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February 22, 2016

## RE: SUPPORT HB 5344

Dear Co-Chair Coleman, Co-Chair Tong, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Please accept this as my testimony for the public hearing being held on 2/24/16. I believe strongly in HB-5344 and urge you to vote in **SUPPORT of HB 5344**, An Act Concerning Support for Animals that are Neglected or Treated Cruelly. This law would establish a process for appointing an advocate to investigate and advocate for the welfare or custody of an animal that is the subject of a civil or criminal court proceeding.

I support HB 5344 because I have been unofficially involved in several criminal abuse cases. I strongly believe that if I had not advocated on these occasions that these cases would have dismissed. In one such case, where according to a witness, a six month old miniature poodle had been beaten to death over the course of an hour the Court was poised to dismiss this case without any action because of a typo in the police report. Two months following this incident the Defendant was arrested for beating her mother.

HB 5344 would help to facilitate animal law prosecutions by ensuring appropriate representation for these creatures rather than depending upon individuals with no standing to attempt to obtain some level of consideration. It is my understanding that the November Report by Connecticut's Office of Legislative Research showed that while 3,500 cases of animal abuse were brought in the past ten years, eighty percent did not make it to Court – 33% being dismissed and 47% nulled. Acts of animal cruelty are linked to a variety of other crimes. Stopping animal abuse can stop the cycle of violence.

Research has established strong links between violent behaviors toward humans and violent behaviors toward animals. If you would like I can provide you with both reports and citations. The Department of Justice has affirmed this: "The topic of animal cruelty may seem unimportant in the face of events like the Boston bombing, school shootings, and other recent tragedies, but we know there's a history of animal cruelty in the backgrounds of many perpetrators of violent acts. Understanding this link between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence is critical to the Department."\*

\*Mary Leary, Acting Assistant Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs in establishing the US DOJ Working Group on Animal Cruelty Apr. 30, 2013

My anecdotal experience has shown me that this is true. Law enforcement agencies must take

violence toward animals seriously, and prosecutions must be encouraged. Violence towards animals is a gateway to greater crimes. Physically violent bullies must be stopped as soon as is possible. The FBI sees animal cruelty as a predictor of violence against people and considers past animal abuse when profiling serial killers. In assessing youth at risk of becoming violent the United States Department of Justice stresses a history of animal abuse and even goes so far as to look into whether the parent of that youth committed acts of violence against a family pet.

Court advocates for animals could be provided at no cost by enlisting volunteer representation for animals from law students and law firms. There are so many of us who would welcome the opportunity to make a difference. Please permit us to do so.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sharon A. Cregeen