

90 Morgan St Ste 108
Stamford, CT 06905
February 21, 2016

Joint Committee of the Judiciary
Legislative Office Building Room 2500
Hartford, CT 06106

To the members of the Connecticut Joint Committee on the Judiciary:

I am writing in support of HB5344. I am a family physician in Stamford for over twelve years. I understand the importance of relationships and the vulnerability of some populations. We are aware of the vulnerability of children and the elderly to abuse, and do our best to protect them from such crimes. Organizations like the LINK remind us of the vulnerability of animals in this cycle of violence. Those who commit acts against one of these groups may also threaten other groups. We must not take crimes of animal cruelty and neglect lightly.

While I understand the link between animal abuse and child abuse/domestic violence, I am no expert in court proceedings. For that, it only seems fitting that an appropriate advocate be appointed for these victims. Although animals are considered property in the eyes of the law, there is ample legal precedent for the appointment of special agents to represent animals' interests.

I believe the changes in the 2016 measure – which would appoint qualified, screened *pro bono* attorneys and law students rather than veterinarians – to be an improvement over the 2013 version of this bill.

With thanks for your consideration of this letter and of HB 5344.

Respectfully,

Kathie Nurena, MD