

Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 361(increasing penalties for malicious & intentional animal cruelty) WITH THE ADDITION of language that would prevent gestation crates from being used in CT

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

We are disappointed that the Chairs of the Environment Committee have refused to allow public hearings on HB 5712, HB 5725, HB 5688 and SB 364. However, with SB 361, Connecticut legislators have the opportunity help all animals by including language that would ban one of the most horrific forms of animal cruelty—gestation crates. These are small metal stalls used by industrial pork farms to confine pigs used for breeding. They are 2 ft by 7 ft barren cages that are so small the pigs cannot even turn around. If we were to confine our pets in this manner, we would be guilty of animal abuse! Scientific research has shown that pigs are extremely intelligent, so it's no wonder that sows confined in these crates quickly go insane from frustration and loneliness. Even the American Veterinary Medical Association has stated that “stall systems restrict normal behavioral expression” and are, therefore, not appropriate.

To deny a ban on gestation crates by suggesting that factory farming/intensive confinement does not exist in CT is inaccurate – it is here already. In my district, we have the infamous KofKoff Egg Farms (Bozrah) which confines approximately 4.7 million birds in cages that are not unlike gestation crates. We do not want to see these factory farming practices expanded in our state!

Polls clearly indicate that Connecticut voters do not want gestation crates to be legal in our state. A statewide survey by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research showed an astounding 91% of Connecticut voters want to ban these. The proposal to create an "advisory council" is NOT acceptable. It would simply add *another* level of bureaucracy that would more than likely block meaningful legislation to help farm animals. It is noteworthy that this “advisory council” tactic is being used by factory farming interests in other states.

Presently, nine US states (including RI and ME) and the European Union have passed legislation to ban gestation crates. Smithfield Foods and Hormel have announced that they will end confinement of pigs in their company-owned facilities. Even McDonald's and Burger King have announced that they will end the use of gestation crates in their supply chain.

We need to support local Connecticut farmers who farm humanely. The only way to accomplish this is to legislate a ban on this egregious practice of the industrial factory farming system.

No gestation crates and no livestock advisory council in CT!