



Testimony before the Judiciary Committee, February 23, 2016

HB 5344 An Act Concerning Support for Animals That Are Neglected or Treated Cruelly

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, Members of the Judiciary Committee,

We represent the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association, which includes the majority of Connecticut-licensed veterinarians, and our members have dedicated their lives to the promotion of optimal health and welfare of animals. While the CVMA acknowledges that the intention of HB 5344 is to protect animals, we have concerns with the legislation as written.

Our legal system acknowledges that animals are unique, feeling creatures, yet while they do not have the same legal status as people, the law also recognizes that they may not be treated indiscriminately, as though they were inanimate personal property. Therefore, animals already enjoy special legal protections, including laws requiring their humane care, and others criminalizing cruelty or neglect. We do have concerns that the creation of animal advocates may at some point in the future be used to interfere with medical choices made by an animal owner if those choices, although not cruel, are perceived by another as inadequate. Although not intended by this legislation, we do not want it to interfere with the veterinary client relationship in making medical decisions

In the case of animal cruelty allegations by state or municipal officials, especially in cases of egregious cruelty, appropriate safeguards currently do exist to assure animal welfare and punish those who mistreat animals.

If the intention of RB 5344 is to more aggressively discourage deficient animal care behaviors, then harsher penalties for those who engage in cruel behavior towards animals is the appropriate remedy, and the CVMA is in strong support of such measures. Thank you.

Respectfully,

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