogs to adopt or sell in one weekend for \$400-\$500 each, you make \$40,000-\$50,000 tax free. I'm not asking that these dogs not be shipped up here to save their lives. I am asking that when they are that they be treated the way they deserve. None of them deserve to be freezing, sick, scared, or abused in any way. This is also NOT an animal control vs rescue issue because I believe what we all do is rescue. I urge you to support this bill. Thank you.