



**Statement of
Jo-Anne R Basile
Executive Director, Connecticut Votes for Animals
Oppose as drafted HB-7297
Joint Committee on the Environment
March 11, 2019**

Senate Co-Chair Cohen, House Co-Chair Demicco, Vice Chairs Senator Kushner and Representative Gresko, Ranking Senator Miner and Ranking Representative Harding, Honorable Members of the Environment Committee.

CT Votes for Animals is a grass roots animal advocacy organization representing 3,000 citizens across the State of Connecticut. CVA members care deeply that Connecticut provides a safe and humane environment for all its animals. CVA speaks up for animals as a reminder to the public that a compassionate world is good for all and one in which we should all want to live.

CVA has long been concerned that CT's dangerous dog law is woefully out of date. It is why CVA and other animal welfare organizations aggressively sought to be a part of finding a solution last session and this fall, that was fair, humane and reflective of 21st Century animal control policies. As you know our request to join the conversation was turned down.

CVA believes HB 7297 needs significant and fundamental changes, and overall it does not adequately meet a standard CVA can support as currently drafted. However, members of the DOAG working group are to be commended for recognizing the need to make improvements to current law. Specifically, changing the rabies quarantine from 14 to 10 days is a positive step and puts Connecticut in line with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations and policies in most other States. The bill also identifies criteria relevant in dangerous dog investigations and its proposal for local mediation is worthy of further discussion.

CVA's concern, however, is that the bill does nothing to address the State's lack of due process protections in these dangerous animal cases. The requirement that the ACO makes a disposal or restraint order at the outset sets a bar too high to reasonably overcome on appeal. A better alternative is to have the ACO investigate a complaint and ascertain appropriate charges based on a clear standard of what constitutes a dangerous dog. As noted above the bill cites some of the relevant considerations, but the proposed language continues to lack specific standards by which charges are made. Other states and communities have tackled this issue and can provide a blue print of best practices for Connecticut to consider. While HB 7297 tries to delineate criteria for judgement, the lack of specifics means animal control decisions remain highly subjective offering little improvement to current law. The stakes are too high not to be very clear in making the charges.

Public safety is of paramount concern, but clear standards and an impartial due process ensures the best outcome. CVA believes sections of the bill as noted above are moving the process in the right direction. However, the bill still needs work to make CT's law more in line with current best practices and to ensure a fair and safe process for all parties concerned. For these reasons, CVA cannot support HB 7297 as drafted.