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Sent: Thursday, March 03, 2016 9:13 AM
To: INSTestimony
Subject: BSL and insurance policies

Testimony Concerning Bill HB 5443
Insurance Committee, March 3, 2016
Shari Tenzer-Urtz

I would like to start by thanking the Insurance Committee for the opportunity to express my strong support of HB 5443, Breed Specific Legislation in regards to Insurance Policies. I am a huge animal lover of all types and believe in speaking out for those who cannot speak for themselves. I have done a great amount of reading regarding "pitbulls" (not even technically a breed), and all the preconceived notions regarding them. Unfortunately the the first problem is the media that loves to report a "pitbull attack. Studies show that there are several other breeds that are more likely to bite. And it is extremely important to consider the owner of the dog, the training of that dog and the lack of responsibility of certain dog owners who would leave a large dog alone with a small child or a stranger in the first place. Furthermore, I have read studies that disprove the notion that "pitbull's" jaws lock when they bite.

Of all the millions of dogs euthanized every year, "pitbulls" comprise more than half of those put down. Many "pitbulls" are incorrectly labeled as such by shelter workers. I read a study recently where they actually did genetic testing of supposed "pitbulls" in a shelter where more than half were incorrectly labeled. Sadly these dogs are passed over because of the misconceived notions regarding "pitbulls". They are also passed over because of BSL - cities that have outlawed "pitbull" ownership and/or the inability to obtain homeowners insurance. So MANY innocent, potentially great family pets just killed for no legitimate reason.

I own a Dogo Argentino, a dog somewhat similar to what is considered to be a "pitbull" and have been turned down for insurance before (here in CT.), because I was told that my dog is too similar to a "pitbull". I cannot begin to express the anger I felt. This dog treats every stranger that comes into our home as if they are best friends that have not seen each other for a long, long time. The worst thing my dog might do is to lick somebody to death. On the other hand, I have a neighbor who owned a Wheaton Terrier that bit two people. Where is the justice?

In closing, I implore the insurance industry, towns and cities to reconsider breed specific legislation. I strongly encourage any dog lover or anyone involved in making such discriminatory laws to read the "Lost Dogs", the story of redemption of the Michael Vick's dogs. The absolute incredible change that was made in those dogs is remarkable. If that is possible, how can "pitbulls" be inherently vicious? It is not the breed that should be punished, but the individuals that are not responsibly training their dogs or worse yet, training them to be vicious.

Thank you for giving me the chance to testify and express my deep feelings concerning this issue. I truly hope that you will consider supporting this important piece of legislation and doing so in an expeditious manor. It's time for a change!

Thank you again,

Shari Tenzer-Urtz
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