



Testimony Before the Judiciary Committee
HB 6690 AAC Court Proceedings and the Protection of Animals
April 5, 2013

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, Members of the Judiciary Committee,

We represent the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association, which includes a majority of Connecticut-licensed veterinarians among its members. We promote optimal health and welfare of animals. The CVMA acknowledges that the intention of this bill is to protect animals but we believe it has the potential to undesirably alter the relationship between animal owners and the animals they own and love.

By providing for an independent “animal advocate” with legal standing apart from the animal’s owner, we believe HB 6690 would alter the relationship between animals and their owners. The result will be that owners may no longer be able to determine what is best for their animals. In turn, this will adversely affect the ability of animal owners to choose appropriate animal care services.

Since animal welfare is overseen by animal owners first, and in the case of animal cruelty allegations by state or municipal officials, appropriate safeguards currently exist to ensure animal welfare. In the first case the owner is present on behalf of their animals and in the latter case, the state or municipality interprets its own laws and adjudicates offenses, including animal cruelty allegations. The perceived need to appoint a separate animal advocate would imply that neither of these safeguards is adequate. We disagree with that premise.

When considering veterinary treatment or care to be provided, if the “best interest of the animal” is the standard, what objective criteria will be used in determining what exactly is in the “best interest of that animal?” While this bill requires that potential advocates have expertise in animal welfare or legal advocacy, it does not spell out specific qualifications or training requirements for potential advocates.

Our legal system acknowledges that animals are unique, feeling creatures. While they do not have the same legal status as people, the law also recognizes that they may not be treated like inanimate personal property. Therefore animals already enjoy special legal protections, including laws requiring humane care, and laws criminalizing abuse, neglect and cruelty.

If the intention of HB 6690 is to more aggressively discourage animal cruelty, then harsher penalties for those who engage in cruel behavior towards animals is the appropriate remedy and the CVMA would be in strong support of those measures. Thank you.

Very respectfully,

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