

Testimony on SB 228

March 4, 2016

Environment Committee

Re: Support with amendments SB 228

I am a resident of Guilford, Connecticut, and am a social worker for the State of Connecticut Department of Children and families, and I have worked in New Haven for almost two decades. In the course of my day, providing services to the children and families in my community, I am often made aware of animals in extreme distress, forced to spend their entire lives relegated to the end of chains, with very little protection from the elements.

On weekends, I monitor a large number of chained dogs within the city of New Haven, and I work very hard to form relationships with the owners of the dogs, knocking on doors and making connections with people, in order to educate them on proper care of their animals. I have had some success over the years, at times helping people bring their animals in to live with the family. I offer financial help with spay/neuter and vetting, socialization and training (being chained causes behavioral pathologies in animals, which are often exhibited as aggression, due to frustration and lack of exercise).

I am currently hosting a "fence building" on April 2, for two chained dogs I monitor, who will now have a large fenced in yard to explore and live in. Both dogs have appointments to be altered. We are also building two large, insulated dog houses, with flaps covering the entry, so the dogs are somewhat protected from wind and cold, as well as providing straw and self warming blankets, to provide a measure of comfort. These houses will replace their current inadequate structures, which, while legal by today's laws, offer very little protection during Connecticut's sometimes brutally cold winters and sweltering summers.

Many animals have owners who are unwilling to address issues of neglect, or work towards improvements to provide the very basic care for their animals. These are the cases in which it is imperative that wording in the law is specific, and not open to interpretation. If animal control officers are given measurable standards by which to assess and address, their job will be made more efficient, as the laws will be enforceable.

The language regarding proper shelter leaves too much room for interpretation, and therefore cannot effectively be enforced. The specifics of proper shelter must include a)adequate ventilation to allow the dog to remain dry and maintain a normal body temperature b) access to water in a sanitary liquid state, c)exposure to natural light according to a regular cycle of day and night, d)sufficient space for the dog to turn and lie down with limbs outstretched, e) at least three inches of empty space above a dog's head when the dog is in a normal sitting position. Straw and a wind flap, as well as insulation, should be included in the language as well.

I have had many experiences with animal control stating they cannot fine or remove a dog because the law does not specify what "adequate shelter" or "reasonable amount of time" means.

I would also like to propose that animal control be given seizure authority for tethered animals during adverse weather conditions, when an owner is not available to address the concerns immediately, and the animal could be forced to endure additional time in a situation.

Thank you for your consideration,

Michele von Stein