

Testimony Concerning HB 5315:

AN ACT CONCERNING THE PREVENTION OF THE HABITUATION OF POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ANIMALS, THE POSTING OF INFORMATIONAL NOTICES CONCERNING ENCOUNTERS WITH WILDLIFE AND THE STATUS OF SNAPPING TURTLES UNDER STATE LAW

Environment Committee Wednesday, February 24, 2016
Jamila HadjSalem

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5315: AN ACT CONCERNING THE PREVENTION OF THE HABITUATION OF POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ANIMALS, THE POSTING OF INFORMATIONAL NOTICES CONCERNING ENCOUNTERS WITH WILDLIFE AND THE STATUS OF SNAPPING TURTLES UNDER STATE LAW

The state of Connecticut has absolutely no signage at any state parks or recreational areas indicating the proper measures that should be taken when an outdoor enthusiast/hiker/biker/etc. encounters wildlife, especially bears. It is important that the state puts up information regarding how to act in such circumstances, since human encroachment on wildlife areas make it more and more likely that the two will run into each other. As is evidenced by the terrible, tragic ordeal down in Sessions Woods, Burlington this past summer, bears can and will approach hikers and others outside in their territory. The hiker in that case clearly did not know how to respond to the bear, resulting in the DEEP killing the bear and his traveling companion, which then led to breaches of confidence that the DEEP did the right thing, and general public uneasiness and mistrust. If there had been signs posted in areas that outdoor enthusiasts frequent, it is very possible the whole tragedy could have been avoided, thus saving the two bears' lives and the reputation of the DEEP's assessment of controversial circumstances, since there was such a public outcry against the DEEP killing the bears.

This case alone proves that there is no general bank of common sense from which the public can draw on to avoid contact with bears, and other wildlife, being so removed as we are from nature as a whole. While some people certainly will do the right thing regarding bears, most don't even know what the right thing is, and we need education in the form of signage to inform people about conditions and situations they would otherwise be clueless in. It is imperative to the safety of all outdoor enthusiasts, as well as to the safety of the wildlife and bears themselves. It would cost the state of Connecticut far less to put up preventative signs now than pay the price for unwanted encounters in the future.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

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