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Testimony in Support of HB 6690
Judiciary Committee
April 5, 2013

Good Morning Chairpersons Coleman and Fox, Ranking Members Kissel and Rebimbas, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of **House Bill 6690, An Act Concerning Court Proceedings and the Protection of Animals.**

The fact that 80 percent of school shooters started by abusing animals is reason enough to place an animal advocate in court, to assure that the link between animal cruelty and future violent behavior is recognized and acted upon. Current records show that most animal cruelty cases result in Accelerated Rehabilitation (AR) that allows the perpetrator to have no record or are nollied. Connecticut Judicial Department data gathered shows that for all data on animal cruelty from 2002 to 2011, 51 percent of all offenses were nollied, meaning the state agreed not to prosecute and charges were eventually dismissed once the defendant completed the program. An additional 34 percent of all animal cruelty cases were dismissed outright. The remaining 15 percent resulted in guilty findings.

The proclivity to not take animal cruelty seriously is hard to fathom when we consider that Kip Kinkel started by putting firecrackers in the mouth of cats and blowing them up before killing his parents and then going to Thurston High School and killing 2 people and wounding 24. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold bragged to schoolmates about mutilating animals before going to Columbine High School and killing 12 students, one teacher and injuring 21 additional students.

After the horrendous tragedy at Sandy Hook we are all looking for ways to detect the early signs of mental instability. Clearly animal cruelty is one. Since 1971, the FBI has recognized that animal cruelty is a red flag for future violent behavior and has used it in profiling. This bill allows for an animal advocate in court. Through discussions with our own U Conn Law School we will be using law students to act as advocates. This will also be open to any law school in

Connecticut. In addition, law firms have already stepped up and offered their services pro bono. The Department of Agriculture will keep a list of potential advocates and I am happy to note that the Department feels they can do this without incurring a fiscal note. This is really an excellent example of collaboration and partnership to make a good thing happen without a large expenditure of money

As I write this testimony there are over 90 letters of support from ordinary people who totally understand this link between animal cruelty and future violent behavior This is an excellent low cost way to identify mental instability and require treatment as well as possible jail time to people who all too often start their careers of violence on helpless animals

I appreciated the committee's time in considering this bill and urge your support for it. Thank you.



Connecticut Cases of Animal Abuse

January 2012, Madison CT – Dog strangled and left in garbage bag on a dead end street

Desmond was adopted from the The New Haven Animal Shelter by Alex Wullaert. Desmond lived with him for almost a year before being hanged to death after allegedly urinating on Alex's leg. Desmond had no food in his belly, only pieces of plastic, gauze, and paper. Alex admitted to not having money for dog food, but said he gave Desmond leftovers sometimes. An autopsy showed he was covered in bruises, had several broken teeth and several broken ribs. Alex admitted to "spanking" him hard to deter him from barking, and locking him in the bathroom for 12+ hours a day. Alex Wullaert already has an extensive history of violence. Wullaert asked for under the Accelerated Rehabilitation (AR) program that will allow all charges to be dismissed after the probation period ended. Wullaert's attorney refused a five year sentence, suspended after 2, and Alex plead not guilty. He is scheduled to appear in court again on April 11th, 2013.

December 6, 2006, Stratford - Pet Rabbit strangled during domestic dispute, Convicted

Anthony Finelli threatened to bite his wife to death and strangled his family's rabbit. His wife told police Finelli became intoxicated, yelled at their three children and hit her in the arm with a skateboard. He pleaded guilty to one count of "Breach of Peace" for the incident and received a suspended 6 month jail sentence and two years' probation. There were no apparent conditions related to owning animals or required counseling.

October 19, 2010, Shelton - Horse sexually assaulted, Dismissed (Conditional)

A case against Marian Wegeil was dismissed conditional if he completed two years of probation after he touched one of his neighbor's female horses in a sexual manner. He stated that he may have inadvertently put his fingers inside one of the horses but he was merely trying to comfort them. Wegeil claimed he was drinking on the day of the incident. According to news reports, Wegeil was granted accelerated rehabilitation in May 2011. It appears the charges were dismissed on his successful completion of AR.

December 1, 2011, New Britain - Young women raped, kitten's head torn off, dog kicked

Francisco Castellano was convicted of raping a fourteen year old girl for over 4 months and sexually abusing and sexually abused a young girl in 2004. He threatened the victims, threw cans of food at them and kicked the young girl's dog when he would defend his owner. He was also accused of ripping the head of a kitten off in front of one of the victims and her family. This case is still pending. Castellano will appear in court again on April 12, 2013. He has been charged with numerous offences including cruelty to animals, risk of injury to child, sexual assault, illegal sexual contact, unlawful restraint, threatening, and intentional cruelty to persons.