

**Testimony from Katherine Throckmorton  
On Behalf of the Animal Law Section of the Connecticut Bar Association**

**April 6, 2015**

Judiciary Committee  
Room 2500  
Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106  
Re: Testimony Supporting Raised SB-1128

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

The Animal Law Section of the Connecticut Bar Association supports Raised SB-1128 An Act Prohibiting the Use of Accelerated Rehabilitation in the Case of Animal Abuse.

A program established under C.G.S. 54-56e provides for accelerated rehabilitation (AR) in the case of persons accused of crimes punishable by prison time, which crimes “are not of a serious nature.” In the case of those charged under C.G.S. 53-247, the animal cruelty statute, the program is available, with few statutory exceptions, to anyone without previous record of conviction of a crime and who the court believes “will *probably* [emphasis added] not offend in the future.” In the case of animal abuse, there is no mandatory program for offenders other than probation no greater than two years. Subsequent to completing probation, the offender’s record is erased.

The availability of AR to animal cruelty dates back to when animal abuse wasn’t deemed serious. But society has evolved considerably from the time of Descartes’ theories on how animals experience pain. And we continue to explore and learn. It is now well established that the abuse of animals is linked to domestic violence and a potential indicator of that and other violent behavior. Connecticut acknowledges this link in *PA No.14-70 AN ACT CONCERNING CROSS-REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND ANIMAL CRUELTY* by requiring cross reporting between animal control officers suspecting animal abuse and Department of Children and Families staff suspecting animal abuse in the course of their employment. Further, the role of animals has developed over time – they are integral in search and rescue, act as therapy animals and are valued companion animals.

According to the Office of Legislative Research, a 2013 research report summarizing the results of 3,699 animal cruelty offenses brought from 2002 to 2012 concludes that 51% of offenses were dropped before prosecution,<sup>1</sup> an indication that lesser infractions likely don't see the light of a courtroom. Moreover, any argument that the AR program is unavailable to those committing egregious offenses is not borne out in practice. Among other examples, a recent noteworthy case relates to "Desmond," a dog beaten, starved and eventually strangled to death by his owner. The offender's record of that crime is due to be expunged next week.

The Animal Law Section is unaware of any state or federal constitutional right to erase a record of violence. With respect to violations of C.G.S. 53-247, AR is an outdated accommodation that trivializes the seriousness of animal abuse and shields vital information from those entering into future business or personal relationships with the offender. By removing this tool from the judiciary repertoire, Connecticut provides protections to the sentient creatures who have become our helpers and companions, as well as striking a more even balance between the rights of those who abuse animals and the transparency Connecticut owes the public.

The Animal Law Section of the Connecticut Bar Association requests full legislative support of this timely and important bill.

Respectfully submitted,



Katherine Throckmorton  
Legislative Liaison  
Executive Committee Member  
Animal Law Section of the CBA

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2013/rpt/pdf/2013-R-0148.pdf>