

March 20, 2015

Re:

SUPPORT SB 361 (increases penalties for animal cruelty) with the addition of language that would prevent gestation crates from being used in CT

Additionally,

OPPOSE HB 6034, Sunday hunting, and

SUPPORT HB 5707, "Beagle Freedom Bill", outdoor sheltering for dogs

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

Please accept this testimony in **SUPPORT SB 361 with the addition of language that would prevent gestation crates from being used in Connecticut.**

I support increasing the penalties for malicious and intentional animal cruelty, and ask that you add language to SB 361 that would prevent gestation crates from coming to Connecticut. 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.

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 would like to 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 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.

The American Veterinary Medical Association recommends that sow housing "allow sows to express normal patterns of behavior", while noting that "stall systems restrict normal behavioral expression."

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. Major corporations such as Nestle, McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, and more than 70 others have announced that they will end gestation crate use in their supply chains.

A May 2013 statewide survey by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research showed that an overwhelming 91% of Connecticut voters support legislation to ban gestation crates. In addition, an American Farm Bureau poll found that 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.

As more states legislate against this cruel practice, Connecticut could become an increasingly viable location for pork mega-factories.

Connecticut's environmental standards, climate, and high cost of living have not stopped factory farms from coming here. For example, KofKoff Egg Farms in Bozrah intensively confines around 4.7 million birds in battery cages.

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 Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production, a project of The Pew Charitable Trusts and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, concluded in its report (which can be found at www.ncifap.org) that "...After reviewing the literature, visiting production facilities, and listening to producers themselves, the Commission believes that the most intensive confinement systems, such as restrictive veal crates, hog gestation pens, restrictive farrowing crates, and battery cages for poultry, all prevent the animal from a normal range of movement and constitute inhumane treatment." In this report, the Commission also included a recommendation to phase out the most intensive and inhumane production practices to reduce risks to public health and improve animal well-being; these practices included gestation crates, battery cages, veal crates, and other cruel practices.

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." Please use language as provided in the 2015 testimony from The Humane Society of the United States' Connecticut State Director Annie Hornish.

Additionally, I **OPPOSE Sunday hunting (HB 6034)**, because I want my one day of peace in the woods and because bow hunting is inhumane (high crippling rate), and I **SUPPORT HB 5707**, which would provide adoption opportunities for dogs and cats used in certain experiments and which would define outdoor sheltering standards for dogs.

Yours truly,

Karin Barth
224 Mistuxet Ave
Mystic, Ct 06355