

March 30, 2015

Re: SUPPORT of HB 6187, AN ACT CONCERNING COURT PROCEEDINGS AND THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS and SUPPORT of SB 1128, AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF ACCELERATED REHABILITATION IN THE CASE OF ANIMAL ABUSE

Dear Co-Chair Coleman, Co-Chair Tong, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Please accept this testimony in SUPPORT of HB 6187, which would establish a process for appointing an advocate for an animal that is the subject of a criminal court proceeding, and in SUPPORT of SB 1128, which would prevent persons charged with committing animal abuse from using accelerated rehabilitation.

HB 6187 will help to facilitate animal cruelty prosecutions by ensuring appropriate representation for the victims.

SB 1128 will help to ensure that violence toward animals is taken seriously and promotes appropriately severe penalties as well as a record of these crimes in cases where people are responsible for causing animals to suffer.

A number of studies have drawn links between the abuse of animals and violence against people.

- Pet abuse is associated with domestic violence.
- Acts of animal cruelty are linked to a variety of other crimes, including violence against people, property crimes, and drug or disorderly conduct offenses.

We need to take animal abuse more seriously. A 2013 research report by the Office of Legislative Research (2013-R-0148) describes procedural outcome of animal cruelty offenses from 2002 through 2012 (n = 3,699). Table 1 shows that 51% of offenses were nolle (this means that the prosecutor decided not to prosecute), 33% were dismissed, 0.2 % resulted in findings of not guilty, and only 16% resulted in guilty findings.

I strongly encourage you to read the OLR report (2013-R-0148) in order to get the big picture view of how animal cruelty cases are treated in Connecticut, namely, that very few are prosecuted. These two bills will encourage animal cruelty cases to be taken with the seriousness they deserve.

On a personal note, I have been an advocate for animals my whole life. I ask for your support on both of these bills because I believe they will make a difference in the rise of these crimes against animals. I cannot attend to testify in person as I have another meeting scheduled during that time dealing with animal welfare. If you would like to discuss these bills and my commitment to them, please contact me.

With appreciation for your advocacy for animals.

Yours truly,
Paula L. Poplawski

387 Steele Street
New Britain, CT 06052
860-224-108