

March 18, 2015

Senator Ted Kennedy, Jr., Co-Chair
Representative James Albis, Co-Chair
Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106



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

On behalf of the Yale University Animal Welfare Alliance, an organization of undergraduate students, I write to request that you **support SB 361 with the addition of language that would ban the use of gestation crates for mother pigs in our state.**

We support increasing the penalties for malicious and intentional animal cruelty, and ask that you add language to SB 361 that would “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.” I am among the 91% of Connecticut voters who want a ban on gestation crates, and I will be following this matter very closely.

Confining mother pigs to gestation crates is an unacceptably cruel practice.

In “gestation crates,” pigs – highly intelligent and social creatures on earth – are immobilized as they endure a cycle of repeated impregnation. The cages are so small that the pigs are unable to turn around or fully extend their limbs. If they can lie down at all, they must push their legs, fragile from lack of use, through the bars into the neighboring crates. In these conditions, it is not surprising that the pigs often become lame due to muscle and bone weakness. Since these highly social and curious animals are denied mental stimulation, many pigs raised in these crates engage in neurotic coping behaviors, such as constantly biting the bars in front of them.

As human beings, we flinch when we hear this, and that flinch is to our credit. Such cruelty stands against one of the common values that our society – and our state – most deeply treasures: treating animals with basic decency.

Gestation crates are unnecessary as well as indecent. Today, cost-efficient group housing systems exist as more humane alternatives that better allow pigs to be pigs. The Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, and which included the former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture – recommended that “all systems that restrict natural movement,” including these crates, be phased out. There is no justification for the continued legality of cruel crates.

The Yale Animal Welfare Alliance strongly supports Connecticut joining the nine other states that have already banned these confinement systems by passing SB 361 with the addition of language that would prevent gestation crates.

If you would like to speak with a group of Yale University students about why this legislation matters so much to us as Connecticut voters and residents, please do not hesitate to contact us. Our members are eager to do all they can to ban these cruel practices from our state – now and for generations to come. We are counting on you to do the right thing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Viveca Morris".

Viveca Morris
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