

April 5, 2013

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing Testimony

HB 6690 AN ACT CONCERNING COURT PROCEEDINGS AND THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS.

Testimony from Annie C. Chittenden
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Member, CT Votes for Animals

Dear members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify **IN SUPPORT of H.B. 6690.**

Animals who are victims of cruelty cannot defend themselves, nor can they advocate on their own behalf. While Connecticut's at risk women, children, elderly and disabled citizens are entitled to receive the benefit of court-appointed advocates to speak on their behalf during court proceedings, animals are not. If passed, HB 6690 will allow court-appointed advocates to speak on an animal's behalf when the animal's welfare or custody is at issue.

Animal abuse is not a victimless crime. It is often a precursor to violence toward other defenseless victims. As the former manager of the CT SafePet Project, I know first-hand how desperately animal welfare advocates are needed in our courts. Every day, there are instances throughout our communities in which pets and farm animals are horribly abused at the hands of a violent offender, often as a means of controlling another victim. It is time for Connecticut's abuser penalties to match the severity of the crime.

HB 6690 will provide much-needed court advocates for animal victims and document the extent of a victim's injuries and suffering. It will further assure that acts of violence toward animals are finally recognized as the precursors they can be of future and escalating acts of violence toward people. As highly valued members of our society, animals not only deserve our compassion and protection, but need to be represented justly in our courts. Please support CT's animal welfare advocates in their efforts to stop the cycles of violence.

Thank you for considering my testimony on this important piece of legislation.