



February 19, 2016

Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, Senator Chapin, Representative Shaban and distinguished members of the Environment Committee:

My name is Gordon G. Willard and I am Executive Director representing the Connecticut Humane Society. We are deeply privileged to be submitting this testimony in support for your raised bill HB5147 "An Act ***INCREASING THE MAXIMUM PENALTY FOR PERSONS CONVICTED OF SUBSEQUENT OFFENSES OF MALICIOUS AND INTENTIONAL ANIMAL CRUELTY.***"

HB5147 is an important step to ensure that those who continuously commit malicious offenses which cause pain, suffering and death to animals receive increased penalties after the first offense. A number of studies clearly show that there is a strong and undeniable link between animal abuse committed as a child or adult and subsequent horrifying offenses against humans.

Animal abuse, especially acts that inflict pain and suffering which provide pleasure, satisfaction, and a sense of power and control to the abuser is an indicator of already existing or future disturbing behavior. These crimes often called "bridge crimes" lead to violent offenses against people and should be recognized as such and addressed through our legal system.

For the first time ever starting in 2016, the FBI will collect data on animal cruelty crimes via its National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). By taking animal cruelty crimes out of the "other crimes" category and specifically tracking animal cruelty separately, the FBI is signaling that animal cruelty is a violent crime on par with other violent crimes like assault, arson and homicide

Recognizing malicious and intentional acts that cause suffering to animals, not necessarily resulting in their death, as serious and worthy of our attention is not just about animal rights. It is about human decency, about protecting those creatures that enrich our lives and the very serious mandate of halting those who would continue on a pathway of cruelty and violence that will eventually harm other humans.

Connecticut ranks 31st in the **Animal Legal Defense Fund's 2015 U.S. Animal Protection Law Rankings** for anti-violent animal laws and this legislation ensures this poor ranking is addressed. **Unfortunately, Connecticut also received the lowest ranking of all New England States.**

The Connecticut Humane Society represents a constituency that cares deeply about animals and people and about the social mandates established through our State Government. **The Connecticut Humane Society has identified HB5147 as one of its top legislative priorities of 2016 and hopes you will support advocating for passage this year!**

Thank you for listening to my testimony and for considering favorably approving HB5147. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding my testimony.