

February 16, 2015

**Committee on Children
Public Hearing Testimony**

Raised Bill No. 6725 AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL ASSISTED THERAPY SERVICES

Dear members of the Committee on Children,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify in Support of H.B. 6725.

I am a past President of Tails of Joy, Inc., an all-volunteer animal assisted therapy group serving Hartford, Tolland and Windham counties. Tails of Joy was established in 1995 by a group of handlers who saw the need to formalize the provision of animal therapy with standards of skill and aptitude as they visited nursing home residents. Over the last twenty years the impact of our therapy teams has widened and standards have been modified to accommodate new settings and improved volunteer protocols.

The need for additional standards for therapy teams working with victims of a tragedy became apparent in the wake recent events in Connecticut. Additionally, having a system in place for an organized response by these teams in time of a crisis is essential to provide the best service to CT residents.

I support H.B. 6725 as it clarifies both the creation of a statewide coordinated volunteer animal critical incident response team and provision of ongoing animal assisted therapy by mental health professionals.

I thank you for considering my testimony on this important piece of legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Jennings
Cromwell, CT 06416
Past President, Tails of Joy, Inc.
Animal Assisted Crisis Response Committee Member, Tails of Joy, Inc.