

April 5, 2013

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing Testimony

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

Kathleen Sullivan

11 Gun Mill Road

Bloomfield, Connecticut

Board Member: CT. Votes for Animals & Our Companions Animal Rescue

I would like to thank the members of the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to express my support of Raised Bill 6690.

It is my understanding that our court system is a process whereby each party has an opportunity to put forth its case and a decision is rendered by an impartial judge or jury based upon hearing both sides of an issue. When one party cannot raise its own defense they are provided with court appointed advocates to represent their interests and to ultimately help the court reach a fair decision. This is not yet the case with abused animals.

An OLR Research Report dated February 20, 2013 reported that of the 3699 cruelty cases in Connecticut brought under CGS 53-247 between 2002 and 2012, 594 (16%) were found guilty, 7 (0.2%) were found not guilty, 1,210 (33%) were dismissed, and 1,883 (51%) were nolle (i.e., the prosecutor decided not to prosecute). Animal cruelty should be taken seriously and the related laws enforced to the maximum extent necessary both for the animal and for the betterment of society as a whole.

Studies routinely show the relationships between child abuse, domestic violence, gangs, drugs and animal abuse in our society. In 2011 Connecticut passed a bill requiring the cross-reporting of child and animal abuse. Preventing animal abuse, many times the tip of the iceberg in domestic violence cases, is an integral part of breaking the cycle of violence. Raised bill 6690 will help take a significant step in that direction.

The bill would provide a voluntary advocate for animals who are the innocent, voiceless victims of alleged abuse. The advocate would be knowledgeable about the specifics of the case, the nature of the needs and protection of animals, and the extent to which their victim can be protected under the law. When judges are able to get a thorough understanding of the victims' side of the case, hopefully they will have the courage and decency to bring the offenders to justice and change the statistics.

On behalf of citizens and animals throughout CT, I urge you to support Raised Bill 6690.