



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

REPRESENTATIVE GAIL LAVIELLE
ONE HUNDRED FORTY-THIRD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 4200
300 CAPITOL AVENUE
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591

CAPITOL: (860) 240-8700
TOLL FREE: (800) 842-1423
Gail.Lavielle@housegop.ct.gov

RANKING MEMBER
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Testimony

in Support of

HB 5147: An Act Increasing the Maximum Penalty for Persons Convicted of Subsequent Offenses of Malicious and Intentional Animal Cruelty

Environment Committee

February 19, 2016

Good afternoon, Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, Senator Chapin, Representative Shaban, and distinguished members of the Environment Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 5147, An Act Increasing the Maximum Penalty for Persons Convicted of Subsequent Offenses of Malicious and Intentional Animal Cruelty.

This bill would increase the penalty for repeat animal cruelty offenses to a class C felony.

I strongly support this bill. I believe that there is no excuse or valid reason for intentional cruelty to animals. I would respectfully make one suggestion, which would involve slightly amending lines 10-12 to read: "while performing medical research according to approved protocols as an employee of, student in, or person associated with any hospital, educational institution, or laboratory".

My thanks to the Committee for raising this bill.

Representative Gail Lavielle
143rd district



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Testimony

in Support of

SJ 5: Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution Concerning the Environment and Natural Resources of the State

Environment Committee

February 19, 2016

Good afternoon, Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, Senator Chapin, Representative Shaban, and distinguished members of the Environment Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SJ5, a Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution Concerning the Environment and Natural Resources of the the State.

The constitutional amendment proposed by this bill would require:

- That any state land held for conservation purposes be sold or transferred only with the approval of two-thirds of the General Assembly following a public hearing
- That any funds received by the state through the disposal of conservation land be used for the acquisition of land with conservation value equal to that of the original parcel.

One of Connecticut's greatest attractions as a place to live is its extraordinarily beautiful natural landscape. This is because our state's residents of our state set great value, fortunately, on protecting open space and making it accessible to the public.

Nevertheless, the General Assembly has firmly established a procedure that makes it very easy to violate the public trust by legislatively transferring ownership of state-owned open space lands to private owners or municipalities with no responsibility or obligation to protect them.

We should not need a constitutional amendment to protect something that is already meant to be protected, but because of the process surrounding the annual conveyance bill, we do.

A few of the characteristics of that process are:

- Bundling all land conveyance requests into one bill, so that none can be voted on separately, and last-minute passage of the bill that does not allow proper scrutiny
- No possibility of public hearings, either in the legislature or in the districts where lands are located, before the votes
- No requirement that the state be compensated for conveyance of open space lands that have served as an asset to the public – which would at least provide funds for the acquisition of similar land for conservation use

If we are to ensure the protection of Connecticut's state-owned open space, we must completely reform the legislative process surrounding the annual conveyance bill. Even a constitutional amendment might not be sufficient to bring about full reform.

I respectfully suggest to the Committee, therefore, that the legislature set in motion both this resolution for a constitutional amendment and full legislative reform of the process surrounding the conveyance bill. Statutory reform is all the more desirable given the complexity of the constitutional amendment process and its uncertainty: we all know the history of the constitutional spending cap amendment, which was approved by more than 80% of Connecticut's voters 25 years ago, and has still not, to this day, been implemented by the General Assembly.

I urge the Committee both to pass this resolution and to raise legislation reforming the legislative process for land conveyance.