

Committee on Environment, March 20, 2015
Testimony Concerning Environmental Committee Bills:
S.B. 361; H.B. 5707; H.B. 6034

Dear Co-chair Kennedy, Co-chair Albis, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to express my **SUPPORT of S.B.361, SUPPORT OF H.B. 5707**, and my **OPPOSITION TO H.B. 6034**.

I am a concerned citizen who cares deeply about animals. Animals can't vote, but since I can, I feel obligated to serve as their voice in the political process and express why S.B.361 and H.B. 5707 need to be supported, and why H.B.6034 should be opposed.

IN SUPPORT of S.B. 361- AN ACT INCREASING THE MAXIMUM PENALTY FOR PERSONS CONVICTED OF MALICIOUS AND INTENTIONAL ANIMAL CRUELTY.

Please accept this testimony in SUPPORT SB 361 with the addition of language that would prevent gestation crates from being used in Connecticut. I strongly support increasing the penalties for malicious and intentional animal cruelty. There is a clearly established correlation between cruelty to animals and violence against people, particularly women and children. In that these victims are the least likely to be able to defend and protect themselves, perpetrators must be deterred in the strongest ways possible.

I am also asking that you add language to SB 361 that would prevent gestation crates from coming to Connecticut. 95 percent of Americans believe farm animals should be well-cared for. Like most Americans, Connecticut residents want to see animals, including those raised for food, treated with decency. I am among the 91% of Connecticut voters who want a ban on gestation crates, and I will be following this matter very closely.

I thank the introducers of the four proposed bills this year that would ban gestation crates: Sen. Moore, Rep. Hennessy, Rep. Urban, Rep. Megna, Rep. Camillo, Rep. Miller, and Rep. Baram. The proposed bills were SB 364, HB 5712, HB 5725, HB 5688 (HB 5688 included a ban on battery cages, too). I am disappointed that the Chairs of the Environment Committee have refused to allow any of these four bills to be granted a public hearing.

The intensive confinement of farm animals is already here in Connecticut - chickens confined in tiny cages at KofKoff Egg Farms in eastern CT -- and I don't want to see further expansion of these types of cruel farming practices. The Committee Chairs have said repeatedly that if gestation crates were known to be here in Connecticut, that they would ban them. However, when asked to ban battery cages this year (HB 5688), which ARE here in Connecticut, the Chairs refused.

This behavior is not in line with the wishes of Connecticut voters. A law preventing gestation crates will promote best practices that our local, Connecticut-based, sustainable farmers already follow; protect our family farmers by preventing out-of state factory farms from coming to Connecticut and ruining our rural communities; make state policy clear, which will enhance business opportunities for Connecticut farmers, whose animal welfare-oriented customers

would know with certainty that gestation crates are not used here. Due to the duration and severity of

their confinement, pigs in gestation crates suffer more than almost any other animal used in industrial agribusiness. For several years, they are confined to crates that immobilize them, enduring a cycle of repeated impregnation. These individual cages are approximately 2 feet wide - so small the animals can't even turn around or take more than a step forward or backward. Because they can't move, they suffer crippling muscle and bone deterioration. And since these highly intelligent and social animals are denied any mental stimulation, many become neurotic, engaging in repetitive coping behaviors, such as constantly biting the bars in front of them. *And there is no legitimate reason for it!*

Even major corporations and restaurant chains like *Nestle, McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, Chiptole's* and more than 70 others have announced that they will end gestation crate use in their supply chains. Nine states (included RI and ME) and the European Union have passed legislation to outlaw gestation crates. Smithfield Foods, the nation's largest pig producer, and Cargill have already announced that they will end the confinement of sows in gestation crates in their company-owned facilities. As more states legislate against this cruel practice, Connecticut could become an increasingly viable location for pork mega-factories.

*To be clear: I am requesting a **ban on gestation crates, not a livestock advisory council (or any other type of diversionary nonsense)**. In other states, these councils have been created to actively thwart efforts to protect farm animals from abuse. In 2014, the proposed council (HB 5416) was heavily biased, with only 1 of 15 members representing animal welfare interests as its primary focus. Suggestions that were offered to allow for a balanced council makeup were rejected. Such suggestions included independent veterinarians, certified humane farmers, and CT-NOFA (Northeast Organic Farming Association). Polling shows 91% of Connecticut voters want legislation to prevent gestation crate use (2013 poll)--not a costly bureaucratic roadblock. The legislative proposal is simple: Amend the cruelty statutes (Title 53, Chapter 945) in order 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."*

IN SUPPORT OF H.B.5707 AN ACT REQUIRING CERTAIN HIGHER EDUCATION FACILITIES THAT CONDUCT RESEARCH USING CATS OR DOGS TO ANIMAL RESCUE ORGANIZATIONS PRIOR TO EUTHANIZING ANY SUCH CAT OR DOG, AND PROVIDING FOR THE PROPER SHELTERING OF DOGS.

First ,I want to address the portion regarding the offering of cats and dogs used for research to animal rescue organizations prior to euthanizing them. I have to say that I strongly oppose using animals for research in the first place, but if it must be done, denying them a chance to find a loving and compassionate home thereafter is the equivalent of adding insult to injury. Currently, the opportunity for a post-laboratory life for these animals is completely dependent on the discretion of research workers to volunteer their time to try to find these animals homes. Not surprisingly, most choose not to do so. There exists no federal or state law or regulation that addresses what is to happen to an animal when the testing ends. After all these animals have endured for the sake of humanity, they deserve a chance at a real life!

The second portion of the Bill, the proper sheltering of dogs in extreme weather conditions, is just common sense. It is also particularly urgent at this time. The unprecedented intensity of both the cold and the hot temperatures we've been experiencing here in Connecticut for the last few years is undisputable. One of the most common forms of animal cruelty is that of animals left outside in dangerous weather. Our most constant and loyal companions feel the effects of winter weather as much as we do, yet they are often cast outside to weather the cold or a storm owing to a misconception that the fur on their backs will insulate them from suffering. They are even *more* prone than we are to suffering heat stroke and dehydration during periods of intense heat.

It has long been established that dogs do a lot for us. They have a positive effect on both our physical and mental health and they protect us as well. In addition, recent scientific studies of the brains of dogs show that not only do dogs love us back, they actually see us as their family. It turns out that dogs rely on humans more than they do their own kind for affection, protection and everything in between. Don't we owe it to them?

OPPOSITION TO H.B. 6034-H.B. No. 6034 (RAISED) AN ACT AUTHORIZING BOW AND ARROW HUNTING ON CERTAIN PRIVATE PROPERTY ON SUNDAYS.

I vehemently oppose bow and arrow hunting on Sundays . The practice of hunting animals with bows and arrows is cruel and inhumane. More often than not it results in wounding the animal, causing a slow, crippling and agonizingly painful death. There are more humane ways to control the deer population. There is absolutely no justification for it.

Time and again, Connecticut has historically been in the forefront of legislation and practices to protect the rights of its residents. We serve as examples for other states and for the federal government. As a lifelong resident of this state , I take great pride in that and am very grateful to the lawmakers who have made it possible. I want to be able to take pride in our support of animal protection rights. Please help me to make this happen.

Sincerely,
Marla Shiller
47 Campfield Rd.
Manchester Ct. 06040