

Testimony of Deborah McKeown

**In Support of SB 361 with the addition of language that would prevent gestation crates from being used in CT
In Support of HB 5707 Beagle Freedom Bill, outdoor sheltering for dogs
Oppose HB 6034 Sunday Hunting
March 18, 2015**

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.

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.

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. We cannot allow this to happen.

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.

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,

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