



**Testimony regarding: SB 228 AN ACT CONCERNING DAMAGES FOR THE UNLAWFUL KILLING OR INJURING OF A COMPANION ANIMAL AND REQUIRING A REPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE CONCERNING THE TETHERING OF DOGS..**

**Environment Committee Public Hearing, March 4, 2016**

**Amy Harrell, President, CT Votes for Animals**

**Vernon, CT resident**

Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, and esteemed members of the Environment Committee, thank you for providing the opportunity to offer input on SB 228. CT Votes for Animals supports the current text of this bill but stands with the ASPCA in urging the adoption of specific requirements for outdoor confinement of dogs.

CVA also supports the goals proposed by the Task Force on the Humane Treatment of Animals in Municipal and Regional Shelters, provided the programs can be successfully implemented without negatively impacting the state's Animal Population Control Program (APCP) funding.

### **Proper shelter for dogs**

Connecticut's tethering law, passed in 2013, ensures that chained dogs are not left outside whenever a weather advisory or warning has been issued. This statute supplements the general cruelty statutes by providing much-needed specificity for the Animal Control Officers who are charged with enforcing the law. The statute has been used repeatedly to end the harmful cycle of 24/7 dog chaining, and protect chained dogs from the weather.

However, the law does *not* cover dogs who are penned or otherwise confined outside. The cruelty statute remains vague on what constitutes "protection from the weather" and as a result ACOs do not have the power to intervene in confinement scenarios. Regulations that clarify our cruelty statutes would allow ACOs to take action *before* dogs are harmed by weather conditions.

CVA and Animal Control facilities are contacted frequently by citizens who are concerned about dogs in their neighborhoods left outside in what appears to be inadequate weather protection. If the statutes are enhanced with further definitions on shelter and confinement standards, ACOs can resolve these complaints quickly, and citizens will have much clearer guidance on how to spot inhumane dog confinement conditions. **I strongly urge the committee to please add language to the statutes that ensures protection for dogs who live outdoors.**

## **Task Force proposals**

The Task force on the Humane Treatment of Animals in Municipal and Regional Shelters has convened regularly for two years and, in the process, has identified what I believe to be some of the top issues for companion animal welfare in Connecticut, including mandatory spay/neuter for animals adopted from shelters, reducing unnecessary euthanasia at pounds, encouraging the use of volunteers at shelters, and strengthening dog breeding regulations. CVA fully supports the goals of these proposals.

Several shelters in Connecticut have proactively developed programs that match these goals put forth by the task force, including robust volunteer programs, spay/neutering all animals adopted from the facility, and euthanizing animals only as a last resort. Thus, there are plenty of valuable “best practices” to be gleaned from these operations, which can and should be applied to other Animal Control facilities throughout the state.

In the drafting and implementation of these proposals, however, I urge the committee to ensure that the APCP fund will not be negatively impacted. If the mandatory spay/neuter proposal allows use of the APCP vouchers, the resulting abrupt rise in voucher redemptions may significantly cut into the APCP account. APCP funding, which comes from municipal dog license fees, pound adoption fees, and “Caring for pets” license plate sales, is no longer solely used to fund spay/neuter operations, but also pays for Animal Control Officer training (PA 12-08), and can be used to reimburse towns caring for seized animals. (PA 14-205)

In the 2013 session, CT Votes for Animals pushed to expand the low-income voucher program of the APCP, thus effectively doubling benefits to people – and animals - with the greatest need. I urge the Committee to review the financial health of the APCP to ensure proposals such as mandatory spay/neuter can be adequately funded without compromising other well-functioning programs in place.

Thank you,  
Amy Harrell