



State of Connecticut

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April 1, 2015

Sen. Coleman, Rep. Tong, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

Please consider this testimony in support of [SB 1128](#): **An Act Prohibiting Accelerated Rehabilitation In The Case of Animal Abuse.**

In the last five years, Connecticut has seen some terrible cases of animal abuse.

In October 2010, a Shelton man sexually abused a neighbor's horse. In 2011, four alpacas were stabbed to death on a farm in Ivoryton, in my district. Also in 2011, a former Branford resident beat, starved, and kicked his dog for months, eventually strangling him.

In each and every case, the defendants received Accelerated Rehabilitation. They paid a fee, were under observation by the court for a prescribed period of time, and if they did not violate the judges' orders, they were set free, and their records wiped clean.

This is particularly troubling in the Branford case. The defendant had previously been charged with attempting to strangle his girlfriend, but after completing a domestic violence program, the charges were also dropped. Should the defendant apply for future employment serving animals, children, the elderly, or any vulnerable population, potential employers will see no record of a pattern of abuse. This is wrong.

As the Connecticut legislature continues to focus on strengthening domestic violence statutes and protections, we must recognize the relationship between animal cruelty and domestic violence, and document that link for all concerned. Keeping records of incidences of animal abuse and domestic violence allows patterns to emerge, promotes appropriate assistance to the abuser, and appropriate protections to children, partners, and the elderly, as well as animals themselves.

This link between animal abuse and domestic violence generated a new statute in 2011, PA-194, requiring staff of Department of Children and Families who were investigating reports of child abuse to report potential animal abuse to animal control officers/the Department of Agriculture if there was an animal present in the home. If animal abuse is reported to animal control officers/Dept. of Agriculture, DCF is required to investigate potential child abuse in the home. How effective will this new reporting requirement be, if convictions of animal abuse are removed from a defendant's record?

I will include an attachment from the Safe Passage organization with my testimony entitled “Power & Control Tactics: Using Animal Cruelty As Part of Domestic Violence” which details various examples of the link between both. One such tactic is **Intimidation**: harming or killing a pet and threatening that the same thing will happen to the partner or elderly parent if they do not comply with the abuser’s demands. Another is **Using Children**: Harming or killing the children’s pet in order to intimidate them, or blaming the “disappearance” of the pet on the adult victim, in order to create a wedge between them and the children. It is these very acts that often cause victims of domestic violence to stay in a life-threatening situation – over 70% of women will not leave a violent home if their pet is in danger.

We must do better for these animals and the families who love them. We must do better to prevent future acts of abuse, by keeping those who commit harm from our most vulnerable citizens. In Connecticut, there should be no free ride for abuse.

I thank you for your consideration of **SB 1128**.