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April 5, 2013

Joint Committee on Judiciary
Room 2500, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860-240-0530
JUD.Testimony@cga.ct.gov

Re: SUPPORT of HB 6690, AN ACT CONCERNING COURT PROCEEDINGS AND THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS

Dear Co-Chair Coleman, Co-Chair Fox, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Connecticut supporters of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), I submit this letter in **SUPPORT** of **HB 6690**, which would establish a process for appointing an advocate to investigate and advocate for the welfare or custody of an animal that is the subject of a civil or criminal court proceeding.

Research has established that there are strong links between violent behaviors toward humans and violent behaviors toward animals. We actively encourage law enforcement agencies to take violence toward animals seriously and to seek appropriately severe penalties for people who are responsible for causing animals to suffer. HB 6690 will help to facilitate animal cruelty prosecutions by ensuring appropriate representation for the victims.

- **Evidence for the need of HB 6690**

A 2011 OLR report (2011-R-0405) describes procedural outcome of animal cruelty offenses from 2002 through November 7, 2011 (n = 3,292). Table 1 shows that 51% of offenses were nolled, 33.5% were dismissed, 0.2 % resulted in findings of not guilty, and only 15% resulted in guilty findings.

- **The connection between animal abuse and criminal violence**

A number of studies have drawn links between the abuse of animals and violence against people. A 2001-2004 study by the Chicago Police Department "revealed a startling propensity for offenders charged with crimes against animals to commit other violent offenses toward human victims." Of those

arrested for animal crimes, 65% had been arrested for battery against another person.[1]

Of 36 convicted multiple murderers questioned in one study, 46% admitted committing acts of animal torture as adolescents.[2] And of seven school shootings that took place across the country between 1997 and 2001, all involved boys who had previously committed acts of animal cruelty.

- **The connection between animal abuse and domestic abuse**

Pet abuse is one of four predictors of domestic partner violence, according to a six-year "gold standard" study conducted in 11 metropolitan cities.[3] In both domestic violence and child-abuse situations, abusers may manipulate and control their human victims through threatened or actual violence against family pets.

Researchers have found that over 70% of women entering domestic violence shelters reported that their partners had threatened, abused, or killed the family pet.[4] Another study found that in families under supervision for physical abuse of their children, pet abuse was concurrent in 88% of the families.[5]

- **Animal neglect can be an indicator of abuse toward people**

Animal abuse in the form of neglect is often one of the first indicators of distress in the household. Whether owing to lack of empathy, mental illness, or substance abuse, a person who fails to provide minimal care for the family pet is more likely to neglect the basic needs of other dependents in the household. In many cases, children found living among the squalor of neglected pets are taken into foster care.

Animal hoarding is an extreme example of how life-threatening neglect affects both people and animals. By the time an animal hoarding situation is discovered, the unsanitary conditions and lack of care may have killed a large number of the animals and compromised the health of dependent children or elders in the household.

- **Animal abuse by children is a warning sign**

Children who abuse animals are sending out clear warning signs that they pose a risk to themselves as well as to others. The National School Safety Council, the U.S. Department of Education, the American Psychological Association, and the National Crime Prevention Council agree that animal cruelty is a warning sign for at-risk youth.[6]

Longitudinal studies show that chronic physical aggression (e.g., animal cruelty) by elementary school boys increases the likelihood they will commit continued physical violence as well as other nonviolent forms of delinquency during adolescence.[7]

A child who abuses animals may also be acting out against violence in his own home.[8] Professional intervention can remove a child from a potentially abusive situation and divert him or her from future abusive behavior.

Experts agree that early prevention and treatment of animal cruelty is the key to stopping the cycle of violence, because as aggressive children get older, they are less responsive to therapeutic intervention.[9] Animal cruelty in children should not be taken lightly. Children who abuse animals should receive immediate professional psychological intervention for both their own welfare and that of the community.

- **Stopping animal abuse strengthens our communities**

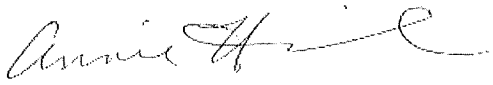
Reporting, investigating, and prosecuting animal cruelty can help take dangerous criminals off the streets. Police know that in homes where animal abuse is a problem, other issues are often concurrent. Acts of animal cruelty are linked to a variety of other crimes, including violence against people, property crimes, and drug or disorderly conduct offenses.[10] Stopping animal abuse in children can help curb violent tendencies before they escalate to include violence against people.

More than a dozen states, including Connecticut, have cross-reporting laws; at least two dozen states have laws, including Connecticut, allow courts to include pets in protection orders in domestic violence situations; and at least two dozen states, including Connecticut, have counseling provisions in their animal cruelty laws.[11,12,13]

The mission of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is to create a humane and sustainable world for all animals—a world that will also benefit people. We believe that teaching humans to behave with kindness and respect toward animals will help build a more humane and better functioning civil society.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,



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