

Testimony Concerning Bills HB6187 and SB1128

Judiciary Committee, April 1, 2015

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Protectors of Animals, Volunteer

I would like to thank the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to express my support of Bill HB 6187 (Desmond's Law) and Bill SB1128.

As a long time animal advocate and volunteer at Protectors of Animals, I fully support a law that takes the needs of our voiceless citizens into account. As our society moves forward in sophistication, we are realizing that there are so many connections between violent crimes and crimes against children and animals, our two most innocent populations. Taking this understanding a step further, we know that we must act, as a civilized society, and protect those who cannot protect themselves. These bills show that we care enough to act. We refuse to settle for anything less. We need to prosecute to the fullest when a crime involves an animal.

When our laws define us as a country that is strict with crimes against animals and we do not give chances to offenders when chances are undeserved, we show future offenders that this is not a road they want to take. Abuse against animals is truly a crime and will be treated as such. We set a precedent that animal abuse will not be tolerated, will be penalized harshly and animals will be given the rights they deserve.

At Protectors of Animals, and in my everyday life involved with animals, I have witnessed many cases of neglect and abuse against animals. Some are blatant and easily recognized, while others are more subtle cases. In each situation, people who care have swept in to tend to the physical and emotional wounds inflicted on the animal, but in almost all the cases, there is no known offender to blame or punish. It is a shame, as there is a lot of suffering happening and no one accountable. When there is a known abuser, that person often just gets a light charge that is not taken seriously.

This past summer, a black and white female cat was left anonymously on the doorstep of POA, in a box. When volunteers found her, they discovered an angry cat, one who was probably shown little love or tenderness in her lifetime, and worst of all, she had a large tumor growing on the top of her head. She needed immediate surgery, which was hard on her. She barely trusted people to begin with, and now she was being handled for surgery and felt more pain before she could recover. Volunteers named her Zinnia.

Over the months, Zinnia healed and began to gain trust. She was an older cat, and lived at the shelter, so she had constant exposure to loving caregivers. Still, she had a tendency to nip and it was difficult to get close to her. I had recently lost a beloved cat of my own and as a volunteer, I asked at the shelter if I could take in one of the harder to place older cats. I wanted a cat that probably would never have a true home of its own, in memory of my cat. My foster team leader showed me Zinnia and I agreed to take her home.

Zinnia fell into a happy routine in our busy animal and child-filled home. My heart soared the day she learned to curl into the cat bed by the fireplace. At Christmastime, she watched me wrap gifts late into the night and I snapped photos to share with the other volunteers, of her laying near bags and ribbons. Zinnia had her ups and downs and her health faltered at times. But we all felt that Zinnia had finally come home. It was one of the most joyous feelings, to know this cat who had spent a lifetime in neglect and hardship could finally purr and feel love. My children bonded with her and we learned how to give her space and when she was open to cuddles.

Sadly, Zinnia began to show signs of more health issues. Just when she was beginning to bloom and know happiness, something that had been unfairly withheld from her for too many years, she passed away. Zinnia was only with us for a few short months, but she learned about purring and fireplaces, children petting her and regular medical care and attention. She learned to trust people and that the world cared. These are the rights that ALL animals deserve. We need to be the voices for cats like Zinnia and all the others, dumped, forgotten, abused, neglected, and worse.

“The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated.”

-Mahatma Ghandi

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,

Heather Davis

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