

## **Testimony Concerning HB 6187 (“Desmond’s Law”) and SB 1128**

**Judiciary Committee**

**April 1, 2015**

**Ellen Wilson**

I would like to thank the Judiciary committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 6187 (“Desmond’s Law”) and SB 1128.

I care very much about animals and believe that as a civilized society we must treat animals humanely. As a former Spanish teacher at Canterbury School in New Milford, I led a service trip to Puerto Rico for students in the summers of 2013 and 2014 to work as volunteers at Save a Sato, a street dog rescue organization and shelter on the island that rescued my dog from the streets fourteen years ago when she was just a puppy. Although Canterbury offers other service trips, the students I took chose this trip because they love dogs and wanted to help those that have been abused, neglected, or thrown out into the streets. Besides wanting to volunteer at the shelter myself, I offered the trip to give students the opportunity to experience the sense of satisfaction that comes from doing service work and to educate the younger generation about our responsibility to speak for those who can’t protect themselves.

My support of these bills goes beyond my love of animals, however. People who are violent towards others or neglect those for whom they are responsible often face criminal charges. We teach our children that hurting others is wrong. But what message are we sending to children when we allow animals to be treated by humans in ways that cause suffering? We are showing them that either we are saying one thing but doing another or that there are those that matter and those that don’t.

To some people, either consciously or subconsciously, there are those who matter more and those who matter less. If we aren’t members of one of the latter groups we may not pick up on the subtleties around us although members of those groups certainly will. No person is inherently better or worse than any other person due to their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or ethnicity. All people feel pain and fear and so do animals. We must send the message that it is wrong to hurt others, no matter who the others are or how we feel about them.

Desmond, the dog for which SB 1128 is named, was beaten, tortured, and strangled to death. I am appalled and angered that Desmond’s killer got off with Accelerated Rehab because the crime was deemed not serious in nature. This bears repeating:

committing battery, torture, and murder was labeled “not serious in nature”. The fact that these acts of violence were committed against an animal rather than a person does not change the scary reality that the perpetrator lacks a conscience and this makes him or her a danger to society.

Finally, people who hurt other people often start by hurting animals. By adopting and enforcing punishments that more accurately reflect the seriousness of their actions combined with mandatory psychological treatment rather than waiting to punish violent behavior until it is directed at humans, it would make a statement that as a society we will not tolerate cruelty of any sort and as a result, fewer offenders would go on to abuse people.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I urge you to strongly support these important bills.

Thank you,

Ellen Wilson  
New Milford