

Date: February 13, 2015

Committee on Children  
State Capitol Building  
Hartford, Connecticut  
06106

Dear Committee on Children,

I am writing to you in regards to Raised Bill No. 6735, An Act Concerning Animal Assisted Therapy Services, as both a former consumer and a future provider.

When I was an adolescent, I struggled with enormous mental health issues that, at the time, seemed insurmountable. But I was lucky enough to have support from both my family and my therapist, which led to my becoming involved with Animal Assisted Therapy Services. Working with an animal (a Black Lab named Phoebe) gave me hope, opened me up, and led me to the eventual conclusion that recovery was possible.

Now, 10 years later, I am an intern at Soul Friends Inc. in Wallingford, Connecticut where every day I get to see the impact that animals have on our clients. I have seen children learn, laugh, and grow with the help of animals. The relationships they form with the dogs, horses, and Guinea pigs at our agency are priceless because they allow for a unique kind of healing.

The very nature of animals as non-judgmental and unconditionally loving makes them the perfect therapeutic partner. They allow many kids to have a new source of comfort and learning in the therapeutic relationship that would not be possible without the presence of an animal. This is especially important for children that have experienced trauma, who may be hesitant to work with adults, but who may more readily open up and find comfort in the companionship of an animal.

With my personal and professional experience, I have come to the conclusion that Animal Assisted Therapy is an enormously important service that has helped and can continue to help many children within our state if this committee supports it.

It is my hope that you take this testimony and the others like it to heart and support the passing of this bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shenandoah Pettit". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shenandoah Pettit  
MSW Student