

April 1, 2015

Re: **SUPPORT of HB 6187, AN ACT CONCERNING COURT PROCEEDINGS AND THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS**

and

SUPPORT of SB 1128, AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF ACCELERATED REHABILITATION IN THE CASE OF ANIMAL ABUSE.

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

Please accept this testimony in SUPPORT of HB 6187, which would establish a process for appointing an advocate for an animal that is the subject of a criminal court proceeding, and in SUPPORT of SB 1128, which would prevent persons charged with committing animal abuse from using accelerated rehabilitation.

I have devoted my education and career to the field of mental health and psychology, and have unfortunately been able to see first-hand that the research and sobering statistics on the very real link between animal abuse and violence against people is accurate, truthful, and exists here in Connecticut. The most recent research suggests the following:

- 71% of pet-owning women entering domestic violence shelters reported that their batterer had injured, maimed, killed or threatened family pets; 32% reported their children had hurt or killed animals
- Of the 68% of battered women who reported violence against their animals, 75% of these incidents occurred in the presence of children
- Abusers kill, harm, or threaten children's pets to coerce them into sexual abuse or to force them to remain silent about abuse. Disturbed children then kill or harm animals to emulate their parents' conduct.
- There are many studies that support this, but in 1 particular study, 70% of animal abusers also had records for other crimes. Domestic violence victims whose animals were abused saw the animal cruelty as one more violent episode of a long history of indiscriminate violence aimed at them and their vulnerability
- **Investigation of animal abuse is often the first point of social services intervention for a family in trouble. ANIMAL CRUELTY PROBLEMS ARE PEOPLE PROBLEMS. WHEN ANIMALS ARE ABUSED, PEOPLE ARE AT-RISK.**

In addition to these facts, it is also important to mention that the data also strongly indicates that acts of animal cruelty are linked to a variety of other crimes, including property crimes, drug offenses, and disorderly conduct offenses.

HB 6187 will help to facilitate animal cruelty prosecutions by ensuring appropriate representation for the victims. SB 1128 will help to ensure that violence towards animals is taken seriously and promotes

appropriately severe penalties as well as a record of these crimes in cases where people are responsible for causing animals to suffer.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Malkin

4 Highfield Lane

North Branford, CT 06471