

Good afternoon,

I am planning on testifying in person on Tuesday but due to the predicted icy weather may not be able to - I would be traveling from New Hampshire.

Bubba and I have been a therapy dog team since 2013. Bubba is a 140 pound, brown and white Newfoundland. Every Tuesday during the school year we visit an elementary school in Hartford, brought in by a language teacher for her second and third grade students with learning and social disabilities.

In this inner city school, Bubba is brought in as a calming influence to allow the children to read and gather together in a stressless environment.

Daniel, a third grader on the spectrum for autism, sat with Bubba for the first time last year. He sat in his chair by Bubba, read his book, listened quietly as the other children read and had little personal interaction with Bubba or anyone else. This year, he sits on the floor at Bubba's head, reads forcefully. Recently, upon leaving he took Bubba's head in his hands, told Bubba, nose to nose, he loved him, what a sweetie he is, kissing him while Bubba licked his face.

I met Diamond for the first time a few weeks ago. She came in, not to read but to visit with Bubba; I learned later that she has problems in social environments. I was sitting in a small chair at Bubba's head, she sat at my feet inches from him. She smiled the entire visit, laughing when Bubba "purred" as she scratched his ears. My impression of her was that of a gentle, kind little girl. Speaking with the language teacher, she told me Diamond is usually almost sullen, keeping to herself most of the time.

Both of these children amazed me in Bubba's quietly powerful influence. I see talkative, confident students. The teacher presents a very different picture of them when she has them in class without Bubba.

I urge you to pass this bill. From my experience, there are no negatives giving acutely troubled children the opportunity to be with a therapy dog.

Thank you.

Ellen Clark and Bubba