Good morning Representative Steinberg, Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Members of the Public Health Committee. The Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) is the largest veterinary professional society in Connecticut and it represents the majority of Connecticut’s practicing veterinarians. We take our responsibilities seriously, including our duty to protect public health. Rabies prevention is among the most important of public health duties for which we bear responsibility.

Therefore, CVMA strongly opposes HB 5659 because it lessens the ability of the state and of the collective veterinary profession to optimally immunize animals and guard public health. The primary purpose of immunizing animals against Rabies virus infection is to protect the public, not to protect the animals themselves, although that is a fortunate and favorable result. Rabies is a dangerous and almost invariably fatal human disease; still claiming many lives worldwide each year, including several in the United States.

This threat is very real, and especially high in countries that do not promote and require the highly successful Rabies prevention standards practiced in the United States. It is important to note that while Rabies vaccine titers may show proof of vaccination, there is no scientific evidence that this demonstrates adequate immunity to the disease. This is too serious and deadly a public health threat to base protection on anything other than established scientific fact.

For the very rare individual animal that the Rabies vaccine might be detrimental to, because of it having an immunologically based disease incompatible with immunization, there is already an established method to obtain a waiver through application to the State Veterinarian. This allows for each situation to be carefully reviewed and approved or denied by an authority higher than an individual practitioner. We believe this system is best for the collective public and its animals.

As far as varying from manufacturers’ published vaccine dosage protocols, it is important to note that the vaccine volume needed for immunity is not based on a relationship to body weight but on the amount necessary to adequately stimulate the immune system to get a protective response in every animal. Conversely, if we are speaking of the rare hypersensitive animal that
has a history of immunologically based reaction to a vaccine, reducing the volume is unlikely to help, as any exposure is capable of eliciting the unwanted response. Just consider situations in which individuals allergic to peanuts for example, would react to the smallest amount to have an adverse reaction. Thus, while "splitting" vaccines between two animals might reduce a veterinarian's overhead, we would be neither protecting the animal from the disease we are vaccinating for, nor preventing any adverse reaction.

We urge you to reject this unscientific and dangerous proposal and instead continue to enable our profession to properly protect the public from Rabies and our pets from other infectious disease. Thank you.