

March 17, 2014 – Public Hearing Testimony

Senator Edward Meyer, Co-Chair
Representative Linda M. Gentile, Co-Chair
Environment Committee
Room 3200, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106



Dear Co-Chair Meyer, Co-Chair Gentile, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Yale University Animal Welfare Alliance, an organization of undergraduate students, we write to request that you pass Section 2 of House Bill No. 5416 to ban the use of gestation crates for mother pigs in our state.

As your constituents, our members ask that you amend the language of the cruelty statutes (Title 53, Chapter 945) to “prohibit confinement of sows during gestation in a manner that prevents them from turning around freely, lying down, standing up, or fully extending their limbs.” As you know, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has already proposed this language.

Confining mother pigs to gestation crates is an unacceptably cruel practice.

In “gestation crates,” pigs -- among the most highly intelligent and social creatures on earth – are immobilized as they endure a cycle of repeated impregnation. The cages are so small that the pigs are unable to turn around or fully extend their limbs. If they can lie down at all, they must push their legs, fragile from lack of use, through the bars into the neighboring crates. In these conditions, it is not surprising that the pigs often become lame due to muscle and bone weakness. Since these highly social and curious animals are denied mental stimulation, many pigs raised in these crates engage in neurotic coping behaviors, such as constantly biting the bars in front of them.

As human beings, we flinch when we hear this, and that flinch is to our credit. Such cruelty stands against one of the common values that our society – and our state – most deeply treasures: treating animals with basic decency.

Gestation crates are unnecessary as well as indecent. Today, cost-efficient group housing systems exist as more humane alternatives that better allow pigs to be pigs. The Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, and which included the former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture – recommended that “all systems that restrict natural movement,” including these crates, be phased out. There is no justification for the continued legality of cruel and inhumane gestation crates.

The Yale Animal Welfare Alliance strongly supports Connecticut joining the nine other states that have already banned these unnecessarily cruel confinement systems by amending our state’s animal cruelty statutes as proposed by the HSUS.

It is important to note that in addition to banning the use of gestation crates, House Bill 5416 as it currently stands proposes, in Section 1, the establishment of a 14-person Livestock Care

Standards Advisory Council. There is no good reason for the two proposals — a gestation crate ban and a livestock council — to be grouped together in one bill. The General Assembly would be better off addressing these issues separately. Designing a committee that fairly protects farmers' interests as well as ensuring safe, humane and environmentally sound livestock practices is complicated and politically challenging. Banning gestation crates is uncomplicated and has overwhelming support.

If you would like to speak with a group of Yale University students about why this legislation matters so much to us as Connecticut voters and residents, please do not hesitate to contact us. Our members are eager to do all they can to ban these cruel practices from our state -- now and for generations to come. We are counting on you to do the right thing.

Sincerely,



Viveca Morris
Yale Animal Welfare Alliance, President
Yale College Class of 2015
viveca.morris@yale.edu



Alex McLeod
Yale Animal Welfare Alliance, Vice President
Yale College Class of 2016
alexander.mcleod@yale.edu



Sarah Lopez
Yale Animal Welfare Alliance, Vice President
Yale College Class of 2016
sarah.lopez@yale.edu



Juno Pinder
Yale Animal Welfare Alliance, Vice President
Yale College Class of 2016
juno.pinder@yale.edu