



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

February 24, 2016

Joint Committee on Judiciary
Legislative Office Building, Room 2500
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860-240-0530
judtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Re: SUPPORT of HB 5344, An Act Concerning Support for Animals that are Neglected or Treated Cruelly

Dear Co-Chair Coleman, Co-Chair Tong, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Connecticut-based supporters of The Humane Society of the United States, the largest animal protection organization in the country, please accept this public hearing testimony in SUPPORT of HB 5344, which would establish a process for appointing an advocate for an animal that is the subject of a criminal court proceeding.

Research has established that there are strong links between violent behaviors toward humans and violent behaviors toward animals. HB 5344 will help to facilitate animal cruelty prosecutions by ensuring appropriate representation for the victims.

- **Evidence of the need for HB 5344**

A 2015 research report by the Office of Legislative Research ([2015-R-0262](#)) describes procedural outcome of animal cruelty offenses from 2005 through October 26, 2015 (n = 3,513)¹. Table 2 shows that 47% of offenses were nolle, 33% were dismissed, 2% resulted in findings of not guilty, and only 18% resulted in guilty findings. These statistics are very concerning given what we know about the often escalating violence that can result from ignoring animal abuse.

- **The connection between animal abuse and criminal violence**

A number of studies have drawn links between the abuse of animals and violence against people. A 2001-2004 study by the Chicago Police Department "revealed a startling propensity for offenders charged with crimes against animals to commit other violent offenses toward human victims." Of those arrested for animal crimes, 65% had been arrested for battery against another person.² Of 36 convicted multiple murderers questioned in one study, 46% admitted committing acts of animal torture as adolescents.³ And of seven school shootings that took place across the country between 1997 and 2001, all involved boys who had previously committed acts of animal cruelty.

¹ <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2015/rpt/pdf/2015-R-0262.pdf>

² Degenhardt, B. 2005. *Statistical Summary of Offenders Charged with Crimes against Companion Animals July 2001-July 2005*. Report from the Chicago Police Department.

³ Cohen, W. (1996). *Congressional Register*, 142(141), Oct. 3.

- **The connection between animal abuse and domestic abuse**

Pet abuse is one of four predictors of domestic partner violence, according to a six-year "gold standard" study conducted in 11 metropolitan cities.⁴ In both domestic violence and child-abuse situations, abusers may manipulate and control their human victims through threatened or actual violence against family pets.

Researchers have found that over 70% of women entering domestic violence shelters reported that their partners had threatened, abused, or killed the family pet.⁵ Another study found that in families under supervision for physical abuse of their children, pet abuse was concurrent in 88% of the families.⁶

- **Stopping animal abuse strengthens our communities**

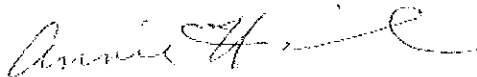
Reporting, investigating, and prosecuting animal cruelty can help take dangerous criminals off the streets. Police know that in homes where animal abuse is a problem, other issues are often concurrent. Acts of animal cruelty are linked to a variety of other crimes, including violence against people, property crimes, and drug or disorderly conduct offenses.⁷ Stopping animal abuse in children can help curb violent tendencies before they escalate to include violence against people.

More than a dozen states, including Connecticut, have cross-reporting laws; at least two dozen states have laws, including Connecticut, that allow courts to include pets in protection orders in domestic violence situations; and at least two dozen states, including Connecticut, have counseling provisions in their animal cruelty laws.^{8,9}

The mission of The Humane Society of the United States is to create a humane and sustainable world for all animals—a world that will also benefit people. We believe that promoting kindness and respect toward animals will help build a more humane and better functioning civil society.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,



Annie Hornish

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⁴ Walton-Moss, B. J., Manganello, J., Frye, V., & Campbell, J. C. (2005). "Risk factors for intimate partner violence and associated injury among urban women." *Journal of Community Health, 30*(5), 377-389.

⁵ Ascione, F., Weber, C., & Wood D (1997). "Animal Welfare and Domestic Violence". Utah State University, Logan, Utah. Originally submitted to The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation.

⁶ DeViney, E., Dickert, J., & Lockwood, R. (1983). "The care of pets within child abusing families." *International Journal for the Study of Animal Problems, 4*, 3321-3329.

⁷ Arluke, A., & Lockwood, R. (Eds.). (1997). *Society & Animals, Special Theme Issue: Animal Cruelty*, 5(3). Society & Animals Forum (formerly Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals): Washington Grove, Md. 301-963-4751.

⁸ The Humane Society of the United States. (2008). *First Strike: The Violence Connection*.

⁹ Ramsey, S., Randour, M.L., & Gupta, M. (2010). "Protecting Domestic Violence Victims by Protecting Their Pets." *Juvenile and Family Justice Today* 19(2), 16-20.