

Testimony Concerning HB 5344:
An act concerning support for animals that are neglected or treated cruelly
Judiciary Committee Wednesday February 24, 2016
Jamila HadjSalem

I would like to thank the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5344, an act concerning support for animals that are neglected or treated cruelly.

Desmond's law (HB 5344) is an extremely important piece of legislation, named after a terrible injustice where a dog named Desmond was beaten, tortured, then strangled to death, with his killer given accelerated rehabilitation, a travesty in light of the serious nature of the crime. This case reached out to many in Connecticut, and elsewhere, as a prime example of why we need stronger legislation to protect the weakest members in our society--animals, who have no voice to speak up and defend themselves. Decades ago, children were the segment of the population who were being abused, and now, with laws and organizations formed to support them in times of need, children have more than adequate representation in court when wrongs are done to them. Presently, it's the animals who need this support from our society, in the most desperate way. Eighty percent of the animal cruelty charges brought against perpetrators in Connecticut are dismissed. In a November 2015 report by Connecticut's Office of Legislative Research, it was found that between 2005 and 2015, only 3,500 cases were brought under the animal cruelty statute, and of those cases, eighty percent never even made it into a court of law. Forty-seven percent were not prosecuted, and thirty-three percent were dismissed. These numbers are reprehensible, that the state of Connecticut would allow eighty percent of accused animal abusers to go free, without even the slightest punishments. Of the twenty percent who did remain to face charges, the most likely discipline was accelerated rehabilitation, as was the case with the person who abused Desmond. This is woefully inadequate, as abusers of animals are almost always abusers of children and other members in society. The state of Connecticut recognizes that, since in 2011 it enacted a law requiring the cross reporting of child abuse and animal cruelty. The FBI, for the first time this past January, began collecting data on animal abuse cases, which indicates that they also acknowledge the link between animal abusers and other sorts of violence being perpetrated by said individuals.

Animals are truly the most innocent and helpless members of our society, and they direly need court appointed defenders. They are mistreated on a daily basis, from Puppy Doe Kiya in Boston, to Desmond in Connecticut, and they have an exigent need that has not been met by legislators to this date. Society is evolving to include the welfare of animals as essential to our well-being as a whole, and a strong advocate for those who are abused is a first and powerful step in recognizing this critical need.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

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