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From: Victoria G <victoria.gsc@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 01, 2015 1:32 AM
To: JudTestimony
Subject: Testimony in Support of: HB 6187, to require the appointment of court advocates for animals, and SB 1128, to prohibit Accelerated Rehabilitation in animal cruelty cases"

Testimony in Support of HB 6187, to require the appointment of court advocates for animals, and SB 1128, to prohibit Accelerated Rehabilitation in animal cruelty cases

Victoria Gasca

West Hartford, CT 06110

04/01/2015

Dear Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

As a constituent, I urge you to support HB 6187, to require the appointment of court advocates for animals and SB 1128, to prohibit Accelerated Rehabilitation in animal cruelty cases.

The same way children are supported and appointed a representative to speak on their behalf, animals should also be protected in our state. Animal abuse is a serious issue as well as a concern for public safety.

Most have heard the news about Ringling Brothers cessation of their elephant acts for 2018. What you may not have heard is that Ringling Bros. Circus was fined \$270,000 by USDA for the mistreatment of animals back in 2011. This small fine was an accumulation of violations committed between 2007 and 2011. Four years of animal abuse and cruelty only fined and then ignored. Four years later and the pressure from public outrage led the circus to release its elephants. Only, not right away, they still need three more years to inflict more pain to these precious creatures. If this lawsuit had gone to court I would be enraged if there were no appointed advocates to speak on behalf of the animals' welfare. This is a federal issue, but if it was a state one I want my state to have the right bills in place that would protect animals and allow court advocates to urge for the appropriate consequence for such heinous acts. Serious crime serious penalty.

Of course, penalties cannot be charged appropriately if Accelerated Rehabilitation is not prohibited in animal cruelty cases. This diversionary pre-trial program is not an appropriate response to the serious nature that is an animal cruelty crime. It is well supported that violence against animals is linked to aggression toward people, violent behavior and even homicide.

A person who has beaten, starved and strangled to death a dog (Desmond's case for example) completes the AR program, thus their records expunged, then they commit another crime; how can the court know that they are a repeated offender? How can this person receive the adequate penalty and avoid being offered AR again? How can more crimes against animals be prevented if cases are dismissed or withdrawn because of AR? Animal abuse does not stop with the animal, as if that was not enough, it can lead and spread to people.

HB 6187 and SB 1128 are needed because the presence of court advocates for animals and the prohibition on the use of Accelerated Rehabilitation would result in better outcomes not just the animals but for the public. Penalties should be consistent with the gravity of the crime committed.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony in support of HB 6187, to require the appointment of court advocates for animals and SB 1128, to prohibit Accelerated Rehabilitation in animal cruelty cases.

Sincerely,

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Victoria Gasca