

# Connecticut Town Clerks Association, Inc.

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## Written Testimony

Debra H. Denette (Town Clerk of East Haddam)  
Connecticut Town Clerks Association

### **SB 997, An Act Concerning Dog Licensing Fees**

### **SB 999, An Act Concerning the Fee for Adopting a Dog, Cat or Other Domestic Animal from a Municipal Pound and Requiring the Licensing of Such Cats and other Domestic Animals**

Environment Committee  
Monday, March 11, 2019

Good morning Senator Cohen, Representative Demicco, Senator Miner, Representative Harding and the distinguished members of the Environment Committee, thank you for affording me the opportunity to present this testimony in **respectful opposition to Senate Bills 997 and 999**. My name is Debra Denette, I am a member of the Legislative Committee of the Connecticut Town Clerks Association and the Town Clerk of East Haddam.

These proposals seek to amend the dog licensing fees (997) and expand them to include cats or other domestic animals from a municipal pound or shelter (999).

The current Statute, in our opinion, is flawed and long overdue for an update. Every municipality reports that only a small fraction of their dog population is licensed. The Statute, as written, punishes those who license late, but poses little consequence to those that never license at all. (i.e. late fee). Expanding the burden to license “cats or other domestic animals” adopted from a municipal animal shelter or dog pound is troubling. As this requirement continues on an annual basis, how will town clerks differentiate what pet was adopted versus, what pet was acquired elsewhere? It appears to be a gateway in to license cats and other domestic animals, that is a HUGE added burden to the town clerk’s office. Many offices simply do not have the staff for that to occur. This amendment further provides for a late fee for failure to license, if the refusal to license continues beyond imposition of a fine, the Statute is silent on recourse.

The fee structure in both proposals remains complicated and burdensome. Under the scenario proposed in Senate Bill 997, the fee increases from \$12.00 for an altered dog and \$30.00 for an

unaltered dog; Under Senate Bill 999 the proposed fee is \$12.00 for an altered dog and \$25.00 for an unaltered dog, both have the same mandatory disbursements.

The CTCA would like to offer some constructive ideas for your consideration:

- Implement a statewide system, similar to the sports license program, that all town clerk's can access to process licenses. This would eliminate 169-towns from purchasing 169-systems, the cost of these systems in essence creates unfunded mandates, particularly when you factor in postage and supplies. Also, animal control officers should be able to access this system. Residents have been asking for a methodology to license online, this technology does exist; however, the cost is burdensome to each municipality purchase but would be far more affordable if purchased under a statewide system.
- Many a customer have brought their dog into the town clerk's office as evidence that it's spayed or neutered when the paperwork cannot be found; we really don't want to see that. Connecticut no longer has an over-population problem, as evidenced by the number of animals imported from other States. Perhaps differentiating is no longer relevant. The program is still relevant, and supporting the ACP program is still a necessity, but is there truly a need to differentiate between the dog's ability to reproduce? It surely complicates the reporting and issuing process.
- CTCA recommends that you consider a flat fee of \$20.00 per dog, divided up as you see fit, with a significantly larger portion going to municipalities to provide incentive for enforcement.
- Lastly, please revisit the effective date. Dog licensing begins on June 1<sup>st</sup> for a license that takes effect July 1. The proposed implementation date is July 1, 2019 meaning these fees would need to be charged for this coming license cycle. CTCA strongly recommends that you make the effective date July 1, 2020 to allow for system changes and notification to the pet owning public.

In conclusion, though the Connecticut Town Clerks Association opposes this legislation as currently draft, if the committee moves forward with this legislation, we would be more than glad to continue working with you on a proposal that best serves the pet owning public.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I would be glad to answer any questions.