April 1, 2015

Joint Committee on Judiciary
Room 2500, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860-240-0530
judtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Re:

- **SUPPORT of HB 6187, AN ACT CONCERNING COURT PROCEEDINGS AND THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS**
- **SUPPORT of SB 1128, AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF ACCELERATED REHABILITATION IN THE CASE OF ANIMAL ABUSE**

Dear Co-Chair Coleman, Co-Chair Tong, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Connecticut supporters of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), I submit this letter in SUPPORT of HB 6187, which would establish a process for appointing an advocate for an animal that is the subject of a criminal court proceeding, and in SUPPORT of SB 1128, which would prevent persons charged with committing animal abuse from using accelerated rehabilitation.

Research has established that there are strong links between violent behaviors toward humans and violent behaviors toward animals. HB 6187 will help to facilitate animal cruelty prosecutions by ensuring appropriate representation for the victims, and SB 1128 will help to ensure that violence toward animals is taken seriously and promotes appropriately severe penalties as well as a record of these crimes in cases where people are responsible for causing animals to suffer.

• Evidence for the need of HB 6187 and SB 1128

A 2013 research report by the Office of Legislative Research (2013-R-0148) describes procedural outcome of animal cruelty offenses from 2002 through 2012 (n = 3,699)[1]. Table 1 shows that 51% of offenses were nolled, 33% were dismissed, 0.2 % resulted in findings of not guilty, and only 16% resulted in guilty findings. That statistic is very concerning given what we know about the often escalating violence that can result from ignoring animal abuse.

• The connection between animal abuse and criminal violence

A number of studies have drawn links between the abuse of animals and violence against people. A 2001-2004 study by the Chicago Police Department "revealed a startling propensity for offenders charged with crimes against animals to commit other violent offenses toward human victims." Of those arrested for animal crimes, 65% had been arrested for battery against another person.[2] Of 36 convicted multiple murderers questioned in one study, 46% admitted committing acts of animal torture as adolescents.[3] And

[1] http://www.cga.ct.gov/2013/rpt/pdf/2013-R-0148.pdf

[2] Degenhardt, B. 2005. *Statistical Summary of Offenders Charged with Crimes against Companion Animals July 2001-July 2005*. Report from the Chicago Police Department.

[3] Cohen, W. (1996). Congressional Register, 142(141), Oct. 3.

of seven school shootings that took place across the country between 1997 and 2001, all involved boys who had previously committed acts of animal cruelty.

- **The connection between animal abuse and domestic abuse**

Pet abuse is one of four predictors of domestic partner violence, according to a six-year "gold standard" study conducted in 11 metropolitan cities.[4] In both domestic violence and child-abuse situations, abusers may manipulate and control their human victims through threatened or actual violence against family pets.

Researchers have found that over 70% of women entering domestic violence shelters reported that their partners had threatened, abused, or killed the family pet.[5] Another study found that in families under supervision for physical abuse of their children, pet abuse was concurrent in 88% of the families.[6]

- **Stopping animal abuse strengthens our communities**

Reporting, investigating, and prosecuting animal cruelty can help take dangerous criminals off the streets. Police know that in homes where animal abuse is a problem, other issues are often concurrent. Acts of animal cruelty are linked to a variety of other crimes, including violence against people, property crimes, and drug or disorderly conduct offenses.[7] Stopping animal abuse in children can help curb violent tendencies before they escalate to include violence against people.

More than a dozen states, including Connecticut, have cross-reporting laws; at least two dozen states have laws, including Connecticut, that allow courts to include pets in protection orders in domestic violence situations; and at least two dozen states, including Connecticut, have counseling provisions in their animal cruelty laws.[8, 9]

The mission of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is to create a humane and sustainable world for all animals—a world that will also benefit people. We believe that teaching humans to behave with kindness and respect toward animals will help build a more humane and better functioning civil society.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,

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[4] Walton-Moss, B. J., Manganello, J., Frye, V., & Campbell, J. C. (2005). "Risk factors for intimate partner violence and associated injury among urban women." *Journal of Community Health, 30*(5), 377–389.
[5] Ascione, F., Weber, C., & Wood D (1997). "Animal Welfare and Domestic Violence". Utah State University, Logan, Utah. Originally submitted to The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation.
[6] DeViney, E., Dickert, J., & Lockwood, R. (1983). "The care of pets within child abusing families." *International Journal for the Study of Animal Problems, 4*, 3321–3329.
[7] Arluke, A., & Lockwood, R. (Eds.). (1997). *Society & Animals, Special Theme Issue: Animal Cruelty,5*(3). Society & Animals Forum (formerly Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals): Washington Grove, Md. 301-963-4751.
[8] The Humane Society of the United States. (2008). First Strike: The Violence Connection.
[9] Ramsey, S., Randour, M.L., & Gupta, M. (2010). "Protecting Domestic Violence Victims by Protecting Their Pets." *Juvenile and Family Justice Today* 19(2), 16-20.