

Student Animal Legal Defense Fund
Yale Law School
127 Wall Street
New Haven, CT 06511

March 25, 2016

Joint Committee on Judiciary
Legislative Office Building, Room 2500
Hartford, CT 06106
(860) 240-0530

Dear Chair Coleman, Chair Tong and Honorable Members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary,

We at the Yale Student Animal Legal Defense Fund support H.B. 5344, An Act Concerning Support for Animals that are Neglected or Treated Cruelly. This Act would appoint pro bono attorneys and law students in Connecticut to serve as court-appointed advocates to represent the interests of the animals or the interests of justice in criminal animal cruelty cases and in matters involving the seizure or custody of abused or neglected animals.

The Yale Student Animal Legal Defense Fund is an active student-led organization at Yale Law School. We sponsor numerous events throughout the school year to educate our membership and the greater student body on law and policy issues relating to animal agriculture, wildlife conservation, and the treatment of companion animals. Our guest speakers are professors and practitioners of animal law, and represent such organizations as the Humane Society of the United States, the Connecticut Humane Society, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Animal Legal Defense Fund, and the Center for Biological Diversity, among others. During the 2014-2015 school year, we co-sponsored a conference with the Connecticut Bar Association Animal Law Section on agriculture gag laws, and we are currently leading an Animal Law Reading Group, a one-credit class for law students that focuses on animal law and policy.

During a recent session of our Animal Law Reading Group, we read court opinions in cases of animal cruelty and neglect, and considered the many difficult questions associated with those cases, including how perpetrators of animal cruelty or neglect who suffer from mental health conditions or engage in hoarding practices should be sentenced and rehabilitated, and what should be done with sick animals rescued from such situations. Because of the difficult nature of these cases, we believe that passage of this Bill would provide the additional resources necessary to achieve the best possible outcomes for animals in cruelty and neglect cases. Yale Law School has an active clinical community in which students routinely represent clients in court, and this Bill could pave the way for another clinical opportunity for our students in the future.

Sincerely,
Yale Student Animal Legal Defense Fund