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My name is Elease McConnell. I have been a Manchester Animal Control Officer since 1999. I am currently serving as the President of CT Municipal Animal Control Officers Association and I'd like to state firmly that I believe in this joint venture for a legislative task force, as the need for this has been determined and supported by the nearly 300 members of the statewide Hoarding Working Group, which has been meeting and working jointly on this effort since September 2014. I have dealt with hoarding and animal hoarding in my career as an ACO on many occasions. I believe that creating a task force to have multiple resources and agencies come together is a benefit to those that suffer from hoarding disorders, their families and the animals that also suffer in the unbearable conditions hoarding causes. I also see uniting together with specific direction as a benefit to the town and community as well. It is my understanding that by creating this task force the ultimate goal is to have all agencies work together as one solitary unit to achieve a humane goal for all those involved.

If agencies do not know what their roll is and have the ability to turn a blind eye on a hoarding situation this joint venture will not work. There is never just one department or agency that can combat this issue.

I can recall struggling with that one family that owned a plethora of animals that were not in the best conditions with a house deteriorating around them and what I believed to be trash acclimating around the homes yard. Because I am fortunate to work in a town where resources are well known and willing to help out one another I was able to figure out who to call when the need arose. For me several of the agencies had been the health department, building department, fire department, fire marshal's office, adult and senior services, the town attorney and my police department. Over the years I have been able to reach out to persons like Judith Dicine of the State's attorney's office and gather more resources on how to push forward to try and get the necessary help to those families and to share my experiences with other ACO's that have told me that their town's do turn a blind eye because the town agencies that should be there helping simply don't know what to do, don't want to put the time and effort into doing the right thing or simply because one person in one or more agencies do not want to remove a person from their home under the belief that, "A man's home is his castle".

I believe that coming together on this issue is and will be a benefit to all of those that suffer with a hoarding disorder. Hoarding is not limited to the person or animals in the home but also to the community in which they live and the agencies that come into rescue them from themselves. At this time I ask that you support a legislative task force tasked with studying and identifying best practices for addressing and mitigating the issue within our communities moving forward.