

Testimony from Colette S. Griffin
Co-Chair of Connecticut Bar Association Animal Law Section

April 1, 2015

Joint Committee Judiciary
Room 2500, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Support of HB 6187
An Act Concerning Court Proceedings and the Protection of Animals

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

On behalf of the Connecticut Bar Association Animal Law Section, I submit this letter in support of HB 6187, a bill that would establish a process for appointing an advocate for an animal that is the subject of a criminal court proceeding.

Since beginning in my individual law career, I have been interested and participated in various cases involving animals and animal welfare. Research has established that there are strong links between violent behaviors toward humans and violent behaviors toward animals. The Connecticut Bar Association Animal Law Section along with UCONN Law School Animal Law Section held a conference which included the topic of the link of violence and the strong need to take violence against animals seriously. HB 6187 will help to facilitate animal cruelty prosecution by helping to ensure that the victims of such crimes would be represented in said proceedings.

The evidence for the need for passage of HB 6187 is overwhelming. A 2013 research report by the Office of the Legislative Research describes the procedural outcome of animal cruelty cases from 2002 through 2012. The OLR report (2013-R-0148) identifies that of the 3,699 animal cruelty cases, 51% of the offenses were nolle and 33% of the cases were dismissed. The statistics give rise to significant concerns as to the outcome of the animal cruelty cases. Court appointed advocates would facilitate a meaningful process in that the victim of the alleged crime would have representation, thus the need for HB 6187.

HB 6187 would help to facilitate meaningful outcomes in cases of animal abuse which is particularly critical in light of the vast evidence between animal abuse and criminal violence. Pet abuse has been found to be one of four predictors of domestic partner violence according to studies originated out of Utah State University. It is clear that as a society that cruelty towards animals is less tolerable as is evidenced in the increasing penalties for animal cruelty as well as the fact that almost every State in the Union has adopted felony cruelty statutes. Given these factors, the Connecticut Bar Association Animal Law Section asks that you vote favorably for HB 6187 as this bill will certainly go a long way in assisting in the prosecution of these cases.

Should further information be helpful, please do not hesitate to contact me directly or any member of the Connecticut Bar Association Animal Law Section.

Respectfully submitted,

Colette S. Griffin

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