

**TESTIMONY CONCERNING HB 6187: AN ACT CONCERNING THE  
PROTECTION OF ANIMALS THAT ARE THE SUBJECT OF CRIMINAL COURT  
PROCEEDINGS and  
SB 1128: AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE OF ACCELERATED REHABILITATION  
IN THE CASE OF ANIMAL ABUSE**

Judiciary Committee, Wednesday, April 1, 2015

Jamila Hadj Salem

I would like to thank the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 6187: AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS THAT ARE THE SUBJECT OF CRIMINAL COURT PROCEEDINGS and SB 1128: AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE OF ACCELERATED REHABILITATION IN THE CASE OF ANIMAL ABUSE.

Desmond's law (HB 6187) was named after a poor dog who suffered horrible at the hands of a malicious person. Every day, dogs, cats, and other animals are abused with impunity, since everyone (especially the perpetrators) knows the penalties are laughable, and the animals have no representation in court. The predators in our communities prey on the weakest members--animals, as well as children--and when they are caught, either nothing happens, or they are given a fine, or accelerated rehabilitation. Rarely are they held accountable for their actions. Desmond was beaten and tortured before he was strangled to death. If this had happened to anyone with a human voice, the outcries would deafen the courtrooms. Since it happened to a dog, who couldn't cry out for himself, the perpetrator merely got accelerated rehabilitation, a joke. This type of story repeats itself over and over again, across the country and world. Now, though, in Connecticut, we have the opportunity to help the victims--the animals who cannot represent themselves in a court of law. Over the years, society has realized children need representation, someone to advocate for them and help only them in abuse situations. We desperately need this type of advocate for animals too. While stories like Desmond's might continue (at least until our society moves away from violence) we need to provide support for animals that can't speak for themselves. Allowing murderers and torturers to get away with the violent acts they commit on animals is insufferable; it is not alright to hurt anything, no matter the species, and by making it mandatory that animals have a strong advocate on their side, we're helping the voiceless multitude that so urgently needs a voice.

Also, the penalty of accelerated rehabilitation is not nearly harsh enough for the crimes committed on these animals. By its very nature, accelerated rehab is given to those whose crimes are deemed not serious in nature. The torturing of *any* animal--whether it be two-legged, four-legged, or tailed--is extremely serious, and I would not want anyone who could torture a living being as my neighbor, or even in my neighborhood. A person who could do something like that has something very wrong with them and accelerated rehab is not the answer to dealing with them. They need to be treated as seriously as anyone would who could hurt children or even adults; it disconcerts me to no end that hurting an animals is considered "not serious" in the eyes of the law. It has been proven time and time again that those who can hurt one species will willingly (and often do) hurt another. Serial killers are the prime example of this. Are they not "serious"?

Those who would mercilessly harm innocent animals need to know there are people fighting for their victims, and they *will* prosecute the bad guys to gain justice for the abused animals.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify, and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Jamila HadjSalem  
Stafford, CT