

**Moniz-Carroll, Rhonda**

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**From:** Erica Scherzer <erica.scherzer@uconn.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 31, 2015 2:17 PM  
**To:** JudTestimony  
**Subject:** H.B. No. 6187

**H.B. No. 6187 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS THAT ARE THE SUBJECT OF CRIMINAL COURT PROCEEDINGS.**

I am writing in support of the above-captioned bill.

I am a third-year, evening division law student at UConn. I have both my own pets and foster animals. While caring for animals, I have learned how resilient animals are and that even minimal human intervention can have a huge impact on an animal's welfare. Animals are adept at hiding physical pain, and have an amazing ability to heal. My experiences have been challenging at times, but very rewarding.

As a law student, I would welcome the opportunity to serve as an animal advocate. Practice-based learning is an academic requirement for graduation. Animal advocacy would allow law students to gain practice experience under supervision. Our family law and criminal casebooks teach us legal procedure as it applies to human parties, child custody, and to property. What happens to family pets is also part of the reality of households in crisis, and this issue must remain on the radar of practitioners. Pets are often considered family members, and factor into decision-making of victims in domestic violence situations. Inevitably, something needs to happen with animals when they have nowhere to go, due to abuse, imprisonment, eviction, inability to care, etc. Student animal advocates can help streamline the placement process into shelters, foster care, or in some cases destruction, within in a structured, transparent legal framework.

Student advocates provide support at little or no cost, benefitting both animal and human victims. Law students have the time and the ability to offer pro bono legal services. We do not face competing client obligations or the pressure for billable hours that most lawyers do. For students who are passionate about animal welfare, like me, it would be an opportunity to advocate for a meaningful cause.

Respectfully yours,  
Erica Scherzer