



CONNECTICUT FEDERATION OF DOG CLUBS
AND RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERS, INC.

Madam/Mr. Chairman, Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Connecticut Federation of Dog Clubs and Responsible Dog Owners, Inc. (the "CFD") is made up of over forty (40) dog clubs representing owners of pure breed dogs that participate in conformation, obedience, agility, therapy dog and hunting/tracking events. CFD's mission is to promote responsible dog ownership and the general welfare of dogs and their owners. **CFD opposes Raised Bill No. 5344.**

While we acknowledge the intention of this bill is to give support for animals that are neglected or treated cruelly, we believe it has the potential to alter the relationship between owners and their pet animals, as well as provide and encourage other parties to participate in proceedings they would otherwise would not be involved.

If the intention of RB 5344 is to more aggressively discourage inhumane animal care behaviors, then harsher penalties for those who engage in cruel behavior towards any animal is the appropriate remedy. The appointment of separate advocates will not further that end and may in fact have legal consequences beyond a given criminal case or cases. The CFD would be in strong support of harsher penalties for cruelty, rather than inclusion of additional parties or animal advocates in criminal proceedings. CFD believes this measure is ill advised and should be defeated.

By providing for an independent "animal advocate" on the request of any party with legal standing apart from the animal's owner, we believe RB 5344 will provide an incentive for activists and activist organizations to become parties to various proceedings, and will lead to legal mischief as a result. Third party interference with the ownership rights of animal owners will inevitably extend far beyond the particular case or cases at hand, ultimately degrading the ownership rights of all animal owners. Traditionally, animal owners have the sole rights and responsibilities over the care of their animals. However, under the provisions of RB 5344, individual owners could lose these ownership rights over their animals by having to give up those rights to third parties. As a result, appointees could use the courts to force a person to make decisions that they believe to not be in the best interest of their animal.

Since in the case of animal cruelty allegations, animal welfare is already overseen by state and municipal officials, appropriate safeguards currently exist to ensure animal cruelty is identified and punished. The state and municipalities actively interpret the laws and adjudicate offenses, including animal cruelty offenses. The perceived need to appoint a separate animal advocate would imply that neither of these safeguards is adequate. We disagree with that premise and believe that RB 5344 is not necessary for the adjudication process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Laurie Maulucci,
President

Mabel M. Diamond
Chair, Legislative Committee