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March 16, 2016

Joint Committee on Judiciary
Legislative Office Building, Room 2500
Hartford, CT 06106
judgetestimony@cga.ct.gov

**Re: VETERINARY SUPPORT of HB 5344, An Act Concerning
Support for Animals that are Neglected or Treated Cruelly**

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

On behalf of the Connecticut-based veterinarian members of the
Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA), an
organization devoted to protecting and advocating for animals while
providing leadership and service opportunities that support a humane
veterinary profession, please accept this public hearing testimony in
SUPPORT of HB 5344, which would establish a process for appointing
an advocate for an animal that is the subject of a criminal court
proceeding.

Evidence of the Need for HB 5344:

There are well established statistics drawing links between violence
towards animals and violence towards people. Specific references and
statistics have already been submitted to the judiciary committee by
other agencies.

There are also well established statistics showing that a vast number of
animal cruelty cases go unpunished and only a small percentage result
in guilty verdicts. Bringing these cases to trial with an approved animal
advocacy system in place, as defined by HB 5344, will increase the
likelihood of a guilty verdict when appropriate. More accurate facts
about specific animal abuse cases, individual circumstances, and
individual offenders will be available through assigned animal
advocates.

With cross-reporting laws already in place in CT, police will have the
added advantage of identifying domestic violence, and other crimes so
commonly found in conjunction with animal abuse. Combined with
existing state laws providing for protection orders, and counseling
provisions, HB 5344 has the potential to benefit animals as well as
people caught in violent, abusive situations in Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Melissa Shapiro, DVM

CT State Representative
Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association
Cell: 203-984-1613, Email: mshapirodvm@gmail.com