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From: mvonstein@comcast.net
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To: JudTestimony
Subject: AN ACT CONCERNING SUPPORT FOR ANIMALS THAT ARE NEGLECTED OR TREATED CRUELLY

Testimony Concerning HB 5344,
Judiciary Committee, 02/24/16

Michele von Stein
Animal advocate, concerned citizen, animal rescuer

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

For approximately thirty years, I have been rescuing dogs and cats living in unsafe and neglectful environments, and have continually fostered dogs for most of that time. I also started the volunteer program at the New Haven Animal Shelter, in 1990, while attending college in New Haven. In my professional life, I also encounter situations in which people fail to care for their children, as well as their animals, as I am a social worker for the State of Connecticut, Department of Children and Families. I believe this HB 5344 is of paramount importance to increase the effectiveness of the judicial systems goal of finding justice for victims of crime, and to provide a voice for an otherwise silent victim. This bill would offer exactly what the criminal justice system seeks to provide to its victims. Animal control officers are discouraged by the lack of seriousness the court places on the crimes against animals, and most cases of animal cruelty and neglect are not prosecuted, which in turn creates an unwillingness to enforce crimes against animals as they occur.

In October 2013, I encountered a situation, though the course of my work, in which the owners of three dogs and a cat, chained two of the dogs in the basement, and failed to feed them for approximately one month. When I discovered them, one of the two dogs was near death. I called the New Haven police, who arrived on the scene, and were shocked by the condition of the animals. Officer Durkin ordered the removal of the three dogs and one cat from the home. Two of the three dogs did not make it, the cat and one dog were adopted. The abusers were granted accelerated rehabilitation. They obtained another dog within six months of the incident. If there had been a court advocate for the victims of this crime, the likelihood of this outcome would have been reduced.

I urge the judiciary committee to support HD 534, an act concerning support for animals that are neglected or treated cruelly.

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

Michele von Stein
Guilford, Connecticut