

Mark Bailey

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Testimony in support of HB 5707

Dear Members of the Environment Committee,

My name is Mark Bailey. I am a commissioner on the Connecticut State Task Force for the Humane Treatment of Animals in Municipal and Regional Shelters and chairman of the New Haven Humane Commission. I am honored to come before you today as proxy for Michael Freda, chief elected official for North Haven, Connecticut, in strong support of HB 5707, commonly known as the Beagle Freedom Bill. First Selectman Freda, who also serves as chair of the state animal welfare task force, is passionate about this cause, as are many others throughout our state.

To begin, the New Haven Humane Commission, established by virtue of municipal ordinance, and representing our state's second largest city in which at least two publicly funded institutions perform animal testing, officially and unanimously is in favor of HB 5707. In hopes that this bill will become law, the humane commission stands ready to support and, if needed, even facilitate, any and all efforts by our research institutions and other humane agencies toward finding loving homes for dogs and cats no longer needed for testing. Our common concern for the humane welfare and compassionate treatment of all companion animals within our city limits undeniably extends to dogs and cats that have given of themselves for the purpose of research testing and who deserve to thrive in loving homes thereafter.

As a department head and permanent professional member of the Yale University community where animal research also takes place, I have yet to encounter a single member of the faculty, staff, or student body who does not also support HB 5707, no matter their feelings on animal testing. This bill is about looking forward and allowing one more critical component of a caring society to fall into place.

Through their resilience and fortitude, companion animals often are able to sustain a variety of circumstances, even those that are not ideal for them. Yet it is undeniable that dogs and cats

thrive and ultimately are meant to live and interact with humans in homes, where their joy and gratitude become a source of unconditional love for their families. I have a great deal of hands on experience rehoming abandoned and frightened dogs and cats that wind up in our public shelters. I also have been following the extraordinary work of the Beagle Freedom Project and have met and interacted with several dogs who have lived most of their lives in research laboratories. The transition these animals encounter from life in the lab to a loving home is reminiscent of, and in many ways aligns with, the careful yet very feasible transition homeless companion animals also go through from the shelter to family life, even if the original circumstances were different. Simply put, rehoming dogs and cats formerly used for testing has an astonishing success rate, which I know would be the case here in Connecticut as well. Each day we celebrate thousands of homeless animals being welcomed into loving households, and healthy dogs and cats that had been used for testing deserve to be part of that celebration.

In conclusion, I am honored to serve my state as a commissioner on our animal welfare task force. I also am proud that my state is building a legacy of legislative compassion toward animals, recognizing that these efforts also help motivate us to be more caring toward our fellow humans. Whether in reference to animals, who have no actual words to express, or humans, who have a cogent voice, compassion is a common value that serves our society remarkably well and enables us to make things better for all. In the instance of HB 5707, including the need to provide adequate shelter for all dogs as well as homes for animals used in research labs, I strongly believe we are on the right path.

Thank you