

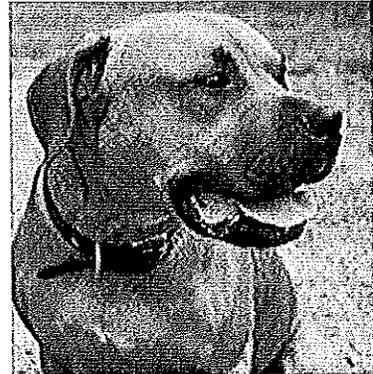
Testimony Concerning BILL 5344
AN ACT CONCERNING SUPPORT FOR ANIMALS THAT ARE NEGLECTED OR TREATED CRUELLY
Judiciary Committee, February 24, 2016

Tricia Wood
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I would like to thank the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to express my support of BILL 5344 AN ACT CONCERNING SUPPORT FOR ANIMALS THAT ARE NEGLECTED OR TREATED CRUELLY.

Accumulating evidence demonstrates a strong link between violence to animals and violence to people. In recognition of that link in 2011 Connecticut enacted a law requiring cross reporting of child abuse and animal cruelty. The State should be applauded for this positive step in safeguarding Connecticut citizens, however this law is meaningless unless serious animal cruelty violations are prosecuted. A November 2015 report by Connecticut's Office of Legislative Research shows that between 2005 and 2015, only 3500 cases were brought under the animal cruelty statute and of those cases a full 80% never made it to Court. Too often, abusers get away with a hand slap, or worse yet, are not prosecuted at all.

Desmond, pictured right, is a case in point. This innocent animal was starved, tortured and eventually hanged to death by his owner. The abuser's sentence? "Accelerated Rehabilitation," a penalty given to those whose crimes are deemed not serious in nature, and an expunged criminal record. Today this murderer lives with no trace of his violent history on record, flying under the radar of Connecticut law enforcement.



Why do so many animal cruelty cases slip through our justice system? Because the victims have no voice. In the best interest of all Connecticut citizens and their four-legged family members, I urge you to support Desmond's law, legislation to establish a volunteer advocate to represent animals in court who are the victims of cruelty. This bill will reduce the number of dismissed cases and hold more violent criminals accountable for their actions. More prosecutions will decrease the number of criminals who are permitted to walk free only to repeat, and likely escalate, their heinous crimes.

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

Tricia Wood