

## Carroll, Rhonda

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**From:** mercedes alonzo, esq. <mgalonzoesq@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 23, 2016 9:50 PM  
**To:** JudTestimony  
**Subject:** Testimony in Support of Bill 5344, An Act Concerning Support for Animals That are Neglected or Treated Cruelly

Testimony Concerning 5344  
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE, February 24, 2016  
Mercedes G. Alonzo, Esq.

I would like to thank the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to express my support of Bill No. 5344, "An Act Concerning Support for Animals That Are Neglected or Treated Cruelly," also known as "Desmond's Law." This law would enable courts to appoint an advocate to represent the interests of an animal in cases where an animal has been abused or neglected.

I think most of us have at one point or another in our lifetimes had a family member of the animal species, whether canine, feline, avian, reptilian, or perhaps something a little more exotic. Regardless of its species, I think each of us has loved our animal family members, and done everything within our abilities to protect and safeguard them. After all, animals are innocent beings and completely dependent upon us for their care. It is our duty to protect them from harm, and to seek Justice when—God forbid—crimes are committed against them. Animals have a special place in many of our lives and deserve the protections offered by Bill 5344.

As an advocate for those who cannot speak for themselves, I think that the time has come for our legal system to provide a process that allows interested individuals such as myself with an opportunity to meaningfully participate in cases involving animal abuse and neglect. This legislation would enable volunteer lawyers and qualified law students to look out for the interests of living, sentient beings who do not have anyone to guard their interests at this time.

More specifically subsection (b) of Bill 5344 provides that an advocate shall: (1) Monitor the case; (2) consult any individual with information that could aid the judge or fact finder and review records relating to the condition of the animal and the defendant's actions, including, but not limited to, records from animal control officers, veterinarians and police officers; (3) attend hearings; and (4) present information or recommendations to the court pertinent to determinations that relate to the interests of the animal or the interests of justice.

I respectfully request that you support this historic and important legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Mercedes G. Alonzo, Esq.  
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