Testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 5566**
An Act Concerning Child Safety by Restricting the Placement of Leghold Traps

February 19, 2013

Dear Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo, and Honorable Members of the Children Committee:

I am writing in SUPPORT of HB 5566, which would restrict the placement of leghold traps. I am a registered voter in Riverside, Connecticut; this bill is extremely important to me. I have also included an editorial that was written by the editor of The Greenwich Time and The Stamford Advocate, Tom Mellana, addressing this topic.

In Connecticut, about 6,000 animals are trapped yearly in barbaric leghold traps; records on the number of non-target (trash) animals are unavailable; they are disposed of by trappers and missing/injured/dead pets are not reported. Cats and dogs have often been found too late to save their lives, suffering the same horrible deaths as wildlife, in agonizing pain, wildly and desperately flailing to escape the powerful grip of the steel trap, often attempting to/chewing off their limbs to get away.

In the wake of the December 14, 2012 Newtown tragic massacre of children, it is especially unconscionable that those with vested interests would still oppose as simple a step to spare any child of pain and injury. It is also extremely selfish of a tiny percentage of CT residents who trap to insist on having their way.

It is hard to comprehend how similar sensible and logical previous bills were so vehemently opposed by the state Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, the Connecticut Trappers Association, Connecticut Farm Bureau, Coalition of Connecticut Sportsmen, etc., claiming that traps present little to no risk to children – even one child saved from pain/suffering is worth passing this bill which would not take away anyone's' rights – why so much irrational opposition?

I also ask that body-crushing traps, known as conibear traps, be included. When not killing animals outright, they cause tremendous suffering. Body-crushing traps pose an extreme safety risk to pets and children alike (not to mention target animals), due to the force with which they slam shut and the amount of damage that they can do.

Leghold traps have been banned by more than 88 nations; the U.S., Canada, and Russia continue to use them. Eight states restrict or ban the use of leghold and body-crushing traps: Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Washington, Arizona, California, Colorado, and Florida.

Leghold traps have been declared inhumane by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the World Veterinary Association, the (U.S.) National Animal Control Association, and the American Animal Hospital Association.

What does it say about a society that allows animals to suffer excruciatingly painful injuries/deaths by resorting to medieval torture instead of learning to coexist with wildlife, using proven non-lethal alternatives? But to potentially expose children to the same is absolutely insane.

The State of Connecticut should neither be condoning such cruelty nor putting our children and companion animals at such unnecessary risk.

I thank you for holding a public hearing on this extremely important bill, and ask that when it comes up for your voting consideration, you vote in SUPPORT of HB 5566.

Sincerely,

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Enclosure: Editorial in Stamford Advocate: End state-sanctioned animal cruelty
End state-sanctioned animal cruelty

Published 5:41 pm, Wednesday, February 6, 2013
Question: What would you call someone who intentionally hurts an animal, any animal, and locks it up to wallow in pain, fear and misery, leaving it to die a slow death, often after hurting itself further in a panicked attempt to free itself from its confines?
The state would call that person an animal abuser, and has laws on the books to punish him.
Strange, then, and tragic, that a person can commit those same behaviors, only this time out in the woods, and the state suddenly calls him a sportsman. It has laws on the books to help him.
It might come as a shock to some that we still allow animal trapping in this state, but allow it we do. Metal clamps that slam shut on an animal's leg, devices that squeeze a body tight underwater until it drowns, are somehow considered acceptable forms of hunting.
It is a cruel practice that belongs to another time. Yet recent efforts to ban trapping in Connecticut have met vociferous opposition from the state Department of Energy & Environmental Protection and so-called sportsmen's groups. It is hard, however, to see anything sporting about nailing a contraption to the ground that will cause an animal hours upon hours of torture followed by death.
Modern-day trappers like to claim that today's traps, including "padded" metal ones, don't cause animals pain. We invite any to provide a demonstration on their own limb as proof.
Padded or not, traps must slam together hard and retain a tight squeeze on a leg or paw to prevent an animal from getting away. According to animal rights organizations that have studied the practice, while the initial snap can cause injury, more severe wounds often occur as trapped animals struggle to free themselves. They break their teeth trying to bite the metal trap, rip their flesh and break their bones as they frantically fight to get away. Animals have even been known chew off their own foot to free themselves.
Sorry if you didn't expect to encounter such a gross image when turning to this page. But that is the terrible reality of trapping.
Most efforts to outlaw trapping have concentrated on the danger the devices pose to pets and even children. Indeed, a bill introduced to the Legislature last year was titled: "An Act Concerning Child Safety by Restricting the Placement of Leghold Traps." It was defeated (see letter to the editor: http://bit.ly/TLupBk).
(See also a Greenwich resident's account of her dog being caught in a trap: http://bit.ly/XP2aQb.)
It is infuriating to imagine a child or pet being injured (in the case of a pet, possibly killed) by a trap. But even if the devices posed zero threat to unintended victims (which trappers often claim), the practice should be unacceptable in a civilized society, regardless of the target. It is cruel to squeeze and drown a beaver to death for its pelt. It is cruel to attempt to control the coyote population by subjecting the animals to metal leg traps.
The subject of hunting has been debated on these pages many times over many years. That is an argument that will not end anytime soon.
But we should all agree that a practice as inhumane as trapping is wrong. Flat-out wrong. It is unconscionable that the state continues to condone such cruelty. It has no place in modern life. The Legislature should ban it, in this session.

Read more: http://www.stamfordadvocate.com/news/article/End-state-sanctioned-animal-cruelty-4257149.php#ixzz2LHPE25Mm