

Testimony Concerning HB 5344
Committee on JUDICIARY, February 24th, 2016
Joseph LaMotta

I appreciate the opportunity to express my support of HB 5344, An Act Concerning Support for Animals that are Neglected or Treated Cruelly.

I am a Senior Assistant State's Attorney employed by the Division of Criminal Justice and assigned to the Part B courthouse in New Haven, GA23.

I do not speak on behalf of the Division. I speak only as a person experienced in the prosecution of crimes against animals.

HB 5344 helps to protect the animals entrusted to our care after an arrest or seizure. For instance, how would a judge realize the futility of a well-reasoned ruling regarding the custody of a seized dog, after months of back and forth between the parties, if the extended stay in the shelter has made the dog too sick to allow adoption? This bill should help to prevent harm to the animals we seize.

This bill provides a reasonably neutral way for a judge to acquire input regarding what would be in the animals best interest. There are advocates available to give voice to victims in every other case in the courthouse where I work. The people, the grocery store and the car wash all have an independent voice. There is no independent input regarding animals in the criminal proceedings under C.G.S. 53-247, or the civil forfeiture proceedings under C.G.S.22-329a. If our intent is to protect animals, we should give them a voice.

This bill allows for the appointment of a person, if the judge so wishes, who can gather, synthesize and present the type of information it usually takes the parties multiple court appearances to produce. A Pro Se defendant may lack the resources to even obtain that information. This bill should save the parties and the court time.

Less time in the courts and less time in the shelters means less money expended by the state and the municipalities who care for these animals. I personally know of one animal who was caged for twenty-three months awaiting a disposition in court. Because of the number of animals seized he was caged in a city far from the crime, the cost of the delay borne by him and a city full of unknowing taxpayers.

HB5344 is a way to ensure better outcomes for the animals we seek to protect, in less time and for less money. I strongly support this bill and I hope the committee supports this bill.

Thank you,

Joseph LaMotta
Hamden, Connecticut