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To: INSTestimony
Subject: Testimony Concerning HB 5443

Testimony Concerning HB 5443
Insurance Committee, March 3, 2016

Ellen Wilson,
Concerned citizen

I would like to thank the Insurance Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5443, the Anti-Breed Discrimination Bill.

I care very much about all animals but dogs are at the top of my list. Some of the nicest dogs I have known have been among the breeds that have been banned so this lumping together of all dogs based on their breed disturbs me. In my animal rescue work, I once spoke to a veterinarian who told me that the worst dog bite she has ever had was from a golden retriever, which is considered one of the gentlest breeds. We say that you shouldn't prejudge people based on their race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or numerous other factors because stereotypes don't fit all, or even most, members of a group. This is true of dogs as well.

Although I don't disagree that some dogs of the breeds that get banned have bitten people, I have been around lots of dogs in my life and none of the dogs I personally knew that bit someone were of these breeds. I would like to add that these biting incidents were often due to parents not teaching their child how to behave around dogs. Parents must take responsibility for supervising their child adequately and although I love dogs, I was always extra-watchful of my children around a dog that was new to us. An energetic two year-old who pulls on a dog's ears or tries to stick his fingers in a dog's eyes is likely going to get bitten, and this doesn't make a dog mean. After all, toddlers are constantly exploring their environment and this situation is not hard to anticipate. Consider two variations on my scenario—one in which the dog is a bully breed or bully breed mix and the other in which the dog is a golden retriever. I would venture a guess that the bully breed would be more likely to be reported as vicious since it's behavior fits the negative stereotype. I believe that with the golden it would be chalked up to the baby hurting the dog and the dog feeling like it needed to protect itself.

My family and I will be moving in June and it may or may not be within Connecticut. I am proud that our state is making good progress in creating laws that protect animals from inhumane treatment and I will continue to be active in this cause no matter where I live. In researching towns where we may end up living, part of my research involves finding out if there are breed bans. I will avoid towns with breed bans if at all possible because I don't want to live where I am not free to adopt a rescue dog whose mix includes one of these breeds, simply because of the hysteria caused by blanket generalizations and ignorance. I am angered that some insurance companies refuse homeowner's insurance to people who have specific breeds of dogs and I refuse to purchase any product they sell.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I ask that you strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Ellen Wilson

New Milford, CT