CHAIRPERSONS: Senator Christine Cohen  
Representative Mike Demicco  

SENATORS: Miner, Haskell  

REPRESENTATIVES: Gresko, Harding, Arconti, Borer, Demicco, Dillon, Dubitsky, Gucker, Harding, Horn, Kennedy, MacLachlan, McGorty, Michel, Muchinsky, Palm, Piscopo, Reyes, Ryan, Simms, Vargas, Wilson, Young  

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Welcome to the Environment Committee Public Hearing for March 1, 2019. Thank you all for being here. First and foremost I will just let everyone know we do have an overflow room, it is Room 1A, it is on the first floor right below us. It does have audio and video from what I am told so you won’t be missing anything so if you don’t have a seat in this room please go to room 1A which is the overflow room.  

Well, have to do a little housekeeping and we will do that right now. So in the interest of safety please note the location of the exits in this hearing room. The two doors through which you entered the room are the emergency exits and are marked with exit signs. In an emergency there is also a door behind us, the legislators, right over there that can be used for exit purposes. In the event of an emergency please walk quickly to the nearest exit, proceed to the main stairs and follow
the exit signs to one of the fire stairs. Please quickly exit the building and follow instructions from the Capital Police. Do not delay and do not return unless and until you are advised that it is safe to do so. In the event of a lockdown announcement please remain in the Hearing Room, stay away from the exit doors and seek concealment behind desks and chairs until an “All Clear” announcement is heard. Hopefully that won’t be necessary but now everyone knows.

Okay so the way that we conduct these Hearings, the first hour of the hearing is reserved for public officials and agency heads and so forth. After the first hour then we alternate between public officials and members of the public. As you may know members of the public have three minutes to testify. You can speak as many Bills, I’m sure there will be some Bills people want to testify on multiple Bills. You can speak on as many as you would like but you only have three minutes. So if you want to speak on several Bills you have to talk fast and in order to be fair everybody gets three minutes. So at the conclusion of your three minutes legislators may want to ask you questions, which is helpful for us, so be prepared for that. Everything that you say of course is a matter of public record. You may notice that legislators throughout the day will be going in and out. They have Committee meetings and other obligations so, you know, don’t be distressed by that, people are going to coming in and out of the room all day. We ask that everyone be respectful of everyone else’s opinions. We ask for no applause, no booing, no applauding. Make your statements. We don’t want anyone to feel that they are being intimidated in anyway. We will hear
the Bills in the order in which they are listed on the Agenda so we won’t be jumping around, we will be going in order of the Agenda. I will tell you that my Co-Chair Senator Cohen is on her way, she will be here shortly and I think we are ready to go. Oh, and the Ranking Member Representative Harding will be shortly as well. Anyone have, anyone on the Committee have anything to say at this point. Okay, I think I covered all the ground rules so the first person who has signed up to testify on the Public Official list is Tracy Hanson. Tracy will be followed by Senator Somers and Representative Hampton so they can be prepared. So Ms. Hanson. Welcome.

TRACY HANSON: Good morning. My name is Tracy Hanson and I am the First Selectman in the Town of Voluntown. I am here today to ask you to approve SB 598 AN ACT CONCERNING PRODUCTION OF HEMP IN CONNECTICUT.

In the Town of Voluntown we have 1,623.94 acres of land assessed as farmland. Right now, some of the largest farms in town are struggling dairy farms. Many farmers are aging and are lacking a younger generation to take over current farm businesses. I know that passing SB 598 will be a key to revitalizing the farming industry in Voluntown and in other Connecticut farm towns.

According to statistics presented by the Hemp Business Journal, in 2017 the annual retail sales for hemp products were estimated to be $820 million dollars. This growth is expected to reach $1.9 billion dollars in 2022. Currently, China is the largest exporter of hemp in the world. With the ability to grow and produce our own hemp to make
cosmetics, health products, plastic, fabric, paper, food products and more, Connecticut farmers would be an integral part of reshoring an industry that our forefathers started this country on.

In December of 2018, President Trump signed the 2018 Farm Bill into law. In this law, industrial hemp is removed from the controlled substance list and legalized under supervision of the Department of Agriculture. In 2015, then Governor Malloy signed HB 5780 which became Public Act 15-202, An Act Legalizing Industrial Hemp. SB 598 would allow Connecticut’s Department of Agriculture to adopt regulations that follows Federal requirements under which the growing and production of hemp products would be regulated in Connecticut. These regulations would need to be submitted as a plan to the US Department of Agriculture for approval. It is important that SB 598 is passed so that the regulations can be created and submitted to the USDA in a timely manner and hemp farming in Connecticut can begin.

Thank you for your time and consideration. And I do want to say as a side note to, when I’m not the First Elected Selectman of Voluntown I am an editor for an online magazine called “USA Levelist” where we promote and support products that are manufactured in the United States. So I have been an advocate for hemp farming in Connecticut and in the whole country for about five years now. I’ve written a couple of articles on it as well. I am excited to have an opportunity for Voluntown farmers to be able to do this.
REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you very much and thank you for your testimony. I’ll ask Committee Members if they have any questions for you. Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for coming in. There are a couple of different hemp Bills on the agenda today and you mentioned one of them. Have you chosen one?

TRACY HANSON: I chose this one because in the research I was doing for Connecticut I saw that it was already legalized so I didn’t know. One of the other Bills was to legalize hemp from what I could understand from it and it already is legalized so per Connecticut in the Farm Bill of 2014 there was a plan in there for a pilot, like a pilot plan for I think it might even be through UConn but I am not 100 percent sure, for farmers to apply to in Connecticut for like a pilot program. So as far as, and I didn’t know the whole background behind that Bill, but as far as I was concerned that one was already legal and the other Bill talked about a pilot program and according to Farm Bill of 2018 there is a Hemp Act in there, the pilot program is not necessary. All that the states need to do according to my research is come up with a plan for registering and tracking and testing and submit to the USDA. One of the things I would suggest for the Bill, this Bill, mirrors the farm, the new Farm Bill in the requirements that need to be in the plan. But I would also suggest that it is added about the SBD oil because that is the most growing industry right now for hemp and the Federal Government might be harder on the testing for that so if the State has a plan in place first, it would be better.
REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Do you know if the Federal Government has regulations regarding SBD oil?

TRACY HANSON: As far as I know they don’t right now but from what I was seeing the FDA, the SBD oil is not a part, from what I understand, it wouldn’t make you high, it is more of a healing oil and the FDA is not accepting it as medical. I’m not an expert on that but there might be people here that are.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So if the FDA has not accepted it, how?

TRACY HANSON: I think they have accepted it, they’re kind of in limbo right now on how to regulate it.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): And what would you have the State do with regard to that?

TRACY HANSON: I would suggest that they look into it and, again I’m not an expert on that, I just know it is something that needs to be looked into. It still should be regulated, that is where the biggest money maker is right now but it would be something they want to pay attention, the State would want to pay attention to when they -- it’s all in this Bill because the Bill says it mirrors the Federal guideline. So when they are reading the Federal guidelines to pay attention to that part.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): When you say you think it should be regulated, in what way should it be regulated?

TRACY HANSON: Well the farm Bill of 2018 that was just passed there, from my understanding there is like a Hemp Farming Act or a Hemp Act within that, that gives all the requirement that the states need
to have when their plan and those were all listed in the Bill and it also refers to that section of the Farm Bill so it would include that.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay so is it your desire to see the State regulations match Federal or go beyond that.

TRACY HANSON: As far as I know the Federal Government hasn’t come up with anything yet. There are other states, there is currently 44 states that already do it, so it wouldn’t be reinventing the wheel. I think Kentucky is one of the states that have the largest farm concentrations so that would be something to look at.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): I’m sorry, you said 44 other states?

TRACY HANSON: Yeah, we’re behind the pack on this so it’s not something new.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So there are only six states in the Nation that have no hemp production?

TRACY HANSON: Well they have policies in place. Whether they have started em yet, I do not know.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): All right, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Representative. Other questions from Committee members? Oh, Representative Palm.

REP. PALM (36TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning. I believe you said that this would be sort of the reinvigoration of a crop on which part of our industrial [Cross-talking]agricultural past. Do you
know if in Voluntown there was actually hemp production in the earlier?

TRACY HANSON:  I don’t know.

REP. PALM (36TH):  Do you know if it existed anywhere?

TRACY HANSON:  In the State?

REP. PALM (36TH):  I’m not trying to put you on the spot, I’m just wondering about the history.

TRACY HANSON:  I don’t know about actually in, I am assuming because from the research I’ve done, when the colonists first came here, they were, it was almost mandatory for them to grow hemp. It was used for ropes in the sails of ships, it was used in a lot of things that they needed to survive in, so it was mandatory for them to grow it. If they didn’t grow it they could be thrown into jail and fined. So George Washington grew hemp. Thomas Jefferson grew hemp. There were, the Revolutionary War, some wars were funded from hemp profits so it’s not, it started our country pretty much. And no China has it. We need to bring it back.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST):  Thank you Representative. Anyone else have questions for Ms. Hanson? Ms. Hanson thank you very much for coming to testify. Appreciate it. So the next person on the list is Senator Somers who is here and to be followed by Representative Hampton and Representative Arnone. Welcome Senator.

SENATOR SOMERS:  Good morning. How the hemp are you? [Laughter]

REP. DEMICCO (21ST):  Is everybody happy?
SENATOR SOMERS: I hope so. It’s a crazy day here at the legislature so I thought we would start with that. I have with John Roe who is an expert grower who actually has grown hemp in Canada and I wanted to come today to lend by support for actually all the hemp bills 598, 893, 5481 and actually the Governor’s new 872 which has all the language on how it would be implemented which follows the Farm Bill. So I would like to talk a little bit about hemp and it being one of the oldest industries actually in the world let alone here in Connecticut and as we heard in Colonial times it was actually illegal for you to not grow hemp. World War II you heard clothing was hemp for victory and it is really a win-win for the State of Connecticut to legalize the production and growing of hemp products. As you’ve heard hemp seed, fiber, oils they are all used by actually large corporations from Ford Motor Company to Patagonia, the body shop that makes creams and lotions uses hemp and this product or most of them are getting it from overseas. Last year the research I did showed that the hemp market internationally was $4 billion dollars, only $1 billion came from the United States so there is a large opportunity, it is growing at about 15 percent per year. As we heard before George Washington actually is quoted saying, “Make the most you can of hemp but the ground be well prepared and the seed be sown in April.” The hemp may be sown anywhere. So we do have a long history here and this raw material can be used as we said in many different applications. It is used in biofuel. The CBD oil seems to be the one that is the most of highest value at this point in time but it is also used in
plastic and components so there is a wide variety of applications for this crop.

I will say that my further research did what can a farmer earn in Connecticut. If you grow the right strain and you plant 2,500 plants per acre a farmer could look at $60,000 dollars per acre in revenue so think of what that could do here for the State of Connecticut.

So we heard a lot of people give different testimony in the past, actually not here today, on hemp and one of the things I thought I would raise a few of those of quote because I think they are important. Kevin Sullivan said, “Diversification is going to save Connecticut agriculture.” This certainly would help us move in that direction. You just heard from the Voluntown First Selectman Tracy Hanson and she noted that more than “1,623 acres of land is assessed as farmland” right now in Voluntown and some of the largest farms in town are struggling dairy farms. You are all very well aware of the issues are with our dairy farmers and many farmers are aging unfortunately and are lacking a younger generation to try to take over the farming industry and business. This gives us an opportunity to change that. Passing these Bills will be key not only to revitalizing Connecticut’s economy but our farming industry here, in Voluntown and other rural communities across Connecticut.

Some farmers, especially the young ones are interested in growing hemp. It is a product that has, as we talked about, a variety of applications, you are not in just one single silo that if an industry experiences a downturn that there is no opportunity for the product in another market and
the UConn Agriculture Program said it was one of those things that we have to look at how do we repurpose greenhouses and Mr. Row can speak to how certain species of hemp can be grown indoor in a controlled environment agriculture greenhouse. So there is amazing things that can be done under glass to expand our growing season so we could even look at an opportunity for a longer season for hemp to grow in the State of Connecticut. There is tremendous demand for this product that is the other thing. We are not trying to create a market that is not there. The market is there. There is not enough product available so it is an opportunity for us to fill a need. And supporting hemp cultivation in Connecticut was a top request of a 50 member agricultural group that presented its recommendations to the Lamont transition team.

I am going to quote the Lieutenant Governor she said, “This is a huge opportunity.” So I would urge you to take serious consideration in moving forward with this legislation and to allow our farmers and our young farmers and Connecticut to really rise to its potential and I would like to turn it over quickly to Mr. John Roe who is an expert grower, previous farmer and also entrepreneur and businessman right now. So thank you, John.

JOHN ROE: Thank you, Senator. I would like to say this, my name is John Charles Row, I live in Stonington Borough. I am a retired farmer from Canada, Southern Ontario where when I grew up we were told some of the finest tobacco was grown, that and Virginia and I did hear that Connecticut was also a good cigar tobacco grower. That was never my father’s or my business but the bottom-line is I
want to make sure everybody here understands that we are sitting on top of a huge gold mine because of where we are latitudinally. Hemp will thrive in Connecticut. We have the right soil conditions and we have the right climate conditions. It will not do as well in South Carolina. It will not do as well in Mississippi and Alabama. I think I’ve made my point. It is amazing how things work out in life.

I was a grower in the greenhouse industry in Canada. In 1998 when the Canadian government Health and Welfare Canada delisted hemp as a Schedule I product here, when they decriminalized it and brought it in as a crop to be grown commercially for the production of its materials into various items from clothing to boxes. At that time CBD was a very early stage derivative medicinal product, nutraceutical pharmaceutical product. So I actually grew hemp on our farm under a contract with the company, I don’t know if everybody is following this industry these days, but there is a company in Manitoba called Manitoba Harvest that are the largest hemp growers in the world and they just sold out for, I don’t know, a billion dollars or something to one of the largest Canadian marijuana companies Tilray. My contract was with them. My hemp was picked up by trucks in huge bails and taken somewhere. I was in Ontario. This company was in Manitoba. I think it might have already gone back there, but the long and the short of it is in 1998 this was a burgeoning industry and it was godsend to us as farmers in 1998 in Canada. We don’t hear about these stories down here that much but I assure you. You may also know that the whole industry marijuana included is advancing so quickly
in Canada that it has caused me to get back into the business. I just decided to very carefully develop a program as an entrepreneurial endeavor here in the State of Connecticut to work with companies like the company that just bought Manitoba Harvest, they are called Tilray to help them perfect the production of everything from cannabinoid medicines to materials, whether it be clothes. I happen to have a book here from China that I bought at Staples, everybody buys these books, looks like cardboard, this is hemp.

So we have an opportunity to replace in so many different ways, products that are just amazing that aren’t apparent at this point in time and the upside just for the State of Connecticut is, I heard, $700 million dollars or $600 million. It’s billions of dollars I assure you in revenue mainly because we have the right combination of environment and growing conditions. And if I can contribute to the industry from the State of Connecticut so be it. I am intending to work with Tilray, the company out of Canada who are coming to the States with this new hemp program.

Just one other thing I would like to add, another company called Canopy Growth have just announced that they are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in a new hemp industrial park in Upstate New York. Did everybody hear about this? It was announced about a week ago. Major, major. We could do the very same thing here on a smaller scale perhaps but maybe not. It’s got a tremendous potential. IN the mean time if something like that sort of infrastructure doesn’t really start to take shape, any hemp, any acreage owners that would want to grow hemp would have to have a ready market in
the industrial hemp park that Canopy is developing in the Binghamton, New York area and that is going to be up and running as soon as 2020. So it is a terrific, terrific opportunity. Thank you.

SENATOR SOMERS (18TH): Do you have any questions?

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Senator, I suspect there will be some questions and Representative Michel who never disappoints is going to ask you a question.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Chair Demicco. Thank you both for your testimony. I’m glad that we are looking at alternatives to methane production. So just a question regarding CBD. I know about TG levels being dramatically lower and by the way, I am a co-sponsor of the Bill, so I am courting favor, I think we are looking at a gold mine for Connecticut. The CBD levels in hemp how are they, can you elaborate on this just cause I am curious and I really don’t know. Thank you.

JOHN ROE: The CBD which is the hallucinatory agent in cannabis, one of, is one percent of the level in hemp versus marijuana so it is nonexistent but at such a small ratio versus THC. It is such a low level the CBDs are so low that what it does is have a desirable effect in treating inflammation, infections and other sorts of internal problems that our bodies sometimes can have in addition to it being a calming agent, I’m told.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): So the CBD levels are high enough to use hemp as a medicinal. Or the CBD from hemp?

JOHN ROE: All hemp production started outside growing in soil and the finest samples of hemp CBD
was extracted from them so it was almost hit and miss. Today what is happening is companies like Tilray are taking the science of growing hemp indoors where they are controlling the environment to the degree where they can maximize the quality and the consistency of the CBD coming out of the plant and that is what the pharma companies are interested in and other nutraceutical companies. So yeah, could we grow CBD quality hemp in Voluntown sure if we get the right rain, and the right sun, and the right, you know, all that stuff just like any other crop. But the odds are that in a controlled environment application the type of, I think what you are interested in knowing is I think you are going to see predominately CBD production coming from controlled environment production rather than field grown. Field grown grows massively. Hemp can grow as high as this ceiling, it is a very heavy crop, it is twice the stalk thickness of a corn plant. It is hard to harvest. You’ve got to have heavy duty equipment, I mean it exists but that type of massive volume is typically then processed into materials whether it be corrugated boxes, clothing, other packaging materials, etc.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Representative. Representative Gresko.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you, Mr. Chair. If you haven’t noticed here at the Capital today it is also Physician’s Day so I just had a conversation with an emergency room physician, he lives in my district and to put it in a nutshell he feels that the majority of the visits that he sees through this
career boil down to some sort of substance abuse and substance taken by individuals who have come to the emergency room and then his parting words to me were, “Just look at Colorado” and what kind of nightmare is occurring there as far as emergency room visits and health implications. So how do you quell the fear that allowing the hemp growth will exacerbate this problem?

JOHN ROE: The doctor said the very same thing to me and I was surprised that he grouped CBD into that list of terrible medicines or drugs that are causing all these problems. I was not aware that CBD was such a contributor. I was not aware that CBD was such a serious drug in the emergency room. I have no expertise in that area. I don’t know anything about it. I was thinking he was referring to the harder drugs, the Fentanyl, the you know the whatever the derivative drugs that are killing people today, the overdose drugs. But as far as I am aware CBD has a safety standard that the Federal Government in Canada and the United States uphold as far as I am aware with proper production and usage methods. I guess you can overdose on aspirin if you must.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Maybe later tonight [Laughter]. My followup question is through the governor’s office we’ve been told that the Federal Government is asking the states to just hold off until they produce the regulations but you’re telling me New York is going full steam ahead so.

JOHN ROE: With hemp.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): With hemp, yes.
JOHN ROE: Since it has been decriminalized at the federal level.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): But if Connecticut and I’m assuming New York their proposals together than proposal would need to go to the Federal Government to get a blessing before either New York or Connecticut would be able to do anything unless we take advantage of the pilot that we established here in 2014 I would assume. All right thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Representative. Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for coming in both of you. I very much appreciate it. A couple questions, first off you say that Connecticut is sort of uniquely situated geographically to benefit because of climate and soil is good. We just heard testimony from the First Selectman of Voluntown who said there are 44 other states who are ahead of us. Is that your understanding as well?

JOHN ROE: I know it is a substantial number, I wasn’t aware that it was 44, but I know it is the majority.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): And you are telling us that the majority of those don’t have the climate that we have of?

JOHN ROE: Absolutely I’m telling you that.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, so for example if you wanted to grow hemp in Florida you would have a hard time.
JOHN ROE: Yeah, what happens hemp is any kind of vegetation is massive, it’s bulky, it’s big and as you introduce humidity into the process that you can’t control you’re gonna have problems. You’re gonna have fungus, you’re gonna have all kinds of mold infestations. Farmers fight with that every day. I think we all understand that. It’s gonna be the same thing with hemp so therefore we’re looking for a temperate, moderate climate with humidity but not 100 percent for, you know, two months in a row like in southern states in the middle of the summer. Now of course you can adjust the growing period. If they are growing hemp in Florida right now, they are growing it right now. It’s March. They are growing corn. Wherever you can grow tobacco successfully, my understanding, is you can grow hemp. It’s a family relative some here might know that. That’s way it is a good bet that we can be successful with hemp here. Tobacco is a crop that has done well here.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): My understanding of, well tell me where we are in the process of getting federal approval? My understanding was that aren’t any states that have already made it through that system. Am I incorrect on that?

JOHN ROE: No, you are absolutely right because until it is decriminalized at the federal level there is a tremendous amount of delay in pushing forward.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, so there aren’t 44 states that are ahead of us?

JOHN ROE: Well I don’t know that there are 44 states ahead of us, but I know that there are states

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): When you say ahead of us, if nobody has been approved how are they ahead of us?

JOHN ROE: Well, Governor Cuomo stood up and said to the company and made the announcement two weeks ago that we’re gonna put up a hemp industrial park in the Binghamton, New York area. I would love to have our governor stand up and say the same thing for Connecticut here. He could if he wants to, I think, I don’t see any problem with it because it’s been decriminalized at the federal level.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, but nobody is ahead of us with regard to approval of a set of regulations?

JOHN ROE: I wouldn’t have that knowledge, sir. I don’t know.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, cause we led to believe that we need to act quickly to get ahead of the curve and if indeed there are 44 states ahead of us sounds like we missed the curve.

JOHN ROE: Oh, that’s not a curve to miss. It’s like putting stop signs and road signs on highways there are maybe 44 states that have more stop signs and road signs than Connecticut but that doesn’t mean that we can’t drive around Connecticut. You know what I mean?

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): The, is hemp an annual or a perennial?

JOHN ROE: It’s an annual.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, so it needs to be replanted every year?
JOHN ROE: Yes.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): If a dairy farmer for example has a field of corn and needs to cut the corn to feed his cows, can he do both crops in a year?

JOHN ROE: No. He would have to decide to either decide to grow hemp or corn. It is the same growing cycle, it’s the same growing season.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, you can only get one crop out of hemp a year?

JOHN ROE: Right.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Cause I had heard the information that you could get more than one crop.

JOHN ROE: You can, down in Florida. There are farmers growing two and even three, I’m told, crops of corn now. I haven’t been farming for a few years so that is pretty amazing to me. It is because of the climate. They don’t grow in the dead of summer but the grow in the early spring like right now and they also grow in the fall to get two crops for sure. So yes, that part is feasible.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay but you don’t think they could do that here?

JOHN ROE: We can’t do that here because once we get a frost it kills the vegetation unless we do it in a controlled environment. But for farmers like, I think the theme here today is to encourage everyone to understand that the farmers need help. I have a farm background in the areas that these farmers are dire emergency right now. I feel for them. I bleed for them. This would be absolutely an amazing
opportunity for them to be able to improve their economic situation because they have the land.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Talking about economics, do you know of any studies with regard to what the demand is and if every state legalizes it would it no suddenly have a, be a glut?

JOHN ROE: Perhaps but where we’re at right now, I think it is important for us to understand that less than 1/100th of 1/10 of one percent -- 1/100th of 1/10 of one percent of the materials we currently could have made by hemp our being made by hemp in this country everything else is typically wood based or other materials whether it be any kind of packaging, clothing and so when we are talking about such a small, currently, level of supply and availability, you know the old saying the sky is the limit, but the sky does have a limit. So I would say this, sir, you are absolutely right in the bigger long-term picture but in the near term, in my lifetime I can’t imagine hemp overcoming competing products today because it just takes that much longer to do but while we’re competing we are doing very, very well at it.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Just a last couple of questions. There is concern obviously that, well sometimes there’s confusion between hemp and marijuana, could you just quickly explain the difference between those two.

JOHN ROE: I’m really not an expert but the bottom line is the TH. There is no THC in hemp.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): THC is the substance that makes you high?
JOHN ROE: THC, the hallucinogenic that makes you high is found in the marijuana plant which is a first cousin of the hemp family, of cannabis.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): All right, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Representative and Representative Wilson did you have a question?

REP. WILSON (53RD): Yes, Mr. Chairman and thank you. And thank you for coming, it has been very informative. I have a question, it is my understanding that Federal Banking regulations make it very, very difficult for marijuana transactions. In fact the big banks to my understanding have completely stayed away from it and there are only a handful of banks in the State of Connecticut that will even touch it. Do those same regulations apply to hemp?

JOHN ROE: No not anymore.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions from the Committee? I do have a question and I am still unclear. We’ve been given figures of 44, 43 other states do they all comply with the, do they currently comply with federal regulations or are they in process? I am unclear about that.

JOHN ROE: My understanding is that’s it’s a free for all. My understanding is every state does what it feels it should do and communicates what they’re doing to the Federal Government and so far there
haven’t been any battles or skirmishes that sort of thing to my knowledge.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): And have the states that currently do produce hemp has there been any problem with the THC concentration threshold that you know of?

JOHN ROE: Not to my knowledge, no.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Okay.

JOHN ROE: What I can help you with sir, is I mentioned a company Manitoba Harvester earlier, if we all know our geography Manitoba is just north of the Dakotas and there is a lot of hemp being grown in the Dakotas and this has been going on for years because Manitoba Harvest have migrated into that region of the Northern Central plains and contract farmers to grow hemp for them there and it’s a big deal.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you. Representative Palm has a question for you.

REP. PALM (36TH): Thanks, Mr. Chair. It is my understanding that the Federal Bill in 2014 allowed state departments of agriculture and universities to set up these pilot programs to lay the groundwork right and we just failed to do that.

JOHN ROE: Exactly.

REP. PALM (36TH): So is it your opinion that the reason Connecticut is behind despite our ideal location is that we just kind of missed the boat on that federal legislation four-five years ago?

JOHN ROE: It just didn’t happen, that’s right.
REP. PALM (36TH): Just didn’t happen. So there’s really no reason for us to be behind expect oversight and a lack of planning?

JOHN ROE: There is no reason for us to be behind and if we decided to move forward, and I think we would be at the forefront of one of the leading states very, very quickly because of all the wonderful assets we have.

REP. PALM (36TH): Okay, thank you very much. Thanks for your testimony, it sounds like a great idea.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Hold on one second. I believe Representative Dubitsky has a question.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize, I forgot to ask you one more thing. When you were growing in Canada where did you get the seed?

JOHN ROE: It was supplied by the company that I was selling the crop to.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, do you know if there are any seed suppliers in the United States that are authorized to provide seed to the farmers?

JOHN ROE: I am going to just say yes although I have not made a contract with a supplier yet but with this advent of Manitoba Harvest getting involved with Canopy in New York State that will be something I will be pursuing. If you would like information on that I can get that for you.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Sure.
JOHN ROE: My assumption is it that it is legally and legitimately legal, I just haven’t identified the supplies yet.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): But I assume the seed manufactures have to be certified by the Federal Government?

JOHN ROE: I would think so, yes sir.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. PALM (36TH): I just have a follow up. I was just able to find it on here that 38 states in active legislation, clarifying existing laws and have started on new licensing requirements for hemp production. They include Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, North Dakota, Nevada, New York, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming and four other states, Florida, Nevada, New Mexico and Nevada have authorized new research and Tennessee has allowed hemp to be grown to the added to feed products. So I think what they are saying about people being ahead of the curve is they have already established pilot programs, are looking at licensure, how they would control, what the checkpoints would be so they would be advanced as compared to Connecticut and it looks like you just have to put a plan together and ask the Federal Government for authorization to go ahead. That is something that pharmaceutical companies and our DSS files wavers and plans every single day with the Federal Government. I think if a plan with like controlled licensure on how you’re going to track it and control it that, you know with the passage of
what just happened in Washington we should be in good shape but we need to get going.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Senator. I appreciate that. Anyone else have questions for Mr. Roe or for Senator Somers? Okay, thank you very much for coming and testifying. I will remind everyone that we do have an overflow room since we are such a popular Committee today, its Room 1A which is on the first floor just below us here. It does have audio and video so if you are not interested in standing for a long time, if you’d rather sit and be comfortable, Room 1A is the overflow room that is available. So with that, the next person to testify is Representative Hampton. Is Representative Hampton here? Okay we will come back to Representative Hampton. I believe Representative Arnone is here so you are next in the hotseat, sir. Welcome. To be followed by Representative Rose and Representative Doucette and again I will remind everyone that in about 15 minutes we’re going to start alternating between public officials and members of the public so everyone will get their opportunity very soon.

REP. ARNONE (58TH): Thank you Co-Chairs Cohen and Demicco, Members of the Committee. My name is Representative Tom Arnone from Enfield’s 58th and I am here to speak on 6016 today and I would with great pleasure like to turn and yield over my time to the Connecticut Humane Society.

THERESA GEARY: Thank you Co-Chairs Senator Cohen and Representative Demicco, Vice-Chairs Senator Kushner and Representative Gresko, Ranking Members Senator Miner and Representative Harding and other distinguished members of the Environment Committee.
My name is Theresa Geary, Director of Operations at the Connecticut Humane Society. I am here today to support HB 6016, “AN ACT REQUIRING MUNICIPAL ANIMAL CONTROL FACILITIES TO COMPLY WITH DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SANITATION AND HUMANE TREATMENT REGULATIONS.”

Having spent more than 20 years working in six animal shelters, both municipal and nonprofit, in four different states I am certain this change will make all the difference for the pets in Connecticut.

Two years ago, the legislature passed with support from the Connecticut Humane Society the creation of measurable and current industry standards of care that would clearly outline and govern expectations for humane care and treatment of animals in nonprofit animal shelter environments. The regulation to be written by the Department of Agriculture were effective for only brick and mortar non-profit shelters and it is CHS’ hope that these regulations when finally written, would aspire to elevate the level of care and understanding for the needs of animals housed in any shelter.

Non-profits were included in the Bill municipal pounds and shelters were not. CHS advocates for all shelter environments and animal care practices to be considerate of the animals’ needs and circumstances for whatever length of time they are being held. To have two separate standards regulated for animals creates a two-tier system for animal care in Connecticut which is both inconsistent and unfair.

How to solve the problem: The Bill, once enacted, will place all animals cared for by brick and mortar shelters whether municipal or non-profit under one
set of clear, measurable and modern standards. The regulations for municipal shelters written in 1963, 56 years ago would be replaced with the same regulations for non-profit shelters which would reflect Connecticut’s desire to set the standards of current animal sheltering practices.

While the regulations are effective immediately for non-profit shelters, the Connecticut Humane Society, as Connecticut’s oldest and largest animal welfare organization, urges you to consider giving municipalities a reasonable length of time, maybe a minimum of two years to adjust to the new regulations. This would allow towns and cities to either combine their efforts to shelter animals and reduce costs or privatize their system which has already been done by the Town of Newington.

The Connecticut Humane Society appreciates your consideration to giving pets a safe, healthy and as stress free environment as possible no matter what type of animal sheltering facility they find themselves in.

Thank you for this opportunity.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Any questions from the Committee? Yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. With regard to the term municipal shelter, which is in the Bill, are you confident that that also or is it your anticipation that that also covers regional shelters that are run by cogs and things like that?

THERESA GEARY: Yes.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): And you are confident that language would encompass that?
THERESA GEARY: Yes.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. So I do support the notion that we should have the same expectations when animals are housed whether it is a private shelter or a public shelter, whether it is a private dog pound or a public dog pound. What I hear from some elected officials is that any variation becomes a critical variation when it come to the Department of Agriculture and so in cases where they might have been able to have real good healthy opportunities for dogs or cats to be kept on behalf of a municipality a run might be six inches sort or something else might be a fraction short. Do you think there should be any leeway? I think what we’re trying to do is get the bottom to come up which I support having been a First Selectman for a while, I think we kept our in a private dog facility and to be quite honest with you they weren’t anything close to what the municipal shelters are. So I think everybody’s moving in that direction. My question is should there be some language that provides a little bit of leeway so that you don’t end up flattening a dog shelter or a dog pound just to comply?

THERESA GEARY: Right, I think there is creative ways within the regulations to put language in there that can solve that problem, right. Connecticut Humane is not here to say all dog pounds need to be leveled and built from the ground up. What we
really want is to figure out a way cooperatively in the State that all animals get the same level of care so when the regulations are written that should be a group of people, all in influencing sections of animal welfare to come up with a reasonable way to do this and everybody gets some input into it.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Senator. Representative Demicco.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Madam Chair. Actually my question is similar to the one just raised by Senator Miner. So I am looking at testimony from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities which says that this Bill would take local control away from the municipalities, that they a one-size fits all approach should not be applied to municipalities and this proposal is a solution looking for a problem. I take it you don’t agree with that?

THERESA GEARY: I read that. Everybody’s got their own perspective. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that and I think the Connecticut Humane Society is standing on the position of what do the cats and dogs think that end up in facilities that need to be upgraded and so within the municipalities we can all be creative and come up with ways, working with other groups both non-profit and rescue groups in your community to figure out a way to achieve that. But a cat is a cat and a dog is a dog and they should all have the same standard of care.
REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Okay but again tying in with your conversation with Senator Miner you see an opportunity to have a little leeway here or?

THERESA GEARY: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely, I think that comes, like I said with the regulations and how those get written and then the language used and, you know, we’ve also put in here timing. When these regulations come out from the Department of Ag they will be imposed on non-profits the next day or as soon as they’ve said they are going to be implemented. We don’t have a timeframe in which to meet these standards but we are asking for municipalities to have a timeframe in which to figure out, maybe that’s grant seeking or looking at some of our more national animal welfare organizations for support for that or regionalization and I think there’s lots of way to come about this to get the same standard of care for cats and dogs.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Anyone else? Thank you for your testimony.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you for your time.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, Representative Rose, followed by Representative Doucette.

REP. ROSE (118TH): Good morning, Representative Chairman Demicco, Senator Cohen, Ranking Members and Members of the Environment Committee. I am joined here today with folks from the local kennels in Connecticut to speak on, in opposition today, to House Bill 7158.

To give you a little bit of background, back in 2014 we signed an Act into Law which is Public Act 13-23.
That Law says, “Anyone offering the services of a kennel must include their license number in such advertising.” That was unanimously passed by the House and Senate and signed into law as I mentioned in 2014, I’m sorry. About six months after that Bill was signed into law we found that the definition of kennel, according to state statute, was incorrect and made this law unenforceable. So we have been attempting to change the definition of kennel since then. So I think you in this Bill you are addressing that, changing that definition to include people who are just boarding dogs.

The problem being is I was approached by “Rover.com” probably about a year ago and asked if I would exempt a certain amount of animals from having to be boarded with a licensed kennel and my opposition to that was why would we exempt dogs. If you have a pet, I have a pet I consider that pet like a member of my family. I have grandchildren so I wouldn’t want my grandchildren going to a daycare center that had three or less children that didn’t need to be licensed because that is exempting them from any kind of protection that the State licensing would afford them. So by exempting three or less dogs what we’re saying is if you are boarding three dogs or less you can operate in the State of Connecticut without having to follow our Rule of Laws, like the rest of these kennels do that are sitting here today. These folks are inspected for health and safety issues, they pay their taxes, they follow zoning regulations, they have to carry proper insurance.

Now according to “Rover” they sent out an email saying that about 30,000 people in the State of
Connecticut use their services. If conservatively we figured there were 1,000 dog sitters today watching three or less dogs, if we pass this law the way it is written we are going to say to the pet owners and to those dogs that don’t have a voice, those 3,000 dogs we don’t care about you. You don’t need to be in the care of anybody whose has had any kind of inspection for health and safety and even the background checks are in question with “Rover.” If you Google “Rover.com” dog deaths, dog injuries you will come up with tens of thousands of complaints.

In the interest of time, I know this is going to be a long day for all of you, I am going to read just one of the five that I put into the testimony.

This one was published 10/12/18.

“I am a 5 star sitter on Rover- that being said- It is WORST COMPANY EVER! They do not protect their sitters nor do they protect your pets! Rover has no regulations! They do a background check but there is no proof that you are who you say you are. They do not come to our homes and check to see if it is how we say it is. They also allow owners not to complete their profile and still find sitters which puts us in really bad situation. Rover holds no accountability, in an emergency they are useless and will tell the sitter its 100% on us. Dog checks need to be done! Dog owners lie/don’t tell about dogs that bite, dogs that are escape risks, and other information that is important.”

Another girl says, “Don’t ever use Rover. Just look at the picture below before booking with a website if you want your dog to end up like this after staying with one of their sitter.” This was about a Doberman that was left in the care of someone who
was living in an apartment and wasn’t allowed to have big dogs. The Rover sitter tethered the Doberman, tied his collar too tight and it cost the dog owner $750 dollars to take the dog to the vet.

If you look at Rovers terms of services they tell you they’re covered but in 2.3 of their Terms of Services, “We hereby disclaim and you hereby expressly release us from any and all liability whatsoever for any controversies claimed through injuries, loss, harm or damages arriving from anyway related to the interactions or dealing with other users and acts, commissions of service to providers and pet owners.” So basically what Rover is saying is we cover you but we don’t cover you. So in order, we’ll cover you but it you sign this release, we are all of a sudden not covering you.

So what we’re doing is basically allowing people, and I’m not against anybody doing a homebased business, I understand that the economy is bad and people need to make extra money, what we are saying is you’re gonna do it, please do it legally. Get licensed. Be inspected. This is a consumer protection Bill as well because as a regular person who maybe doesn’t know about all the licensing I go to someone’s house and I meet them and they are nice and my dog likes them and they like my dog and I agree to let them watch. I don’t know that we should be looking for the spread of Parvo and if there are sharp objects that could hurt my dog and is there a hole in the fence where my dog could escape because again there are a thousand of those complaints up on the website.

With that being said, the health and safety of our pets in this State depend on what you do with this
Bill this year. And I hope that you will consider taking out the exemption of the three pets because I don’t want my dog to be one of those three pets that goes unprotected. And I would be happy to take any questions and I do have a host of kennels here that all have testimony if time allows we would like to let them speak. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. I actually have a question. So, you know, you compared it to children at the beginning of your testimony. I have three children myself and often need to secure the services of a babysitter for my children, not necessarily putting them in daycare but a sitter, and that sitter wouldn’t necessarily be a licensed sitter. Do you see any room where the same could hold true for your pets? I have a dog at home as well. I had a Lab for 14 years and I never put him in a kennel just because I was fortunate enough to have a lot of family and friends around. When he became older and ill and I didn’t have family to watch him I was concerned about putting an elderly dog who had not been in a kennel previously into a traditional kennel. Do you see any room for any exemption for pet owners who perhaps who want to do their own due diligence and go out and find a pet sitter that may take one, two or three dogs but not have, you know, your traditional cement slabs or, you know I know kennels have changed over the years but I defer to you? Do you have, do you think there is any room for exemption?

REP. ROSE (118TH): I really don’t because again if they are following the laws and okay, so we’re not talking about somebody coming into your home and pet sitting. We’re not talking about dog walkers. We’re
talking about people actually advertising and conducting business. So if I go to, this woman on my right and she has three dogs in her home, what if one of those dogs has Parvo and honestly I don’t understand enough about all of the diseases and I’m not a vet but to the average person when you are boarding your dog with somebody with three, do you realize that you’re not being covered that there could be another dog there that has Parvo and that your dog is potentially going to contract that and I don’t know if the other two dogs have had all their vaccinations. Have they had their rabies? So as a regular consumer I wouldn’t even think about checking that. I would be trusting that what’s happening but that is the reason we have licensed kennels. So if somebody wants to open their home to board dogs, absolutely. No question about it but following the zoning regulations too. I don’t want my next door neighbor with three or four dogs in their backyard barking all day and if one of those dogs, they are getting paid to watch those dogs, what if one of those dogs comes over and attacks my dog or bites me? Who is liable? There is so many issues, how can you exclude anybody from following the law on the State of Connecticut?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): With all due respect, I don’t always want pets that are to come in to my home just like perhaps if I am going away for a couple of days I might, you know, I just wouldn’t necessarily want to open up my home. So in those instances I would, a consumer, I think I am fairly educated consumer, I would be again doing my due diligence to ask the question of the pet sitter, you know, are you taking in other dogs, have these dogs been up to date with their immunizations that sort of thing. Granted not
every consumer knows to ask those questions, but not every consumer knows to ask their children’s babysitter certain questions as well that I might consider important to me. Do you have a gun in the house, things of that nature? So I am just wondering if perhaps there is room for exemptions. Clearly we want to do something and there are, you know, there are a lot of regulations to be contended with to become a commercial kennel and perhaps a pet owner might not want to bring their dog into that environment. So I just throw that out there as a possibility. Are there any other questions from Committee members? Yes, Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. So one of the things that I struggle with is that this is kind of similar to my mind in the transportation industry, so for years we had taxies, livery and your neighbor who might give you a ride to the airport and then we went to Uber or Lyft and it is because of the technology that people are becoming very accustomed to. My wife and I board our dog at a kennel but that doesn’t mean there aren’t occasions when my daughter-in-law might come over and stay at our house with our dog or our dog might go stay at their house for an afternoon. This is the problem that I’m having with this. We have, and I’m not, I don’t own stock in Rover, I’m not a Rover employee or whatever I don’t know anything about them except what I’ve read. But whether I like the technology, technological aspect of it or not our constituents do and to what degree with the testimony you’ve given or anyone else will give is 100 percent accurate. The truth of the matter this is goin on just like Uber and Lyft were going on so when I look at this issue I think to myself if we
could create an umbrella under which we would be able to monitor those situations for complaints, for compliance for whatever at least we would be taking a step. I doubt my wife is gonna call somebody on that list and say, we want to leave our dog with you. We are very comfortable with our kennel just like we are very comfortable with our veterinarian and I don’t think that is gonna change for a lot of people that are comfortable with that situation. But whether I like it or I don’t like it, whether I agree with it or I don’t our constituents have moved on to this and that is the problem and like Uber and like Lyft I think having some regulatory process under which they can operate lawfully maybe we get to the point that you’re at.

I’ve got a sheet here that says that 23,000 cats and dogs came into the State of Connecticut last year, lawfully. You want to talk about disease or other issues that is where the focus should be not on whether or not my neighbor chooses to use, to my mind one of those sitting services or places. So why shouldn’t we be looking at this from the standpoint of taking that step and putting some tight regulations as you point out on them about compliance and incident reporting. Why isn’t that the better way to go than just to say you can’t do it knowing that it’s gonna happen?

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you for your question, Senator. Would you mind if I have one of my kennels address that? Thank you very much.

MARYBETH STARK: Hi, my name is Marybeth Stark and I own Bark Avenue Pet House in Milford. I am also a, I have an import license for bringing in rescue dogs. So just the last thing you said about
unhealthy dogs coming in, so we worry about them. Any dog that comes in legally comes in with a health certificate and if you have an import license you are taking that dog to the vet within 48 hours to at Connecticut vet to get another health certificate.

The other thing I’d like to address is you’re talking about Lyft and Uber. Those drivers have Connecticut drivers’ licenses, they are insured and that’s what we’re asking of this. I have no problem if someone wants to have three of four dogs in their house if they are licensed, if they are insured, they don’t have to go to highest steps that I do which having everyone of my employees certified in pet first aid and CPR but we are actually getting dogs back from people that have done this in their homes and the dogs are, we make them do another fecal exam to make sure the dogs aren’t coming in with diseases. They’re coming in, there’s one person in my town that has ten dogs in her backyard and a backyard full of dirt which is breeding ground for giardia, all sorts of things. So that’s all were asking. We’re asking, you know, I pay my taxes, I’ve lost some people to Rover people because they said, hey it’s cheaper, we don’t have to pay sales tax on it. So they can undercut us as well but, my kennel is doing great but I want people to be legal and I want them to take care of the pets and I want them to be following the same type of rules we do. I would love to have ten dogs coming out of my house where I don’t have to pay sales tax and I don’t have to have zoning bothering me but it took me three years to get through Planning and Zoning in Milford.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): So I appreciate your testimony. I don’t necessarily want my neighbor to
have ten dogs either. I think there are a lot of regulations, a lot of statutes that limit the amount of dogs anybody can have on their property and that was I think originally focused on the breeding issue. So I think I can at least speak for myself, I am trying to get my hands around this issue knowing that its’ going to exist whether we like it or not in some form or fashion and trying to figure out is there a way where we can put a license in place, regulations in place so that we all have the same level of understanding of what would be permitted, what is permitted and then some review process. So that is what I think this bill does. Thank you.

MARYBETH STARK: So just one more thing on this, we have no problem like you said with your daughter-in-law or your sister, you know, I have a friend that would watch my two dogs before I had my own place, I watched her two dogs but I am not making a living out of it and doing illegally.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Senator. Yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Is it my understanding that you are in favor of part of the Bill but not the other part?

REP. ROSE (118TH): Yes, Representative and I would first of all like to that you for helping me rewrite the language that we’ve been trying to attempt to pass for the last few years. I am in favor of the fact that they are just finally defining kennel which you would know better than I. Correctly I am not in favor of adding the three people. The
original intent in the Bill which quite a few members here supported back in 2013, the problem being the only way to catch these people is to add that word advertising service of the kennel to add their license number to that advertising, that is where we’re lacking in this Bill and that is what I’m opposed to.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, but the advertising is not in this Bill it is a Bill that has been passed long ago, right?

REP. ROSE (118TH): We originally passed a Bill that said yes. Public Act said that, “anyone offering the services of a kennel must publish their license number in such advertising”, was the only way for us to try to enforce the fact that people are conducting illegal business. It is much like the home improvement contracts have to publish their license but with this Bill it finally does redefine kennels but it is also putting in the caveat that if you have three or less dogs you have free reign you don’t have to be licensed or inspected.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): With regard to the definition frankly the current definition in existing law makes no sense. It defines a kennel as a pack of dogs. Clearly the people here do not operate a pack of dogs in common ownership they operate a facility of some sort, they operate a place. So with regard to that piece of it, I think it makes complete sense. With regard to the other piece, the piece that you’re opposing let me ask you this or any of the people here, if I have two dogs and I’m going to go on vacation and I want to pay my neighbor to take care of my two dogs at this house what kind of
regulations, what kind of government involvement should there be in that transaction?

REP. ROSE (118TH): Assuming there is no exchange of money and they are not advertising that they do this on a regular basis for anyone it is a friend helping a friend or a niece babysitting your dogs or your next door neighbor taking your dogs. They are not advertising a business. That’s why in the original language of the original Bill that we passed it those advertising the services of a kennel assuming the definition of kennel was correct.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Right but this Bill doesn’t have anything to do with advertising so if I wanted to pay my neighbor, my neighbor’s kid to take care of my dogs while I’m vacation, no advertising but there’s still a money transaction where is the government, what should the State do in that instance, where should the State be involved in that transaction?

REP. ROSE (118TH): I don’t think the State should be involved at all. That is the other problem I have with this Bill, it is not addressing how do we enforce current State laws saying if you are a kennel, again lets assuming the definition is correct, if you are operating a kennel then you have to follow the law, this Bill is not saying that and I am also opposed to that.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay but if you remove the exemption for three dogs then my neighbor would be a commercial kennel under the Statute and would be subject to all commercial kennel regulations wouldn’t he?
REP. ROSE (118TH): Not if you’re neighbor is babysitting your dog for a couple of days. They are not taking in other pets. I mean is it your dog and then their taking other neighbors dogs in all at the same time and they are making money and advertising their business?

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Again this has nothing to do with advertising, this is just a definition of the place as a place where dogs are kept for money. If you remove that then my neighbor would be considered a commercial kennel under the Statue wouldn’t he?

REP. ROSE (118TH): Under the current Statute or with this change?

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Under the Statute, as amended removing the three dog exemption if I paid my neighbor’s kid to take care of my dogs at their house, he would be considered a commercial kennel wouldn’t he?

REP. ROSE (118TH): I’m not an attorney and I am not that familiar to be honest with you. With that scenario I would say, no but I don’t know what the State law, I’m sure you know better than I do.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay well that would be my concern because then it would say, “A commercial kennel means a place maintained for boarding or grooming dogs or cats and includes but is not limited to veterinary hospital which boards or grooms.” It would be a place maintained for boarding. Wouldn’t that be my neighbor’s house if he has my dogs over there or are you saying it wouldn’t?
REP. ROSE (118TH): I would be saying is wouldn’t. Your neighbor’s house is not a place maintained for boarding. Your neighbor’s house is their house and they are doing you a favor even if you are buying ‘em a bottle of wine or throwing them a few dollars just for watchin your dog. I don’t think they would be subject to sales tax and all of that.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): I’m just curious where the line would be drawn in that instance. I wouldn’t be able to see it from the Statue where the line is drawn and that’s what would concern me about removing that, but I thank you for coming in and I thank you for bringing your, the kennel owners. I assume most of the people here that you’ve brought own kennels is that right?

REP. ROSE (118TH): Yes, if could introduce them or have them introduce themselves to the Committee?

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Well is there one of them perhaps who could answer the question as to if that section were removed where would the line be drawn?

BARBARA BUTLER: I just wanted to say. My name is Barbara Butler and I own Shoreline Pet Lodge in Branford, Connecticut for 32 years. This is my understanding I was supporting House Bill 7158 with the exception of allowing unlicensed providers to board dogs in their homes overnight. I wouldn’t consider your neighbor somebody who is going to advertise their services so that’s my understanding of Rover was going to do with the advertised. Right now they advertise their pet sitting services, my though was that they, I was told that they wanted to advertise their boarding services, that is what we’re opposed to. You know like as a business owner
I go to advertise to Yellopages.com for example and I went into the phonebook the other day and I looked and I’m “S” so “S” is all the way down on the bottom of the page, there are several I am going to say like 50 names ahead of mine that are people that aren’t commercial boarding kennels. It’s somebody’s pet service or somebody’s like if you were to call it you would find out they’re boarding in their home. So what we’re asking for is that the people who offer, the people like us, we would have to put our kennel license number in that advertising so that would identify us as licensed by the State of Connecticut commercial kennel. What we know is, it’s not the next door neighbor and it is not a relative, those aren’t are problems. But what we object to is, I know in today’s economy people like to make a quick dollar all right, and if they can board one to three dogs overnight in their home, they’re making money. But the thing is, taking care of animals is a fulltime job. It doesn’t matter if you are boarding three or you’re boarding 20 it is the same amount of work that goes into it and for us, our background is we consult with our local veterinarian, we seek professional development. We have trainers that come in and work with us. We attend conferences. We know about animal care, animal behavior and animal diseases. We know that if anything happens to the animals that are in our care we’re in major trouble because a pet is a member of your family and it is like a child. So if something goes wrong, you know, it’s a difficult business and you can’t just say, “I’m sorry, sir. I’m sorry ma’am.”
REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): I understand. I don’t mean to cut you off but if you could just address the question that I asked.

BARBARA BUTLER: I thought I did.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): If you remove the three animal exemption, why would my neighbor not be considered a commercial kennel?

BARBARA BUTLER: I would think that your neighbor wouldn’t be advertising.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So advertising is where you would draw the line?

BARBARA BUTLER: Yeah.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So he could do that for his friends and neighbors but as long as he doesn’t advertise you would consider him not to be a commercial kennel.

BARBARA BUTLER: Anybody else?

BOB MICKLOWYCK: Basically the same that Barb Butler was saying. Your neighbor is not advertising, you know. Okay well all abide by the same law that the State issued us as for inspections, health care, the safety of the animals and if, you know, hundreds of years neighbors have been watching neighbor’s pets that’s not an issue, even if you gave him $50 dollars or whatever you gave him, it’s just a neighbor. He is not advertising on the internet.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So again advertising is your line?

BOB MICKLOWYCK: Right if they want.
REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So if advertising were in the Statue.

BOB MICKLOWYCK: Right whoever is boarding pets for money, commercially under Rover or Care, Doggie VaCa, Craig’s List let them put their state license with the advertising. You know, right now the Department of Agriculture is so short-staffed they can’t they can’t inspect all these people that are doing it illegally and just takes away from us commercial folks that have been doing it for, we’ve owned our business for 50 years. Barbara has had her business for 50 years plus and in fact we’ve worked hard and we help the communities and these other companies just come in and they are not paying the sales tax. You folks don’t realize how much money the state is losing in revenue. There’s a place in Old Greenwich that is boarding dogs, charging $65 dollars a day and they have maybe a minimum of ten dogs. That adds up to $1,400 dollars a year the state lost in taxes.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Again, I don’t mean to cut you off there are a lot of people that want to testify today. I asked a very specific question. I appreciate your coming in and thank you very much. [Off mike speaking] Could you turn on your microphone, please and put it towards you?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Could everyone, I’m just going to interrupt for one moment because we need to have names stated for the records so sir, if you could just state your name.

BOB MICKLOWYCK: My name is Robert Mickowlyck and I’m from Milford, Connecticut.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you.
MARY BETH STARK: Marybeth Stark from Milford, Connecticut. Also following zoning laws. If for some reason you took, we took your dogs in and he was over zoning, some towns only allow you to have three dogs in your home. So I would say that fall into it to.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. I do think that this is an important distinction because what I was referring to when I was speaking with you Representative is some sort of exception to the rule and if the distinction is advertising, you know, the facilities that I’m referring to aren’t advertisers. They perhaps operate through word of mouth, you know, but there are, you know, family, friends, neighbors who do in fact run a business taking in perhaps one, two or three animals but are not actively advertising in that way and I’m sure all of us know somebody that operates in that fashion. Are you saying that that would be okay as a carve out to this law?

REP. ROSE (118TH): As stated in the original intent of Public Act 1323 I get that people are doing this as you said one or two dogs in their house and they’re doing it word of mouth. When we originally passed this law we had to try to figure out a way of how to identify people that are, you know, how do we get the word out that they are advertising and they need to be licensed so that is why we did, if you’re advertising a business. And we are not going after just people that advertise on Rover, there’s a couple of other’s Craig’s List and Care.com that also advertise services of boarding dogs so yes,
carve out is the advertising because in just advertising, that tells me they are running a business and as such you should follow the laws of the State of Connecticut, you should follow all of the health requirements as well as register your business, pay your taxes, take care of the pets. But let’s do it her right way.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Yeah, I think we need to really define that word advertising because advertising can be a pretty broad term and, you know, certain businesses might not advertise, you know, the way you are thinking of advertising but in somebody’s else’s definition it may be considered advertising, that would be another important distinction.

REP. ROSE (118TH): Well again this is much like what we do with home improvement contractors, that was the only solution that we could come up with is if you are a home improvement contractor and you’re advertising you have to publish your license number in your ads so that the consumers know one you are registered with the State of Connecticut as a registered home improvement contractor and as such you have your insurance and what not this is the same type of situation. Yes there is always gonna be the guy that knocks on your door and says Hey I notice your gutters fallin down can I come fix it for your for a hundred bucks, that is always gonna happen but we have to somewhere start. And I’m not saying down the road as Senator Miner said, we need to overthink this and come up with some regulations cause if there is going to be an approved home based business that boards dogs that is going to be years from now. In the meantime please take two minutes
this afternoon and Google dog deaths, problems with Rover, problems with dogcare.com and you will be disgusted by the amount of complaints and injuries and deaths you see. There recently was a gal down in Greenwich she didn’t want to come and testify because she still is having an issue with what happened. She boarded her dog with a pet sitter she found on Rover within an hour and a half the dog was gone, the dog is still gone and they now believe this person actually sold her pet and when we when to get onto the website the other day this pet sitter had removed their website. They said they were licensed and I’m still trying to confirm the fact that they were.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Representative Michel with a small question.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): [Laughter] Thank you, Senator Cohen. Thank you Representative Rose and thank you everyone for coming here today in snowy weather. Regarding the zoning because you’ve mentioned and I’m sorry I forgot your name, thank you, but you mentioned zoning so and I am not sure yet where I am on this Bill. I think there is a lot of language that probably should come out of this after this public hearing. But when you say zoning I have a neighbor for example in Stanford who does home pet sitting and it seems like in terms of zoning she would be compliant because she has separate housing for the dogs and all kinds of stuff going on in the backyard which almost makes it look like a kennel. But she could have two dogs, she could have six dogs, I’m not sure what her capacity is there so say she was respecting the zoning and she is not advertising because it is word of mouth, neighbors
in the community how would that stand with your position?

MARY BETH STARK: Well basically if she is complying with zoning she can get a license. But then they will inspect her place, that is the first step. It took me three years to get through zoning as we’re talking an I’m in an industrial area. Milford does not allow this to happen in residential areas but if zoning in that town approves it, then she can go to the state and get a license.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): And if she didn’t want to get a license and she just, you know.

MARY BETH STARK: Well right now the state could go after her for running an illegal dog business.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Even though she is not advertising and it is word of mouth and she? [Cross talking]

MARY BETH STARK: That I’m not sure. I know that they did it to a person in Milford that she has been running an illegal dog care.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): What’s covered by the kennel license. If you have a short like just bullets of the kennel.

MARY BETH STARK: Basically they come in and inspect us. They do everything about safety issues, type of chemical we’re using, they want to see all the veterinary records of all the dogs that are there, what else do they do. They come once or twice a year and make sure we have the right amount of people per dog. I can’t think of anything else.
BARBARA BUTLER: Hello, I’m Barbara Butler. If I could answer, speak to that question you asked. I know with zoning Branford has zoning that is a special exception if you are in certain type of area with five acres of land and that is what I have, other zoning places will, other towns will allow you to have your kennel in a commercial setting. But because as I was preparing for this meeting I talked to our Zoning Enforcement Officer and the residential area is not one that a kennel should be in. There aren’t enough people out there, like I know that you can talk to the Zoning Office in Branford for example. If people are boarding they can come and maybe make a visit. The other thing I know I was talking to another kennel in North Branford yesterday and there are people in North Branford that are boarding in their home and what the State of Connecticut Department of Agriculture, the State Animal Control they will go and pay a visit and ask them to cease and assist or they will give them a fine. When we get our commercial boarding licenses I think this is what you were asking, we do boarding, grooming, daycare, training those are all the services that we can offer in our businesses. The Branford Town told me that, the Town of Branford Zoning Department told me it could be a nightmare if people are doing this in their home and this is really quick but there was some sort of change in Branford at a zoning meeting and I went to oppose what was going on. People that showed up weren’t people who were opposing kennels they were opposing people who were doing boarding in their own like in their own homes and there was a lot of barking nose that they were complaining about. So I know that it happens in every town, the
State has told us let us know whose doing this, we will go and shut them down. But it is a problem if you’re not in a properly zoned area. Thank you.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): This just makes me think it’s a city with many mysteries. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Oh, Representative Demicco.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Madam Chair. Just real quickly, Robert I hope you will check in with the Clerk or the Assistant Clerk because I’m pretty confident they won’t know how to spell your name unless you help them, so if you could do that, that would be helpful to us. And Representative I just want to acknowledge publicly your hard work on this issue for several years and you and I have had discussions many times and I appreciate your sincerity and your desire to try to get this whole thing resolved. So I just wanted to thank you for that.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): And thank you all for taking the time, I know you have a very long day and we all appreciate your time.

REP. ROSE (118TH): Thank you all for being here, especially Ms. Butler my constituent and I’ve heard great things about your facility.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, so we have gone way over our hour of public officials here so we are going to alternate now between members of the public and legislators and elected officials. Next we will, our first Bill is Senate Bill 590 on the Agenda and we have Eileen Grant. Is Eileen here? Thank you. Welcome. Thank you for being patient.
EILEEN GRANT: Hello, my name is Eileen Grant and I am the Co-President of Friends of Connecticut State Parks and I am on the Board of Trustees of the Friends of Harkness Memorial Park.

I offer this testimony in strong opposition to Bill 590. I speak from the perspective of one who has closely observed the complex logistics necessary to facilitate the very successful Mansion Rental Program at Harkness Memorial State Park, instituted in 1998. I have been a volunteer at the Park since 1996. The unintended consequence of Bill 590 will be assured damage to the sensitive State Parks’ historic buildings that are available for rental, and a fostering of unsafe conditions for the regular park patrons who visit their state parks before and during rental events. Presently, there are very stringent and necessary rules and regulations in place to protect our landmark buildings and guarantee visitors’ safety. These protective measures were refined over a long period in response to knowledge gained in the initial years of the rental programs; these regulations, including those governing caterer selection, help to guarantee that the true purpose for which the enterprise rental programs were launched is fulfilled not undermined. That purpose is to raise revenue sufficient to keep vulnerable park structures in proper repair.

The Park System, as everyone knows, has been chronically underfunded for decades. Last on the list of priorities for budget expenditure has been repair of its historic structures. To their great credit, the Parks Department sought means to help self-fund the maintenance of these expensive buildings and chose a difficult labor intensive
initiative to accomplish that goal. By any measure, the staff at Harkness Memorial State Park has exceeded all expectations for the Mansion Rental Program. Today staff oversees 60 to 80 wedding events per year in the Mansion and another 20 to 25 on the Harkness grounds. Rental receipts in the neighborhood of $4 million over 21 years have generated profits that have kept the Mansion to restoration standard, have furnished funds to maintain the landmark gardens, and allowed a partial restoration of the former estate’s expansive 1910 greenhouse complex. They have helped Harkness underwrite its equipment costs, to plant replacements for century old trees lost to age and extreme weather, and to complete many other projects large and small that have enhanced visitor experience and preserved the property for future generations. None of these park improvements would have been remotely possible had this longstanding program not done two things 1. Maximize its profit through cost control, consistently high standards in building condition and excellence in service and 2. Minimize any risk to the vulnerable historic resource, so expensive to repair should renters or their vendors carelessly abuse the venue.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Ms. Grant are you wrapping up, that bell unfortunately signifies the time limit. If you could wrap it up and summarize. Has this been submitted as testimony? I believe so. So if you could summarize for us that would be greatly appreciated.

EILEEN GRANT. I would like to emphasize the rental of the buildings is a business. It is not a park service and any citizen has access to rental but not
every for-profit caterer who is unvetted has the same assumed right to a sensitive building. In order to protect the business and protect the buildings we have to have control of quality of the vendors coming into the building because it is a very difficult structure.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you for your testimony. I’m sorry we have so many people here today testifying we just really need to keep it. I actually have a real quick followup question and then I’ll ask the Committee if they have any questions as I suspect they may. Could you tell me is there a limit on how many caterers are on your list and could you also just tell us a little bit more about how you get on said list?

EILEEN GRANT: Well typically there have been say between and eight and ten or eleven caterers. It depends on the quality of the persons who apply and meet all the, there are pre-published criteria. And so, you know, no matter how many vendors apply as long as, you know, they meet those criteria and they have the product mix lets say that we know is desired by our cliental then they would be accepted and there is a bidding process every few years and any caterer in Connecticut can apply and they fill out a very long form and then they are interviewed I believe. So there is no barrier what so ever to any caterer applying to use the building.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, so you are saying there is a time period with which they can apply to become a caterer and that is once every couple of years but there is no limit to the number of caterers that can be on the approved catering list. Representative Michel.
REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank your testifying today. My wife and I got married in Stamford at the Museum Nature Center and we are both vegans so we were looking for a cruelty free caterer and they didn’t have one on their list. So we got a caterer that we knew we were friends with for an additional fee. But it seemed to me the Old Henri Bendel’s house and the property was covered in the specific insurance and that was also, you know, part of the cost of being in that location. Can like, what’s your?

EILEEN GRANT: I don’t know part of the stipulations for any caterer that they are, they have specific kinds of insurance and that they have a specific kind of liquor license which is covered in Statute and that is one of the things they’re informed of prior.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): The insurance, my apology, but the insurance was not with the caterer for the property it was coming directly from the property and I value what you were saying about protecting the environment and the property and the historical preservation but it that is included separately and then you have a caterer and they also have to sign their own documents with the property because they are coming on to that property to cater. So, I’m just trying to understand like.

EILEEN GRANT: I mean what a renter signs is much less stringent than what say a caterer would agree to or be vetted for before they are accepted on the contract because of course they have, huge responsibility. They are in charge of the liquor and they have to monitor the consumption on the site and that obviously is of great concern because the
part all the time the weddings are running is also host to, Harkness has 250,000 visitors per year and when people are setting up the events and so forth, you know, it is an old estate and you have access roads that are narrow and run between historic buildings and if you have people running pell-mell through the park I mean you can take out, you know, the sweet little kid on the tricycle with the little bell and or strollers and so forth, you have to have very responsible persons in there and I think if you wanted to get a good idea of what Harkness looks like and what the limitations are for the site you could look on harkness.org it shows you what all the buildings look like, what the access roads look like and you would figure out what a dance it is to have those things going on when the public is visiting the part.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Okay, thank you very much. By the way our caterer was the Cinnamon Snail, cruelty free. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, thank you, Representative. Any other questions from the Committee? Okay, thank you so much Ms. Grant. Okay next we have Representative John Hampton.

REP. JOHN HAMPTON: Good afternoon, Distinguished Chairs Demicco, Vice-Chair Gresko, Senator Cohen, Senator Miner and Representative Harding and all my friends and colleagues. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to have John Hampton, State Representative from Simsbury the opportunity to talk to you today about Senate Bill 894 AN ACT CONCERNING THE NONLETHAL MANAGEMENT OF THE BLACK BEAR POPULATION IN CONNECTICUT. I think Simsbury is getting close to Farmington in terms of highest bear
population, Mr. Chair, I’m not sure but I grew up in Simsbury and over the last 10-15 years the bear population is growing and we are concerned about the management of the bears and also especially the protection of our citizens. We’ve had some near misses over bears in contact with humans and near accidents so we’re concerned and I wanted to explore with you and this Committee the opportunity to explore a comprehensive plan of management of the black bear population in Connecticut and I brought with me animal control officer Mark Rudewicz of Simsbury who is going to offer a few remarks. Thank you.

MARK RUDEWICZ: Good morning, folks. Oh is it afternoon, all right. Well my names if Mark Rudewicz, I’m an office with Town of Simsbury and assigned to animal control. I’ve been here since 2005 actually prior to that I was a Lieutenant with the Hartford Police, retired but. Most of my calls for service are in response to wildlife issues and conflicts. However from early spring through probably towards fall, the end of fall, early December most of my calls are about the black bear.

I’ve experienced both our bear population along with our calls for service increasing over the years. Last year we responded to 576 calls for service and with myself being the majority of those calls responding. With the bears being present when we are there sometimes it’s after the fact but the majority of the calls the bears are still there, coming out of the garage, back deck looking in the slider. We actually had four entries into home and significant reports of property damage. As you know, and many here know, the bear population here
in Connecticut is growing annually however, in our town the bear population has greatly impacted the community where people just are very concerned. Many of the bears that roam about the town have become extremely food conditioned and human habituated and to the point where they have generally lost their fear of humans. Countless, countless, countless times I go to call where a bears just come around a corner, out of a garage, out of a car, a pool. As a matter of fact in the Town of Simsbury, I am probably one that, you know, who engage in less lethal practices of hazing the bears or kinda adverse conditioning management meaning I’ll discharge a beanbag round or it’s called a rubber buckshot round out of a shotgun. It is less lethal, it is not designed to harm the bear but it’s designed to get him moving. The same with cracker shell rounds, whizzbang rounds a lot of noise oriented. But some of these bears even with that said, you sting ‘em even with a beanbag and they will move 20 feet, 20 yards and will look back. I’ve had some double back on me so even to the point where I thought a couple of occasions I might have to use another measure of force.

I have to say that countless residents, we have attended meetings, Representative Hampton, we’ve met with the DEEP, the officials in the DEEP have been very responsive to come and meet with us. We work well with them. But people are very concerned for their safety, the safety of their property and of course just the close, extremely close interaction with bears in just neighborhoods, it’s not just limited to areas as you know Simsbury is a wooded populated area but we’ve experienced them right behind our Simsbury Police Department which is
probably less than a thousand feet from a school, the post office across the street so it’s not just the wooded areas, it’s densely populated areas. I’ve got photos of, countless photos of them at doors at condo or apartment complexes. I have to say that for myself I support a Bill that goes forward encouraging the State to continue to explore options and practices for managing our growing bear population.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you so much for your testimony. Can I just ask, have these interactions been aggressive towards humans that you’ve noticed?

MARK RUDEWICZ: Well a bear will do what is called a bluff charge. So I will say this fortunately and knock on wood we have not had anybody really hurt in our town or are seriously impacted and I will use this word, yeah. I will say these bears are very up close and personal, they are in residential areas, they’re you know at back doors, pawing at windows. We’ve had, you know, I’ve had several reports of them from causing thousands of dollars in property damage on garage doors to windows to people’s cars. So they will do a bluff charge if you’re close enough and this is how close many of them are. If you go into a yard and somebody says the bear is in the backyard, I don’t know a lot of times exactly where, I kinda try to tread lightly and I go in and there is a mother with let’s say a couple of cubs. I’ve had several times what they will do is called the bluff charge. However these charges can easily turn into a full blown attack absolutely. Keep in mind these are, you know, I would say the average bear here in the State of Connecticut weighs about 300 pounds, I’d say average 275–300 for an adult
bear and maybe some more. However, what was I going to say, I lost my train of thought, I apologize.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): No problem, if you think of it. But also could you just briefly walk us through.

MARK RUDEWICZ: Oh, you know what I was going to say, you know, don’t yell and a lot of ‘em are just passively lumbering through, walking through yards. However what I tell our population and a good majority of the Town of Simsbury is high alert and alarm to the bears. Don’t minimize because they are just walking thorough, these are still wild animals. I love seein ‘em, they’re beautiful creatures no doubt. I come from a background in another police department. I spent a career where we didn’t see bears and so before that years in the Marine Corps so didn’t deal with bears there either. [Laughter] But here I do and it’s don’t minimize it, these are wild animals, they are dangerous animals and hence the word wild meaning highly unpredictable.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Could you and I know every situation is very different but could you just briefly walk us through sort of the process that the Town of Simsbury uses when dealing or you yourself use when dealing with a bear interaction and sort of step-one, step-two, step-three?

MARK RUDEWICZ: Surely, I’ll respond. I mean I have had ‘em right by garage doors and sitting there, lying by a garage door like it was somebody’s 300 pound Lab. First what I’ll do is go in the yard and I start yelling, I’ve got a pretty big mouth when need be. The bears, a lot of ‘em got to know my voice because they know what’s coming next. This
is how smart animals are in this wild bear population. But I’ll start with just verbal. Go, get, start yelling. A lot of times they’ll move a foot or two and some will look at me like, “Yeah baldly I’m not leaving till I’m done, [Laughter] you know when I’m done eating this diaper out of the garbage I’ll go.” And what happens next is I’ll discharge some noise rounds, cracker shell rounds, it’s less lethal. That usually has a good effect in getting them goin and the ones who don’t actually will just continue to look and say, “Listen, move me, bring it on.” We use less lethal, what’s called you know, the beanbag rounds from a Remington 870 shotgun. It’s less lethal but it does get ‘em moving. With all these things I’ve mentioned though is with get much less and less effect. You know you get ‘em moving the bear is usually right back ten minutes after I leave. Now the population is growing so it’s not just one bear, I’m not just speaking about like one bear. There’re days when I’ve been to 14 different calls with probably eight different bears in that area from Main Street, to Hopmeadow Street to the Avon line right through to 35.8 square miles of the Town of Simsbury. So they are growing and we seem to have a good concentration in Simsbury, Farmington Valley as a whole, but some reason Simsbury seems to be.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Could you just clarify for the Committee also whether you are speaking in favor of nonlethal measures to sort of avert the bear population or are you in favor or opening hunting, bear hunting on a limited basis in the Town of Simsbury?
MARK RUDEWICZ: Well I can only speak for me. I am not here speaking as a representative of the town, but I am in favor of any control measures that will, that will render areas safe, you know minimizing bear exposure, bear property damage.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): So if that involves hunting black bear then?

MARK RUDEWICZ: [Cross-talking] Less lethal absolutely, if that works that works. If it like other states where a season is open for a 30-day period, we’ve seen states as close as the State of New Jersey where for 30-days they had I believe a limited hunting season and it shown that it has impacted, you know, the human interactions with the bear.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, thank you. Senator Miner and then Representative Michel.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you. Thank you both for being here. I’ve seen photos and videos of some of your constituent’s bear population and it has it’s own Facebook page. They really are a beautiful animal, let me start there. So the closest state to us with a bear season is Massachusetts by the way, not New Jersey. So it seems based on what you’re saying is that there is a redundancy in some cases in that there is an effort on the part of municipal employees to repel or dissuade the population of bears from that human interaction aspect. The question is should we be in someway taking that next step, and I know Representative Hampton, we’re hearing your Bill and another Bill and I can tell you I’m not opposed to the agency continuing to deploy all of those other efforts to try and change
the mindset of a wild animal but it seems based on certain statistics that in certain clusters no matter what we’ve done to date except putting them in a can and taking down to the Caylee or somewhere else, we’re not minimizing that number. I mean if the DEEPs testimony is pretty compelling and so I guess I would have, well I think you’ve answered the question at least personally, not on behalf of the constituents but personally that may be one of the tools we need to add to the toolbox. Representative Hampton I don’t know if you’re at that point or not?

REP. HAMPTON (16TH): I’m not at that point and then I had a forum last fall of about 100 folks who a lot of them did want to engage in their own hunting. So people were talking about, you know, being able to go out on their lawn with a bow hunt or shotgun. You know that kind of stuff makes me nervous cause if they have bad aim they hit the kid next door and things like that. So I think if we were to go to any hunting I would probably recommend that it be done by DEEP as opposed to the public that it is more controlled hunting.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you. Thank you Madam Chairman.

MARK RUDEWICZ: Senator Miner may I add one thing? We also spend a lot of, I also spend a lot of time with public education to. Even though we have a growing bear population I spend a lot of time doing public forums and our Facebook, videos on removing all natural attractions birdfeeders, suet, garbage. I mean I do say by one way, and once again it’s with less and less success but I used to say and I still believe to some degree one way of lessening your yards exposure to the bears eliminating these non-
natural attractions. So I just don’t want to come in here and think that we’re just saying, but whatever control measures and whatever has to be taken to render the public safe, their person and their property. And I do realize the State of Mass does but the State of New Jersey just came out with statistics that’s why I mentioned New Jersey.

MARK RUDEWICZ: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Senator.

Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank testifying today. I have a couple of questions for you. I’ll try to keep it brief. The first one is what do you think about educating the public as to not leave food in their backyards and that kind of stuff that attracts bears? Or maybe I should ask you what attracts bears in the populated area?

MARK RUDEWICZ: I do spend a lot of time, and I know other communities in my area do educating the public or informing the public. You know, I live in a community where it’s highly educated successful town but, you know, exactly remove the non-natural attractions, Representative is you know, your birdfeeders, suet, garbage, recycle bins rather. You know don’t feed your pets outside, don’t even gas grills, clean your grills, wafting smells. Everybody has garages and sheds and they can secure their garbage and so forth so understand that. We even recommend taking other measures whether it is mothballs or ammonia to dissipating the wafting smells because when you think about that, the nose of that bear is the strongest scent. I can refer as a dog handler. I have had the fortune to be in the
canines in the Marines and Hartford Police and, you know, detection dogs and that is their strongest scent. So same with the bears, the smell. You have rotisserie chicken, pizza boxes, your ice cream containers, you know, a quarter mile away so absolutely education is a component of it.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): So what are the non-naturals outside of food being left like you mentioned a couple. Is there anything else you can think of that would attract a bear in a populated area?

MARK RUDEWICZ: Well a lot of that too I would imagine, and I can’t speak on, we have a lot of growth and development in this State. So they are growing in numbers but we do have growth in development. So I wound imagine we have some land space that’s less.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): And how do we exactly know that they are growing in numbers, I mean I know that the numbers are very small for the size of our State but how do we know?

MARK RUDEWICZ: Based on my experience speaking to the people I work very well with our State DEEP and these folks I look at them as they are the subject matter experts.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I don’t think the DEEP conducted a proper study. They based it on the number of calls and bear sightings and bear sightings you could have the same bear pop-up here and pop-up there.

MARK RUDEWICZ: Yeah but you don’t, here’s why. Because I respond to these calls. My job is more of your resident game warden, I deal with mostly
probably 95 percent of my calls are handling wildlife and bears now are tagged and they are collared. The sows are collared which is telemetry or global positioning collars and the State have an alpha-numeric tag in their ears and I have dealt with several bears like I said there was days when I went to 13-14 bear calls and eight different bears. So I can tell ya and as dopey as it may sound you get to know which bear just on size and.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): So the 13 or 14 calls and eight different bears that is an example. Okay.

MARK RUDEWICZ: They are growing in number since I started. Each year our calls for service are increasing and what else is increasing is peoples alarm and the heightened fear factor. Granted some people love seein ‘em, I do but people, we still have obligation to make sure that, we’ve had now bears going into peoples homes through windows, through sliders, through backdoors.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): They must be getting hungry.

MARK RUDEWICZ: I would imagine that’s the reason.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): They might be missing the other space we’re taking from them. And then the hunting, let’s say that lethal action be taken, I think it has been proved with culling deers for example when they are overpopulating or considered to be overpopulating an area, doesn’t seem that it works because if you remove an animal from an area then there is room for another same similar animal to take this area of habitat because it’s got the food and it’s got the attraction. So when you say that it maybe more effective to use the nonlethal
and by using fear factor like rubber bullets or you mentioned something about bags.

MARK RUDEWICZ: Yeah beanbags.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Same thing, right or similar do you think that would be more effective because if you want to remove the bears from the area you’re teaching the bear that this is not a good area he’ll get hurt rather than you kill the bear, remove the bear and there is room for another bear to come in that doesn’t know that this is a dangerous area for that bear.

MARK RUDEWICZ: Well, I can tell ya with unequivocal certainty Representative that I do that on a daily basis, countless times a day and it has minimal effect because the bears, you can haze em, and it is a reversive condition management. I’m in favor of that. However I am not also, there’s other control measures that may need to be taken that the State may have to look to. And as far as the deer population I remember the cases, probably 15-17 years ago Point Bluff down by the shore, the deer population they had hunters come in for a short period and, you know, one thing about hunting it is a way of conservation and, you know, controlling population so.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Scientifically I think it has been pretty much proven that culling really doesn’t work because then you have deer that repopulate the same area. But I thank you for your answers and I’m not coming after you, just trying to get some of your knowledge. Last question, do you have any training in terms or recognition, bear recognition?
Like what kind of bear or it its? I’m sure you have good eyes.

MARK RUDEWICZ: Oh yeah, well I don’t know about that [Laughter]. My training is my department, I will say the Town of Simsbury and the police department have been greatly supportive so I’ve been to many trainings through the State on wildlife management. I have my Connecticut Certified Trapper’s License, State License NUCO and when I first started we had a guy come in from actually British Columbia Fish and Game and we hosted seminars and I do a lot of continuous training with learning and working with our State. I seek them, I turn to them for. Am I a bear expert, by no means? Do I profess to be? No. My background believe it or not, I’m a dog guy, a canine. Hartford Police dog training, I’ll be training dogs tonight.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Are there any such thing as a bear like professional recognized by the State?

MARK RUDEWICZ: Well we have biologists, state biologists, senior furbearing biologists that would be more expert in that subject matter. Could I recognize a bear, do I know the difference types of bears and so forth?

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I trust you can recognize a bear, you start the conversations with them [Laughter].

MARK RUDEWICZ: Well what people do in our neighborhoods, we have Fridays with Fred, Tuesday’s with different one. We have one bear on one street on Fridays when they put the garbage out to the curb and he comes down the street knocking it all over.
REP. MICHEL (146TH): He can be quite friendly. They can be quite friendly.

MARK RUDEWICZ: Well not all of them, you know, a lot of them just lumber through but once again, you know, there’s no absolutes and you don’t want to see a matter of time before somebody is hurt thought.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you very much for comments. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Representative Reyes.

REP. REYES (75th): Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon gentlemen, thank you very much for testifying here on this important Bill. Sir, first of all thank you for your service. I just out of curiosity how long have you been doing your job, sir as animal control?

MARK RUDEWICZ: I’ve been in the capacity since 2005.

REP. REYES (75th): Ever put an animal down?

MARK RUDEWICZ: Several.

REP. REYES (75th): A bear?

MARK RUDEWICZ: No, no. I’ve been when a bear has had to be euthanized, but did I pull the trigger, no.

REP. REYES (75th): What year was that bear killed, sir?

MARK RUDEWICZ: Last year. Hit by a motor vehicle.

REP. REYES (75th): Okay.

MARK RUDEWICZ: Most all my interactions in my job ae because animals have been impacted either through
other wildlife or a lot of it motor vehicle strikes. So humaneness warrants its removal from suffering. There is no rehab for adult animal wildlife creatures. Small young ones, infants possible, young juveniles of certain species like raccoons, skunks, deer. So I’ve had to put countless numbers down unfortunately.

REP. REYES (75th): Outside of bears, sir. Outside of bears do you also feel any other species other than a bear that needs to be controlled in population?

MARK RUDEWICZ: Well if you think about it, and I’m not here. Let me make this clear, I’m not here as an advocate for or against hunting. In my position there’s neutrality. Speaking, I’m representing a Town, I’m wearing a uniform of a Town that employees me. However we do have seasons to control almost every other species here in the State. Coyotes have almost, with the exception of a couple of weeks throughout the years, coyotes can be hunted. Raccoons, almost every furbearing species, your upland birds pheasants which is stocked by the State and of course crows so we do have seasons. These are the control measures that the State seeks to control populations.

REP. REYES (75th): I thank you for those answers and again thank you for your service. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. And before we move on I just want to remind everybody that there is an overflow room, Room 1A that does have audio/video. So if you would rather not stand and want to clear the doorway you can go
to 1A. I believe Representative Gresko has a question.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you, Madam Chair. In the interest of time, two quick questions. You said 570 some odd calls, were they bear calls or is that your total calls for Simsbury?

MARK RUDEWICZ: Solely bear.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Solely bear and then my other question is based on your professional experience do you think there would be a difference between the beanbags that you use now and rubber bullets as far as a deterrent for the bears, would one hurt more?

MARK RUDEWICZ: Well they both sting and they are both effective to at least getting them moving from the source wherever there at. If they are at a garage or if they’re in a backyard or just, you know, whatever. I’ve seem in just pokin their heads into people’s doors. You know we ask people to do, to remove a lot of these things but we also can’t expect people to live like prisoners in their yards in these communities in their town.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Well, that’s where I was going with that in that -- do you think there is a method in between lethal and the current beanbags that you use that might be more effective nonlethal that even, you know, someone that would be interested in hunting might accept for going after a bear like a rubber bullet is the first thing that popped into my head?

MARK RUDEWICZ: Well you know what, maybe I’m unclear. You’re talking about hunting. The rubber
bullet is less lethal. You’re talking about an in between measure what we can be doin?

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Yes.

MARK RUDEWICZ: Before we force the continuum of lethal?

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Correct.

MARK RUDEWICZ: Well I can’t speak for, we engage in the Town as much as we can do. You know, rubber buckshot, noise to get ‘em moving. The problem is it having a minimal affect. Some of the bears usually do go but many times an hour later, the next day the bear is back. Our population is growing so it is not one bear that were talkin, two bears, five bears even ten bears. I do try to push ‘em into a wooded area.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): I understand that but what I’m saying is there a tool between the beanbags and lethal.

MARK RUDEWICZ: No, not that I see. We can do what other states do like the big state parks, what I think is called diversionary feeding where rather than have bears try to go to campgrounds I’ve heard or read in the past they put food sources way out in the woods. Our state is not geared towards that. I don’t support that.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative.

Anybody else? Thank you so much.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thanks for all your leadership efforts. So I thank everybody for being so patient here today and we’re just going to go off schedule a
little bit, very quickly because we have joining us Commissioner Katie Dykes from DEEP. So I am going to ask that she come and testify please. Welcome.

COMM DYKES: And with the Committee’s indulgence I’ve got members of my team here who I think will be really helpful and able to answer questions including our Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Conservation Susan Whalen and Rich Jacobson who is the Head of Wildlife Division.

So, Senator Cohen and Representative Demicco and Members of the Environment Committee, I am so pleased to have the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Katie Dykes and I新鲜ly confirmed Commissioner for DEEP. I believe this is my first time to have the honor of appearing before this Committee so I am excited to work with you all and to be here to speak. We have submitted written testimony on a number of the Bills that are on your Agenda for today but I wanted to appear here in person including with our excellent staff to offer some testimony or summary of our testimony just with respect to Senate Bill 586 - AN ACT AUTHORIZING BLACK BEAR HUNTING IN LITCHFIELD COUNTY as well as Senate Bill 894 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE NONLETHAL MANAGEMENT OF THE BLACK BEAR POPULATION IN CONNECTICUT.

Just in my short few weeks in the Commissioners role it has become clear to me that this question of the what is the right balanced approach to the management of black bears in our State is one that to approach, you know, with great sensitivity and openness to all of the different viewpoints. This is something that has really captured a lot of attention and the subject of much debate over the
past few years so we’re really sensitive to all the concerns and interests of everyone in the community about this issue and I will also say that, you know, I’ve heard from a number of folks reaching out, you know, looking for an opportunity to come and talk with us at DEEP about this issue and in some cases just with the compressed schedule of the last few weeks haven’t had that opportunity but we do, I do personally hope to be able to get those meetings in the very near future because it is important to me to have an open door as a new commissioner, to understand what all the different concerns and sensitivities are from folks on this important issue.

And I will also say that, you know, as we look at really the long history of bears in Connecticut, you know, we think that the return of the black bear population to the State of Connecticut is really something to celebrate with increase forestation, you know that we’ve seen bears returning to our state in the late 1980s particularly well-established populations in the northwestern part of the State and, you know, these are beautiful, powerful fascinating animals. If you have had the opportunity to, you know, be hiking in the woods and encounter a bear, you know, this is sore of those really magical moments of being able to witness, you know, a very important and fascinating species and it’s frankly a driver for many nature enthusiasts who are visiting our parks and forests to have those types of encounters. And our job at DEEP of course is to ensure that, you know, we are making sure to the best of our ability that we have, you know, the possibility of maintaining a safe and healthy and
thriveing bear population but in a way that is protecting for human safety as well.

And while this issue has been very vigorously debated over the last couple of years, you know we have had the opportunity with the technical work that we do to see, you know, to track the trends that our occurring here and some of these trends are concerning with respect to, you know, the changes in the black bear population. We know that the reproductive rate for bears is very high, about 85 percent of cubs reach survival after one year which means that from a scientific perspective that the bear population is reproducing at a significant rate and so this is not essentially an issue that stays stable from year to year but as we’re debating what proper management is we’re also seeing this population increasing. And at the same time we are seeing that the frequency of human-bear interactions has also been increasing substantially year-to-year and in fact we saw, just last year, a 38 percent increase between 2017 and 2018 in bear public sightings.

We indicated in our written testimony some of these statistics that we received 1,300 reports of human-bear interactions in 2018 which is the highest one year total in recent history. Sixty three bears killed by vehicles in 2018 which was the highest one year total on record. And then with the growing bear population, reports of nuisance bears and of bold and aggressive bear behavior are also increasing and we saw, you know, the most extreme cases of human-bear interaction reports of bears entering homes has risen from seven incidents in 2015 to 21 in 2018.
So I do want to just pause here because we have, you know, terrific staff who are working on the scientific management and monitoring of the bear population and I know there are some different questions and answers today just on some of those factual issues and I wanted to give them a chance to update a little bit about some of the research that we’ve been doing just in monitoring the baseline on these trends in bear interactions and the bear populations. So I don’t know if Susan or Rick if you want to jump in.

SUSAN WALEN: So, good afternoon Members of the Committee. My name is Susan Whalen, I am the Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Conservation for the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about this testimony, these Bills.

There have been several questions this morning from Members about the studies that we conduct whether there are any bear experts in the State, what bear removal results are and I can start by saying that we have been for some years now conducting very robust studies on the growing bear population here in the State of Connecticut both with the professional furbearer biologist we have on our staff and in concert with professional folks at the University of Connecticut Natural History and Natural Resources that are helping us to help understand the population distribution, reproduction rates, survival rates and also the sort of human response to bears as they have returned to Connecticut.

As you heard most people are thrilled to see a bear. It’s pretty amazing, they are incredible animals and
we are really excited to have them back on the landscape and they definitely have a place in the landscape. That said we are seeing increasing human interactions with bears that lead us to have some concerns. So I think I’ve addressed the fact that we do have some bear experts both on our staff and at the University of Connecticut. We are doing ongoing studies on the bear population and I want to turn it over to Rick Jacobson here with Natural Resources Chief of National Resources if he wants to talk about a few of these other issues that have been raised.

COMM DYKES: Actually before we turn to Rick I just maybe wanted to introduce, I think what he is going to cover is to say that, you know, we are really here speaking in favor of both of these bills. You know, I think that we believe that there is really an all the above approaches necessary to ensure that we can have, you know, very safe and sustainable level of types of interactions between our bear and human populations. And so there’s a number of tools that are important to have with respect to, you know, achieving that goal and where we see this trend in increasing encounters between bear and humans at our current population level, you know that raises our concern about our capabilities to ensure a safe close distance between bears and humans as that population continues to expand which we expect that it will at a significant rate given the high survival rate of the cubs. So, you know, for that reason we are supportive of having of the Committee’s proposal to authorize a limited bear hunt in Litchfield County. That we know is a tool that is employed successfully in other stats including neighboring states to be able to maintain
a certain level of a population and at the same time we’re supportive of the Bill calling for a study and reporting back to the community on nonlethal methods to help to ensure the bears are conditioned and to not seek out these interactions with the humans and that we can maintain safe interactions levels. And there are a variety of tools that are appropriate and are recognized in that Bill around nonlethal management that we are engaging and utilizing to a large extent today. So is know Rick can talk about the methods that we utilize in terms of adverse conditioning, that we have a procedure that is carefully spelled out for our personnel who are involved and called to these incidents. We have also worked carefully with municipalities that are seeing high levels of bear-human interactions to offer training and the possibility for them to adopt similar procedures for adverse conditioning in their law enforcement and other personnel to these incidents. We also are involved in, we have an extensive campaign around informing the humans in this equation about how steps that they can take to, when they encounter bears, to maintain their safety and also behavioral changes in the way that they manage their refuse and birdfeeders and other types of attractants to try to minimize things that will bring bears to their properties.

Attractive management I will just note is a very important part of this equation so while we engage in aversive conditioning for every single incident that we are called to there are limits on our ability to really effectively scale those attractant management tools. You know if we want to talk about what would be necessary to really deter or to reduce those attractants we would have to be talking about,
you know, indefinite in funding specialized containers for trash which other states do provide, looking at providing control on birdfeeders which is something that I know has been raised in the past and the folks felt we’re intrusive on their personal lives. And so I think this is where, I just offer this as maybe shedding some light on why this issue has been so difficult but I applaud the Committee for, you know, opening this hearing to provide an opportunity to for us to, you know, really share what we know and what our experiences have been in addressing this really critical but admittedly controversial issue and we look forward to working with you in a collaborative manner, listening to the concerns of stakeholders on either side as we know this is a very important issue of growing concern that will need a really collaborative approach to address. So I would be happy to have Rick walk through any of our, in what we do in terms of the nonlethal measures but it may also be more efficient to the Chairs if we wait for your questions or, you know, we are obviously at your disposal.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Sure, that is actually one of my questions would be, and I know you and I Commissioner have talked about his previously but what methods are being taken currently when a bear is reported, if you could just sort of walk through. I asked the Simsbury office this same question what does DEEP do procedurally step-by-step if a bear is reported?

RICK JACOBSON: Well our, excuse me. Yes, my name I Rick Jacobson, Chief of the Bureau of Natural Resources at the Department of Energy and Environment Protection. I’ve only been in that role
for a short-time but the previous tenure I was Director of the Wildlife Division at the Department.

I was also intimately involved in developing our black bear response guidelines which dictate the procedure we go through when we consider whether or not to intervene when there has been a human-bear interaction, how we characterize the nature of that human-bear interaction and scale the response relative to that category of interaction that occurred.

When we receive a complaint of a human-bear interaction we put them into one of four categories. The least intrusive category is are bears that are simply ambling through someone’s yard, they might be committing their first instance minor property damage vis a vis dumping over a garbage can, taking down a bird feeder. In those interactions we use education first. We provide fliers on feeding bears, on how to control garbage, how to manage food stuffs around the property, how to manage compost piles and dog food and pet food, those sorts of things. We also direct them to our website that has a collection of information on various ways in which to manage your landscape to avoid bear interactions. We provide to beekeepers instructions and information about how to protect their apiaries so that they don’t have problems with bears, etc.

When the interaction escalates to what we refer to as a Category 2 Bear, now those are bears that are repeatedly doing property damage that are damaging crops for the first time, damaging orchards for the first time, approaching or injuring, or even killing pets that are not under the control of their owner. In other words if you leave your pet out in your
backyard with an invisible fence, the invisible fence might mean something to the pet but it doesn’t mean anything to a black bear. Those bears fall into our Category 2 instance at which point then we will take a more engaged approach where we’ll actually engage in perhaps trapping the bear, whether we trap the bear or not we will get involved in aversion conditioning or hazing the bear. In an instance where we’re hazing where we don’t capture the bear first, that might be a cause where environmental conservation officer is on site, they will often use noise, they will use shotguns with beanbags whether we use rubber bullets or rubber pellets in a beanbag it has the same sort of effect on a bear. We are trying to do whatever we can to instill a fear of humans. The fear of humans that come from a bear that are instilled in a bear that is not habituated to humans. In those instances where we actually capture the bear first we commonly tranquilize the bear, collect as much biological information from it as we can, that is where you will commonly see ear tags placed on the bear so that we can identify it in the future to know whether or not it is a repeat offender and at that point we will take more aggressive aversion condition techniques. So when the bear comes back to consciousness we’ll have it back in the culvert trap and this is a culvert trap, it’s like a big Have-A-Heart trap, we will bang on the side of trap, we will use all sorts of noise. We’ll use pepper spray, we will shoot it with beanbags, we will sometimes shoot it with paintballs. We will do everything we can to try to frighten that bear as much as possible away from the area where it was
doing the damage. The intent being to create as much fear of that area as possible.

When we elevated at a Category 3 bear, now that is a bear that is doing damage to crops repeatedly, that is a bear that’s doing, that’s injuring livestock that are under protective controls vis a vis a horse or pony or a llama in a corral. In those instances they elevated and either/or condition. Whether or not we come to the conclusion that that bear is so habituated that it’s and it’s been a repeat offender that we’ve tried to aversion condition in the past and we’ve been unsuccessful. It repeats the behavior. Then it is a candidate for euthanasia. Otherwise we’ll just do additional aversion conditioning.

Now a bear that falls into the Category 4, that’s an exceedingly bold bear. That is a bear that actually injures a human. That is a bear that demonstrated direct aggression toward a human. That’s a bear that injures a pet that is actually on a leash for instance, I mean you are that close to the bear. The bear is clearly showing it does not have any fear of humans. That is another case for euthanasia.

So our first attempt and I will add the vast majority of the bears, I can’t give you a number, but the exceedingly vast number of bears fall into Category 1 or 2. Smaller fraction fall into Category 3 so we are using nonlethal techniques in the vast majority of those category 3 instances and it is in the extremely care condition that we fall into Category 4 or that portion of Category 3 where we use euthanasia. It is our last resort attempt and it is only those bears that demonstrated
inability to respond to our aversion conditioning techniques.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you and can you just tell me, you know, we talk a lot about human interaction and you were just referring to the aggressive, they can be aggressive towards humans obviously. Could you perhaps, could you quantify how many aggressive reports toward humans there were in the last year or the year before, do you have that data and could you also quantify how many Category 4 incidents there were?

RICK JACOBSON: I should actually correct in that Category 4 instance since there was one additional element that comes into play and that is a bear that it’s so lost its fear of humans that it will actually enter a building, a space that is commonly inhabited by humans, so entering a home, entering a Crazy Bruce’s those kinds of instances. We do have several of those, in fact I believe we had as many as 21 this year alone where bears were so habituated that they have been entering homes. A naturally human averse bear does not enter a home as a general rule.

So how many instances? I’m afraid the good Commissioner is more immediately on top of these particular issues than I am.

COMM. DYKES: We do have some statistics that go up through 2018 and we would be happy to provide that for the Committee.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Can you tell me how many bears were put down by the agency last year?
COMM DYKES: I believe it’s about, the last page there.

RICK JACOBSON: Oh yes, sorry. Thank you.
[Counting]

COMM DYKES: This is making me feel real good and in a couple of weeks on the job here [laughter].

RICK JACOBSON: Seven.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. And my understanding is that one reason to allow a bear hunt would be to adversely condition the bear and to negatively habituate the bear, so in other words get it to go back to where it should be, into the woods. Do you see any viability in nonlethal methods if they were employed on a regular basis as hunting would be having perhaps the same effect and hopefully instilling that fear of humans in the bears again and hopefully they would tell all their friends to stay in the woods [Laughter]?

COMM DYKES: I mean I think, and I’ll let the team jump in here but I think that there’s multiple sort of management objectives that these different tools are serving. I think from the standpoint of allowing hunting, you know, that is primarily focused on stabilizing the population levels, right and there is multiple tools as well to address the, you know, the habituation or the trying to reduce the potential for unsafe human-bear interactions. So I just want to make sure we are clear about the various objectives. Rick, please I know you’ve got the team that really knows all this here.

RICK JACOBSON: Thank you, Commissioner. Yes the primary purpose of a bear hunt would be population
control. For all the benefits affiliated with nonlethal techniques, none of those lead to population control so we will continue to see a rising bear population spreading across the State as long as we don’t have any measure of means of population control. The one thing I will say about the relationship between hunting and habituated bears are that habituated bears are more susceptible to taking during a hunt than non-habituated bears vis a vis they’re not as frightened away from where a hunter may be for instance. They are more predictable in being attracted to bait for instance. So that is the one way in which hunting would be effective on reducing the number of habituated bears. I should add that there is nothing about hunting that is particularly effective of targeting specific troubling bears.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): And so we are definitely saying that population is the issue not as much the migration into rural areas?

COMM DYKES: I think it is multiple issues. One is we’re seeing increased frequency of interactions that are, you know, that are challenging with respect to public safety at the current levels of population. The best available information from the data that the Deputy Commissioner went through is that the population is going to continue to expand at a rapid rate so we want to make sure that we can, you know, from a management perspective ideally we would have tools to be able to maintain and to control the population expansion and then at the same time continue and, you know, work with the Committee on how we can expand the use of nonlethal methods that we’ll be able to address as best as
possible ways to minimize human-bear interactions that could be challenging from a public safety perspective and this is especially the case in suburban areas, you know, areas that would not be appropriate for hunting for example. So that’s why I refer to it as kind of an all the above in our support for both of those Bills.

And if I may, I also just wanted to note that we have provided to the Clerk, and I’m not sure if you have it in front of you, a range of the different materials that we have distributed and have produced as part of our Be Bear Aware campaign. It includes the handouts that Mr. Jacobson mentioned which are provided to homeowners and that sort of Category 1 when they may have an encounter with a bear. We have posters that we provide. We do demonstrations and go to public meetings at various towns. We also, one of the posters you have there is printable off our website because we encourage our partner folks to distribute these and we want to, you know make a toolkit for educational materials that is very accessible and can, you know, where our reach in terms of public awareness can be multiplied by others who want to promote, you know, our mission of ensuring that people can have a safe interaction with the bear population.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you and I don’t want to monopolize the time, as I already have, but I do have two more questions and then I’ll open it up to the rest of the Committee. We’ve received some testimony from folks wanting to open up the bear hunt beyond what has been proposed in SB 586 Litchfield County, what would be the Agency’s position on that?
COMM DYKES: You know, we at this point have offered our testimony in support of the Bill that is in front of us, addressing Litchfield County but we’d be happy to get back to the Committee on our position on that.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay and then my other question is on nonlethal methods. Has the Agency ever explored using bear dogs?

COMM DYKES: Bear dogs for deterring?

RICK JACOBSON: We’ve explored it only in so far as we’ve read some of the literature about it but have we gone so far as to invest in acquiring bear dogs and training our own handlers for doing? No, we have not. But we are aware of much of the research and literature that’s out there so it is one of the nonlethal techniques that we consider among the others.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Any members? Yes, Representative Palm.

REP. PALM (36TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, I appreciate your efforts to educate the public about what to do if there is an encounter, how to avoid an encounter. I understand you’ve put a lot of thought into these four strata for ascertaining the danger. What I feel is missing from this conversation is any recognition of how we can prevent these wild creatures from leaving their habitat in the first place. I wonder if any of us is questioning the inevitability that wild creatures seek out garbage pails when they are happier staying put. Is anyone looking at what are we doing as a species to make it necessary for these creatures to come forward? Where I live we have barn owls and
fisher-cats and coyotes and all these creatures, deer certainly which never used to tally forth and I would just wonder if we are looking hard enough at what human behavior is causing this problem in the first place? Thank you.

COMM DYKES: Just initially I think that with an expanding population and the territorial needs of the bears and that coupled with, you know, unsecured trash, bird feeders, etc. it creates and equation where we see this expanding bear population moving into those areas with, you know, that are more densely populated. But I will turn to Susan and Rick if you want to add to that from your experience in working on this for many years.

SUSAN WHALEN: So I think conventional wisdom would tell you that most wild animals would rather be in the wild. We have a densely populated state here in Connecticut. We do have a fair amount of open space under the care and control of the department and we do everything we can to sustain wildlife populations there but a lot of the studies that we are doing both on bear and bobcat are leading us to conclude that these animals are taking advantage of humans and, you know, to your point we are doing everything we can to educate people because our first objective is to teach citizens how to learn to live with wildlife, to learn how to live with bears, how to live with bobcats and all the other range of creatures that we’re lucky to have here. But it’s educating one person at a time and it’s really challenging. In spite of all the platforms we use to try to get people to learn how to live without wildlife, wildlife have learned that we can provide them with an easy meal in many cases.
REP. PALM (36TH): But doesn’t nature, if left alone, exist in a state of homeostasis?

SUSAN WHALEN. Um, I don’t think anybody has told the bears that. They are moving into and they are documented as being in, you know, close proximity to humans as are to bobcat populations.

COMM DYKES: That’s why I think we cited the survival rates of the cubs. Again if they had limitations on their food sources for example we might expect, you know, that to be a limited on the expansion of this population but they are finding, you know a wealth of things to eat in these suburban neighborhoods and around residential properties and so that’s why our focus has been on education but necessarily if we’re gonna continue to have the expansions of population we have to have more tools and more compliance from, you know, the humans in terms of minimizing the attractive, the food, the grill, you know, your birdfeeder all of those things that are great food sources and are supporting the expansion of the population.

REP. PALM (36TH): Right, and I’m not challenging the wisdom of cutting down on things that make it easier or attractive for them. I guess what I’m trying to get at is a sense of, in your opinion, is this the same as thousands of years ago, you know, some timber wolf decided to creep closer to a campfire and now we have Chihuahuas in goofy hats. Is this a thing that is just an inevitable progression where the animal chooses an easier lifestyle or are doing something to their habitat to force them into our world?
RICK JACOBSON: I wouldn’t characterize it as we’re forcing them from the natural world into our world rather we are drawing them in. It is the way in which we manage food sources whether intentionally or unintentionally. They are finding it easier to live where we do.

REP. PALM (36TH): So is there an adequate food source in their natural habitat or are you saying that they do have enough to eat where they naturally live but they prefer birdfeeders and residue on grills?

RICK JACOBSON: We’ve done a tremendous amount of research on to bear density by habitat type meaning center of forest versus center of Simsbury and we find that bears do very well in both habitats. They just do better in downtown Simsbury than they do in the center of the forest.

REP. PALM (36TH): Thank you for that. I just find that really interesting and I wonder if we trace back the phenomenon far enough something kicked it off. I mean we’ve had human existence, you know, for thousands of years and bears and suddenly they seem to be bolder and creeping in and I guess, I’m sorry I’m not trying to be contentious I just have a hard time believing that is totally of their own volition.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you newly appointed Commissioner Dyke. I heard your speech at the Organization Environmental Summit of how you understand nature and hiking and grew up with it. Ms. Whalen I have a couple of questions
for you. My first one would be how many years has the DEEP, I believe you are not newly appointed correct? How many years has the DEEP been pushing for bear hunting?

SUSAN WHALEN: I guess I would say that as the General Assembly has raised these Bills over the years, the department has taken a position in recent years to support said legislation.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Right because I think it is apparent, like go into my computer, that it has been before the bear population is considered to have increased. My next question would be when you say expanding population I believe I read the numbers with UConn I think it is something around 800, is that correct?

SUSAN WHALEN: That’s correct.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Eight hundred doesn’t seem like a high population for a state we have a lot of land but when did it expand from and to and in how many years, what are we talking about?

SUSAN WHALEN: So just confirming with Rick here who’s got a longer history with this than I, so the bears returned, essentially extirpated from Connecticut by humans in the late 19th century and they have returned as our landscape has changed and the forests have grown back. So they returned to Connecticut in the 1980s and the population has been tracked ever since.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): And so say did you have numbers like from 10 years ago or 15 years ago?

SUSAN WHALEN: Yes, we can get you those numbers.
REP. MICHEL (146TH): Do you know offhand for right now approximate?

SUSAN WHALEN: We have a time series that we can share with you.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Okay because I read something from UConn that it was an increase of 10 percent in the population so I am not sure from how many years ago. It doesn’t sound like right now they’re making a comeback, 10 percent is 10 percent.

SUSAN WHALEN: So that 10 percent, Representative is 10 percent per year we’re seeing the population increase based on the studies by UConn and our biologists.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you for that. And you talked about Mr. Jacobson, you talked about education when you have a Category 1 type of interaction. Is there any other education done as prevention such like my colleague, my esteemed colleague Representative Palm mentioned earlier?

RICK JACOBSON: Well there most certainly is. We work collaboratively with various towns within what’s traditionally thought of as bear range and they ask often times for forums and we support those forums by sending staff, by sending Master Wildlife Conservationists with a whole host of information that provide just that, education to anyone that wants to learn more about how to live with bears in their neighborhood. We also have information on our website as we had indicated. We also direct people to our information through our Facebook page, we also have press releases that we issue each year. We try to use multimodal approaches to getting information out to as broad an audience as possible.
COMM DYKES: And I would add to, you know, we’ve done social media campaigns and as much as possible we try when there are incidents of human-bear interaction that tend to generate media interest or social media interest and so we also try to use those as moments to remind people about what these safe practices are and we also, you know, encourage members of the Committee, you have great following form social media and can be helpful advocates for sharing this information as well.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): That would be my pleasure to participate in that. Then I have a question, you mentioned seven bears killed in 2018 I believe, how many of those bears were mothers if I may ask? Meaning had cubs.

RICK JACOBSON: Well I don’t know how to answer that exactly. I know that of the seven three were killed, were euthanized by DEEP employees. One I’m not sure who it is, the record doesn’t display that here and three were other, which means likely by a landowner, a property owner. Of those taken three were male and three were female, one sex was not reported.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Was the female killed by the DEEP?

RICK JACOBSON: Of the two females both were estimated at 1.5 years which means they would not have yet been in reproductive age.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Okay. I am not sure what year, it has to be between 2016 and now, where DEEP had killed a mother bear, now the cubs of the bears stay for two years with their mother so that is basically killing the cubs as well. So I’m just wondering if you have like a protocol like paying attention to
the sex of the bear before euthanizing it, making sure it is not a mother and there could potentially be cubs that would be just basically left to die.

RICK JACOBSON: Although true cubs stay with the sow for two years, much of the research across the region indicates that they can live fully independent at roughly six-months of age or older, 60 pounds in weight or larger. So that is one factor we’re taking into consideration.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): During the year before taking the choice of euthanizing the bear, like they would be able to?

RICK JACOBSON: It would be one factor taken into consideration. Correct.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I am trying to imagine a situation, what’s most instances when the DEEP is actually engaged in killing a bear? Is it the Category 3 or 4 or could it be something else?

RICK JACOBSON: Well we only euthanize a bear if it falls within the Category 3 but most notably Category 4 and that again is if they’re intruding into a house, if they have shown direct aggression toward a human, they killed a pet under the act of control of that owner or if they are sick or injured we may euthanize them.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): How do you define aggression?

RICK JACOBSON: That is, we’ve only had that I’m aware of one or two instance where we’ve actually euthanized a bear as a function of open aggression. One of those is the most well know, it is the Burlington Bear where a bear actually went up and
approached the leg of a person walking on a forest trail.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Okay.

RICK JACOBSON: But two other instances that would have fallen into that category are the jogger on a trial in I think it was the Simsbury Avon area where she was scratched by a bear and another in a.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I understand but do you have an actual description of what you consider aggression of a bear being aggressive maybe on the website or somewhere?

COMM DYKES: We do have guidelines I think as the Deputy Commissioner had mentioned as respect and we would be happy to provide a copy of those guidelines to the Committee.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Sure and then just to finish, hopefully I don’t have anything else, but also sort of coming to, if a mother is with her cubs it could be large changes that she could be considered maybe aggressive or more like defensive for her cubs and she’ll show aggression in defense of her cubs. Did that ever happen in a DEEP, in a situation where DEEP killed a mother bear?

RICK JACOBSON: Not that I’m aware of.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Gresko.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you, Madam Chair. You mentioned the forest coming back as the major reason why the bears have repopulated this State. So in
your estimation of the 800 population, are you
assuming the majority of them, if not all of them
are in the Northwest Hills? I haven’t heard of
anything of a sighting or even an estimation of a
population being on the east of the Connecticut
River if I’m not mistaken.

RICK JACOBSON: We certainly traditionally think of
bear range as that range of where we have
reproducing sows. The vast majority of the
reproducing sows in Connecticut now extend from the
Massachusetts border south to approximately Oxford,
from the New York border to the Connecticut River.
Now we do have isolated incidences of reproducing
sows in northeastern Connecticut notably in Stafford
Springs and Union. They are small groupings. We
haven’t seen substantial expansion of those
population centers yet. We will see what the next
few years brings.

COMM DYKES: We an provide the best available data
that we have in terms of the distribution of the
population, happy to follow up with that for the
Committee.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): So my final question would be
so the 10 percent population increase per year that
you are estimating is based on the fact that you
think they’re going to be continuing to migrate east
possibly to northeastern Connecticut so no
stabilization of, they’re not comin to Bridgeport,
lets put it that way but you see there is plenty of
room for the population to continue to go up to 10
percent per year for the foreseeable future?

RICK JACOBSON: That’s correct. And that estimate
of 10 percent comes from, we have some scientific
research going on where we have radio collars on a collection of female bears and we monitor them throughout the year. Each year we sample those bears, identify how many cubs we mark those cubs with a passive integrative transponder, a little pit tag like some people put in their pets such that when we capture those bears again in the future we can tell which bear it was and it is from that data that we seen the reproductive rate at which bears are reproducing and we also see the mortality rate particularly through those first couple of years when we recapture those bears and we’ve noted that the reproductive rate is quite high. But I think the Commissioner may have mentioned 2.2 cubs per sow every other year and the mortality rate is in the 90 percent, or the survival rate for that first year is in the 90 percent rate which is exceptionally high. From those numbers we project that the population is actually growing at a rate of 10 percent. Which translates to doubling every seven years.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I actually have a question. Since we’re talking about population how would you propose that and I’m not sure that others even do this who allow bear hunting, but how is one supposed to distinguish whether they are killing a sow that has cubs that are actively needing their mother or a cub for that matter versus a fully grown bear which is what I think would be what we’d like to see where the population control, we’d like to see ideally those bears hunted versus the pregnant female or a female that is working with her cubs or even a male for that matter. I don’t know enough about bears and please whoever has the answer.
RICK JACOBSON: I think they’re looking at me. Well first of all they wouldn’t be able to tell if it was a female or a male bear. They might if it is an exceedingly large bear have an idea but hunters are generally focused on larger bears rather than smaller bear and that’s why you wouldn’t see, as a general rule, cubs being taken in such a case except for perhaps one and one-half year old’s which are approaching that period where they would leave the sow regardless. And the other thing is, the last item you had asked about taking a sow that still has cubs that are dependent, such a hunt would be prosecuted later in the year after they hit that target of six months of age or greater and 60 pounds or larger such that the cub themselves would have a high survival rate on their own if the sow was taken.

COMM DYKES: But these are the kinds of things that, you know, in the design of any type of hunting regulation are taken into account in terms of the duration of the hunting period, the timing of it relative to the reproductive cycle for the bears and as with any regulatory process we would undertake if this bill were enacted and we were to move forward with this we would have, you know, we would look forward to significant engagement from the public to help ensure the design of any type of hunting season and restrictions and regulations around that balances all of these different interests.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you Commissioner. Did you have a followup question to that? That’s only because there’s other. Okay, thank you. Representative Michel.
REP. MICHEL (146TH): I’ll be very brief. I am sorry about that. For the mother with the two cubs, that was killed that was in Simsbury so if you could look that up that would be fantastic and that’s it. Thank you.

COMM DYKES: We will be happy to do that.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you all for being here. I’ve enjoyed all of these conversations to the extent that people are from the Agency year after year I think have provided us with something to think about and it’s not always easy. Sometimes I have conversations with members of your Agency and we talk about fishing which is a much similar topic. But today we have a number of Bills before us, the two on bears which as I understand the Agency is in support of and to the extent of nonlethal Bill includes a suite things that you already do that is intended to reinforce the Agency’s position that if you get one you don’t give up the other. And every time I’ve has a conversation with you folks I think you’ve made it abundantly clear to me that there are a series of steps that we should be taking on a regular basis both as homeowners and as the Agency to try and keep us separated to the extent that we can from the population. So I appreciate your testimony on both of these. Bill 6014 is the ban on leghold and other traps and I’ve read your testimony on that as well and am I correct that the Agency remains opposed to that type of legislation as it begins to take tools out of the toolbox? I did have a chance to peruse this and other publications prior to the meeting? I’ll let you answer that.
COMM DYKES: Yeah, well thank you for that. I mean we do, in addition to the topic of bears which is one obviously that we get a lot of interaction on with folks about, impacts the public are contacting us about with respect to coyotes and beavers and the State also a significant area of activity and concern. And so these are two abundant species that are, you know, we get hundreds of calls a year from property owners in some cases coyotes you know killing their pets and so on. So it is something that we take very seriously. So, you know, we for this reason we know that these types of traps are most effective and in some cases they are the only or the most humane tools that we have to resolve and reduce the complex associated with these two species. We are strong supporters of strict regulations. Ours are the strictest in the country and that confirm to best management practices for trapping and so we, you know, for these various reasons we would oppose this Bill but we again recognize the sensitivity of the issue and we see it as an opportunity to you know, share our experiences with the Committee about how we’ve engaged in the, you know, what best practices, best management practices look like to ensure appropriate use of these tools.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. Again this like the bear issue there is a suite of recommendations depending on what the property owner may be looking for. In some cases is it possible to relocate for instance a coyote or, well let me just start there? So do we permit people to move coyotes from one parcel of property to another?
RICK JACOBSON: Senator, no we do not. Effectively it would be moving a problem coyote from one community to another community and that is just a direction we don’t go.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And lastly to what degree does the spread of rabies effect the agencies decision on transport and relocation?

RICK JACOBSON: It is not a driving factor for purposes of beaver or coyote. Certainly in the context of rabies vector species like bats, like raccoons, like possums those types of things, it most certainly is a concern. I think that is the clearest answer.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And so, I’m sorry through you Madam Chairman, so if I contracted with a nuisance wildlife agent and my direction was to take the raccoon from my attic and take it down to Representative Demicco’s neighborhood that is not permitted because of the rabies vector connection?

RICK JACOBSON: That’s correct.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Demicco.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): [Laughter] Thank you, Madam Chair. Senator Miner you and I will discuss things later. So I hate to take us back to the bear discussion but I do have a couple of questions that I would just like to propose. I appreciate the fact that the department is in favor of both of the bear Bills that are in front of us both the nonlethal management Bill as well as the limited bear hunt. I
don’t necessarily agree with it but I appreciate that you have taken a position to favor both of these pieces of legislation. But I remain somewhat befuddled here, I guess is the best word, would this limited bear hunt, are we trying to control the bear population in Connecticut or are we trying to deal with the nuisance bears because I think those are two different issues. I’m just curious how does the Department view this?

COMM DYKES: It’s primarily to control the population, right because as we’ve noted the population is increasing significantly and so, you know, there’s no magic number where we say this is the right number and this is right threshold and now we need to stabilize it a “X” number. But where we see this population continuing to expand and where we see and this will be the information that we will submit to the Committee, the human-bear interactions expanding at an even more precipitous rate, you know, that 38 percent increase just from 2017 to 2018 for example and where we see that our aversive conditioning and our, you know, educational campaigns and so on, while we’re doing everything and we believe that we can there, are not going to, are not going to prevent that population from continuing to increase. You know that’s why we’re supporting this all of the above, both of these Bills. We want to use all these different tools as appropriate in order to make sure that we can continue to have this, you know, this important population of bears in our community and also protect public safety.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you. I appreciate that but I’m just curious to know with regards to
nuisance bears, does the Department feel that they are no longer able to control nuisance bears, that they don’t have the resources or the tools or the manpower to control the nuisance bears?

COMM DYKES: I mean we’re seeing the frequency of these interactions increase, right. So when we are called to these situations obviously in the Category 4 at these most concerning levels, you know, we have the resources to address those but with the increased frequency with interaction, you know, the possibility of more bears becoming more habituated and the frequency of more bears, you know, losing that fear of human interaction, you know, is increasing. So I think that to prevent that from occurring, we would need to be and the absence of controls on the population expanding we would have to have very serious commitment to more tools which some may view as too intrusive on their personal liberties and requiring investment, you know, for towns and so on to be able to control trash, make sure people have places to put their trash cans, not everyone has a garage that they can close up and put their trash inside. You know leaving a grill out, your birdfeed who is goin to go around and monitor and make sure all the birdfeeders are put away. That is just sort of on the horizon as we see the population expanding we would need to see if there’s a desire to really focus exclusively on nonlethal measures. I think we would find ourselves, if we’re not there yet, soon in a place where we have to have more serious conversation around the types of measures that are necessary and that you see in place in National Parks for example that have more ability to control, you know, those types of human
interactions for example. I don’t know Rick if you want to add.

SUSAN WHALEN: That was a great answer but I do want to add one more thing that is not just the Department that is facing an increased demand on our time and resources of both our Environmental Conservation Officers and our biologists but municipalities are increasing reaching out to us because of the demands there are you know, being faced with. You heard from the Simsbury Animal Control Officer today, so it’s not just the Department it’s a broader challenge for municipalities as well who are trying to cope with some of these calls that they are getting from their citizens.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Again, I don’t think I am any less befuddled now than I was five minutes ago. I am still having trouble figuring out what is the problem here. Is it the increasing population of the bears or is it the increasing encounters with human beings? Is it the nuisance bears that are really the crux of the problem here?

COMM DYKES: Yeah, I think what we’re trying to say is that it is both.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): I appreciate that. I am going just going to give you a figure and I am curious to hear your response to this. So in testimony that was submitted by others on this Bill 586 it was pointed out that the Department testified a couple of years ago that there were 43 black bears killed by automobiles in Connecticut in the year 2016. So I’m not a great student of math but it seems to me that is a significant number. I don’t want to say
that solves your problem but that almost equals what is being purported to be solved with Bill 586 which is to reduce the population by about five percent. Am I right on that or is my math off?

COMM DYKES: I think will all due respect and I want to make sure that I’m not misinterpreting your question and we do have the figures that we can provide around some of where we’ve tracked these human-bear interaction including mortality but we would not, I think that, you know, any kind of motor vehicle accident or encounter with a bear is very concerning from our standpoint for the health, I mean this is obviously an extremely upsetting and difficult situation for the bear. We may respond and in some case with euthanasia and the pain and suffering for the bear for some kind of trauma like that.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): I’m not suggesting Commissioner that it is a good thing, I’m just suggesting that the bears, if you are trying to reduce the bear population situation it is happening even without Bill 586.

COMM DYKES: Well, yeah okay.

RICK JACOBSON: You’re right there are a variety of forms of mortality. When we weigh car accidents as one form of mortality, when we consider the trajectory of the bear population it is the combination of reproductive rate and mortality. The reproductive rate is greater than the mortality rate today. It is so much greater that in spite of 43 car bear incidents leading to a bear death in spite of however many cubs die each year we are still seeing the population increase. So the Bill that is
in front of us today has numbers of that the harvest rate would be of a bear hunt and it would reduce the population growth by a commensurate amount.

COMM DYKES: Try to be more succinct is what I was saying, my concern is that with an increase in population of bears and expanding population that we put the public in danger of potential more frequency of running into a bear which I know is an outcome no one wants to see happen. But this is a difficult issue and I appreciate this opportunity to dialogue.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): And I appreciate it as well, Commissioner and to your staff as well. So I just want to introduce one more thing since Rick you mentioned about reproduction I guess all of you talked about it at one point or another, so have there states or municipalities, I guess states done anything about dealing with the reproduction of bears, the gestation cycle, is there something that can be done in that regard again, I’m not a math expert and I’m certainly not a biology expert but I want to ask the question?

COMM DYKES: In terms of sterilization measures or? That’ I’m not personally familiar with but I will refer to the team or follow that.

RICK JACOBSON: We would be happy to follow up in greater detail on that question. Much of the research that has been done relative to sterilization procedures and the rate of the growth of wild populations. The only places that I’m aware of where that has demonstrated any measure of success was when you have a real controlled population vis a vis a fenced deer population where there is no path of egress or enter into the
population. I am not aware of any research that has shown measurable effect it certainly not in any sort of sustainable way and any kind of cost effective way on free ranging wild populations.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Okay, thank you. I appreciate that. And just one final question, I just want to make sure I’m clear, is it not, and correct me if I’m wrong, I believe it is already in Statute that force is allowed to be used by a resident of Connecticut if he or she feels that their livestock or their own personal safety is being threatened by a bear? Am I right on that?

SUSAN WHALEN: So the short answer is yes. There are limited circumstance under which a citizen may address, you know, a bear they feel threatened by whether it is in an agricultural setting or whether they feel personally threatened. I’m sorry, I can’t call the Statues to mind but there are limited opportunities for that.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Thank you, Representative. Anybody else from the Committee? Yes, Representative.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you for coming today and being so patient with us. I just want to clarify in my mind the ways that you’re assessing in the population. And I know that in the deer assessment a lot is done by aerial survey, am I correct? And are you using that aerial survey at the same time counting bears as well or how do you come up with your count?

SUSAN WAHLEN: So we don’t do aerial surveys for bears. I think that would be pretty difficult if not impossible given the way they live their lives
in the landscape but as Rick mentioned we do have a pretty intensive program that has a long time series where we go out and radio collar sows and tag them and tag their cubs and track them year to year. We also extract data whenever we can from animals that, you know, that we either have to euthanize or we’re heard about by other means so we don’t track them in aerial fashion but we track them on the ground and using the radio collar technology that we have.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you for that answer and I’ve also heard that the citizenry is asked to report to DEEP when they see a bear and I’ve also heard that there is a lot of folks who do not report because they love bears. So do you have any data that shows or how you determine the actual population when in fact it probably isn’t being reported?

RICK JACOBSON: Thank you for that question, Representative because I would like to point out there is distinction between the studies we do, and we have two primary types of studies we’ve done or are continuing to do that measures the number of bears on the landscape. There is a third collection of work that I’ve already described that measures the rate at which that population changes and then there is this third body of work that is nothing more than an index. It is an index to indicate whether the population is generally increasing, generally decreasing and those indices are things like sightings, numbers of bears killed on the road, numbers of incidents of bear damage, number of incident of home of incursions. Those are just indices, the don’t indicate what the population actually is, they just give you an idea if it’s
growing or if its decreasing or if it’s stable. The two techniques we use to measure the size of the population one is the Deputy Commissioner referred to it earlier it was a collaborative study we did with the University of Connecticut where we did a DNA study where we were actually collecting hair samples from individual bears, won’t go into all the science of it, but picture it like a big jar of jellybeans and you want to know how many are in the jar but there is no way to count them all. If you take out a handful of 20 jellybeans and you replace those red jellybeans with green, mix ‘em all up and then take another handful and if two of your new handful of jellybeans happen to be green then you know that 10 percent of your population is in your hand, extrapolate out there is 200 jelly beans in the jar. That is effectively what we’re doing when we do our DNA analysis and the project that we did with the University of Connecticut. The important thing about that, it gives you a very discreet number or range that the number of bears on our landscape fell within. The nice thing about that is it complemented well the other work we’re doing that the Deputy Commissioner just referred to where we track bears on the landscape, how they move, how they interact, how they use the habitat and then we take a bunch of measurements about that habitat and then we develop a relationship between how many bears can each habitat unit support and then we may those habitats across the states and how many of those fall within active bear range and how many are outside and then we do the math to come up with what the population estimate is based on the amount of supportable habitat within that bears range. Again basically Oxford to Massachusetts, New York to the
Connecticut River. That extrapolation actually was complemented very well by the work done by the University so marriaging that information with our reproductive and mortality information gives us the population projection. Does that answer?

REP. WILSON (53RD): I think that was excellent and it sounds to me like it’s a fairly scientific approach to the way that these estimates are made and I appreciate your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Representative. Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank you for coming in. This discussion on bears has been very enlightening for me. We’re out in Eastern Connecticut and there aren’t all that may bears out there at least we haven’t seen a lot of ‘em. But what I wanted to ask you about was not about bears it’s about beavers. You submitted testimony about the proposed ban on traps and I was wondering if there was anything that you wanted to say to highlight any of your testimony there. I understand that leghold traps and the body crushing traps that are supposedly the object of the Bill before us are already banned in Connecticut is that true?

RICK JACOBSON: There has been a lot of work done on trying to identify the most humane forms of trapping. In fact there was an exhaustive 15-year study that was done across North America and much of the results of that 15-year research into various forms of trapping and kinds of injury it imposed on animals was used as a foundation for both development of best management practices by the
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies here in North America - Canada, the U.S. and Mexico and also served as a bit of foundation for an international set of standards on humane trapping techniques. In that 15-year evaluation there were a number of types of traps that were identified as being effective in capturing animals but also imposing undo harm. Those types of traps that impose undo hare have been prohibited in Connecticut. We only allow in Connecticut those forms of particularly foothold traps that have been found to inflict the least amount of injury on an animal possible and still achieve the objective of capturing the animal.

So the foothold traps that we use here in Connecticut are different than those that have often been demonized in various cartoons, big steel traps with jaws and teeth that tear apart the limb of an animal. Rather we have traps that when they fully close, there is actually a gap between the teeth, between the jaws, let me be clear and more so still those jaws themselves that actually where they touch the animal are actually rubber padded such that one of the smaller traps that if it were here in the room I would be perfectly comfortable putting my hand in the trap and having to collapse on my fingers without any injury what so ever. Does that help?

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): It does, thank you. So the traps that are currently used are compliant with best management practices around the country?

RICK JACOBSON: Absolutely they are. In fact the traps that are allowed in Connecticut, the rules that we have governing trapping in Connecticut both the type of trap used and the means in which you may
use it, the methods, are among the strictest in the country and more so still we require all of our trappers to go through a trapping training program before than can become licensed.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Are you aware of any instances where non targeted animals are caught in leghold traps or is it a common occurrence?

RICK JACOBSON: I am aware of reports of nontargeted animals being caught in traps. In fact I think we have some data for you that we would be happy to share. The numbers of dogs, if I recall correctly was something like five dogs over, I’m not even sure that the period is and there may have been three cats. I can tell you from my own personal experience in cats we’ve lost on our property at our house, I’ve lost more to coyotes and fox than I have to foothold traps.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): What is the, other than having trappers go out and get animals for lets say pelts, or for their own business, is it important to have trappers other than that? Like what’s the purpose of having trapping in Connecticut?

RICK JACOBSON: From a wildlife management perspective as humans on the landscape we’ve certainly have changed the dynamics of our interrelationships and the distribution of wildlife on the landscape and as part of that, beavers have returned to the State, coyotes have invaded the State and they’ve invaded and recolonized the State at such rates that they create extensive property damage where they occur or they create certain public safety fears and trappers in the act of trapping is one effective tool we have to
controlling the abundance of those populations, to control the affects on our woodlands to constrain the affects they have on some of our state parks, local parks and private properties in the context of creating dams at road crossings, flooding out roads, flooding septic systems, flood wells those kinds of things. If not for trappers, well trappers serve a valuable role in providing a free path to landowners to address some of those property concerns.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): How would that ability be affected by the banning of the padded leghold traps, foothold traps?

RICK JACOBSON: Specifically padded foothold traps?

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Well the traps that are the subject of this Bill.

RICK JACOBSON: Well this Bill as I understand it actually effects both foothold traps and body crushing traps which we typically refer to, the most common form is a Conibear trap, it’s the type of body crushing trap that is legal in Connecticut. I would greatly undermine in the capacity and capability of removing populations of beaver and coyotes from the landscape. Padded foothold traps represent the single most effective in many cases the only effective method of capturing a coyote.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Now with regards to the Conibear traps, where are those typically used?

RICK JACOBSON: Those are typically used in aquatic systems specifically for aquatic mammals and I will add that over my history with the Agency I am not aware of any pets or domestic animals ever having
been injured in a Conibear trap, legally set I should add.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Now trapping it sounds to me from what you’re saying is necessary to have management tools to keep a balance, a conservation balance between wildlife and human inhabitants, is that right?

RICK JACOBSON: That’s correct.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): And is it fair to say that banning these tools that you use would throw that balance out of balance?

RICK JACOBSON: Yes.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Representative. Do Committee members have any further questions? No further questions. Okay thank you Mr. Jacobson, Ms. Whalen and Commissioner. We really appreciate your time.

COMM DYKES: Committee we appreciate the opportunity.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you. So, the next person to testify is Amy Patterson to be followed by Representative Doucette.

AMY PATTERSON: Thank you, Representative Demicco and Members of the Environment Committee. For the record I’m Amy Blaymore Patterson and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council.
LCC is the umbrella organization for Connecticut’s land conservation community. What I started to say as I was coming up here to start talking about bears, I realized, no I did not put testimony in but it has been an interesting conversation.

I’m here to support House Bill 7157 which would reauthorize bond funding for the Connecticut Recreational Trails and Greenway Program.

This matching grant program is one where demand now far outweights available funds. Without reauthorization there will be no funds available for projects ranging from construction and maintenance of trails to acquisition of land and trails for development.

Why do we need this program and by the way, I have my written testimony in the record, I’m just gonna cover a few points in the interest of your time? Well you can just ask a land trust or town why we need this program. When it comes to land conservation the acquisition of the land is just the very beginning, that’s just the start. A land conservation transaction is just as much about the care and development of the property for a balance between human use and public access and the habit protection as it is about purchasing the land or acquiring it in the first place.

As part of the land conservation process this program will help to fund the finishing touches of land conservation projects whether it be developing trails, maintaining trails, ensuring people of all abilities have access to the land.

So we encourage you to raise the bonding level in the Bill to $3 million a year for both FY 2020 and
FY 2021. This would be consistent with the level of bonding given as matching grants in 2018 and is a reasonable amount to support Connecticut’s recreational trails and greenways on an ongoing annual basis.

While I’m up here, I just wanted to quickly say that we have also submitted testimony in Support of 6637 which is the Bill that would require an invasive species stamp for the operation of motorboat on wetlands of the State, or inland waters, excuse me of the State. We have been speaking to legislators particularly Senator Miner, Representative Harding for many years now looking to assist in trying to find a comprehensive program to address this serious problem of the proliferation of invasive species not only on for aquatic invasive species but also terrestrial as well. So we look at this as a really good first step at moving toward getting to that comprehensive program and really addressing this serious issue in our State.

So we support it. There is testimony in the record that we did read and they raised some good points about how maybe to modify the Bill, tweak it, provide some clarifications including ensuring that it is clear that it includes rivers as part of the definition of inland waters but again we are supportive of the Bill and be happy to work with you moving forward on this program. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, thank you for your testimony and for your patience. Do Committee Member have any questions for Ms. Patterson? So I just have a quick question just to refresh me in my
memory here, so for 7157 the funding would be used for what purposes now?

AMY PATTERSON: So this is for the Recreational Trails and Greenway Program and there is a list of the types of uses for which those funds maybe used to matching grant program. There is a list that I have in my testimony includes construction of new trails, maintenance and restoration of existing trails, purchase or lease of equipment, acquisition of trail easements and developing trail access for people with disabilities among other uses.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): And you’re suggesting that we bump that up from what’s currently in the Bill and bump it up to $3 million dollars?

AMY PATTERSON: Three million dollars per year and the reason being that there is a, currently there is a big shortfall and there are many projects in the que that had not been funded as a result of the lack of the funding. So this is one of those programs where clearly the demand for the funds outweighs the availability of the money for projects that are a reinvestment in the community.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you very much. So one more time, Committee members. I guess everybody is all set. So thank you, Amy. So I neglected to mention we are now on Bill 7157 and we are going to continue the practice of alternating between public officials and members of the public. We have a lot of people who want to testify today so I am going to call up Representative Doucette. Is he here? Representative Doucette to be followed by Eric Hammerling. I appreciate that you’re teaming up so this would Representative Doucette and
Representative Allie-Brennan, right? All right, thank you.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Good afternoon, Representative Demicco, Senator Miner, Members of the Environment Committee I am here to testify on House Bill 5386 which is a Bill that Representative Allie-Brennan and I originally introduced. Thank you for allowing this to the Public Hearing and for the opportunity to speak in support of the Bill.

The Bill is intended to promote the health, welfare and safety of animals that would otherwise becoming from inhumane puppy mills.

In 2014 this Legislature convened a task force, some folks who are still here were involved with that task force. At the time the task force considered but ultimately opted against an outright ban and went forward with a regulatory solution. There had been a hope at that time that the USDA would increase commercial breeder standards of care and improve enforcement and the State Department of Agriculture would then rely on the USDA reporting in order to enforce our Connecticut laws in which there were several changes in 2014 again geared towards trying to address the practice of puppy mills which is the primary impetus for this Bill. Unfortunately the USDA process reporting enforcement has proven ineffective. Just this week on Tuesday as it happens, there was an article in the Washington Post detailing this in great detail basically what we are seeing is that citations by the USDA for puppy mill type commercial breeders is down dramatically over the last three years. A bar graph here shows that, you know, basically it’s dropped by 60 percent or more in terms of the enforcement by the USDA in this
regard. So there is no enforcement currently happening and the reporting which was supposed to be the impetus for the State to go in and confirm that the practice was being followed which was the intent of the 2014 Bill no longer happens.

So, I believe this Bill is the best way to accomplish the goal again of cutting down commercial puppy mills. In recent years there has been a movement towards this model nationwide. Other states, first California and then Maryland have adopted this most recently. Several other states are considering it this year. Our Bill as proposed, intends to follow the Maryland example as adopted in 2018. One difference that should be pointed out in the Bill as it came out of LCO is that the definition of animal welfare organization, we would submit and some other advocates will testify to the Maryland language is more appropriate. Our definition in existing statute is not, the scope of that is a little too narrow I think and we want to flush that out a little more to include who we’re talking about with respect reputable animal welfare organizations.

Finally I wish to address concerns about the impact this legislation on businesses that may be affected. I want to be clear that this bill is intended to prohibit inhumane business practice not to prohibit pet stores. A business currently supplying animals from puppy mills can certainly expand its business to partner with an animal control unit and/or animal welfare organization. As many of you know this is currently already happening in a great many stores across our State. And of course it should be pointed out the vast majority of pet stores in our
State do not sell animals from puppy mills. So with that I’ll ask Representative Allie-Brennan to say a few words and then introduce his constituent who was sort of his inspiration for this legislation.

REP. ALLIE-BRENNAN (2ND): Thank you to the Committee and the Chairs for having the conversation on this Bill. I think this is so long overdue. I was lucky enough to meet Sherri Axcell, she is my constituent. She brought this issue to my attention. In the Danbury area we have two pet stores that are know for selling dogs that come from puppy mills and we’ve heard horrific stories, I’m sure if you read the testimony from people like Stephanie Jordan and Amanda Tombassio you can hear stories of someone who purchased a pet recently in Danbury in January. A week later this got this pet, it’s sick and she is paying nearly $2,000 dollars in veterinarian bills of sickness that she was not informed about, was told the pets were fine and she is paying the bills. This is a consumer protection Bill we are making sure people that are buying these pets, they are not aware. Some people don’t know to ask the questions and they are kind of contributing to this inhuman pipeline of puppy mills to the pet stores.

I would point out there are nine business in this state that do this, there are 12 pet stores in total so it’s not like we’re completely trying to hammer down an entire business network. I think you could see by Barkery Boo-tique’s testimony that they operate a pet store that does not sell pets. They have been in business for over 12 years so people can still have a pet store and not sell these types of animals. The proof is in the testimony and I
want Sherri to share her, she’s been involved with this for awhile and has been kind of policing this. We do know that a pet store in Danbury after reviewing this week, one of their kennels that they operate is not even USDA compliant since 2016. So the issues are there. The USDA is not doing its job and we are all just sick and tired of it so here’s Sherri Axcell. Thank you.

SHERRI AXCELL: Thank you very much, I appreciate your time Representative for letting me come and speak. Ghandi said, “The greatness of a nation.”

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Just give us your name please.

SHERRI AXCELL: Oh, I’m sorry. Sherri Axcell, I’m from Bethel. Ghandi said “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way we treat our animals.” So what does it say about Connecticut that would continue to bring in animals from puppy mills and sell them in our retail stores? What does it say? It doesn’t say anything about Connecticut that I am proud of. We’ve got more than 250 jurisdictions across the United States that have banned puppy mill pets. I submitted with my written testimony but if anybody wants list is pages, and pages and pages long. This is not something new or something crazy that we want to do in Connecticut. This is all across the country. You heard California already bans them. Maryland banned them. Pennsylvania which is like of the states that has the largest puppy mill population have legislation up this year to ban them, New Jersey and New York also do. We need to be on the same playing field as those states. We can’t fall behind and, you know, we don’t want our State to be one of those places where people come to buy puppy mill dogs. There is
no shortage of animals in need of good homes. We all know that, right? There’s tons and tons of animals that need to be adopted and certainly stores can partner with those entities if they want to continue to find dogs homes. The only way to shutdown the puppy mill industry though is to close down their pipeline to retail pet stores. It is the only way. We may not have puppy mills in Connecticut but we’re their pipe line, this is where their puppies come, right. We can’t stop those businesses unless we shutdown their ability to send their dogs here.

Personally as the Representative said, we have two of those stores in Danbury. A friend of mine recently moved to Massachusetts and guess where they come to buy their dogs? They come to buy a designer breed in Danbury. They come to Danbury to buy these Chiweenies and Morkies and, you know, dogs aren’t really breeds or anything like that. I first got involved when the store formerly know as American Breeders now know as Puppy Kisses was being investigated because the owner was doing surgery on dogs in the basement. He has since been charged with felony animal cruelty and he no longer owns the store but the store was sold to a gentleman from Missouri who according to LinkedIn is a sales representative for the Hunt Corporation. The Hunt Corporation who now does business under the name Choice Pup, anyway it’s still the Hunt Corporation. They are the largest puppy mill broker in the country by far. Every single cage tag in that store says it came from a Hunt broker. This is just, this pipeline of puppies from the mills into our stores, into our area and we don’t want that. I don’t want that in my State.
So we have a Facebook group where we try to keep track of what is going on with that store in our neighborhood and we hear from employees, and former employees and employees of neighboring stores as well as, you know, consumers who have bought pets there and the things they tell us are heartbreaking. You don’t want to hear the stories of what people tell us go on there. Nothing has changed, nothing’s gotten better. We got rid of the guy that was convicted or animal cruelty. Great, now we have the same things going on with somebody else’s name on it. I’ve talked to people about pet stores in their locations and it doesn’t sound to me like there is anything different going on anywhere else. This is all the same business, all across the State. It’s not just the store in our neighborhood, that is just the one I’m familiar with.

Opponents are gonna tell you that these dogs come from USDA regulated kennels. Whoopie! I’m sorry but that is completely meaningless. USDA regulations say that the dog can be kept it’s entire life in a cage that is six inches higher and six inches wider than the size of the dog, it’s entire life. USDA says right in their documentation that their standards are absolute minimums and they encourage people to exceed them but there is no enforcement or anything like that. There is no required socialization. The requirements for veterinary are absolutely minimal. And even with that people don’t maintain those standards. We have no way of actually even following up anymore because the USDA website has rejected all the information. So we can’t go and look up kennel reports. I can’t go into a pet store and see the cage card that Connecticut requires that says where this pet is
from. I can no longer go onto the USDA website and even look if they have violations because that information has all been redacted by the current administration. So our laws here that are supposed to help the consumers, they can’t do that anymore.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): I’m afraid that, I don’t mean to cut you off, but you’re up here along with the two good Representatives and I’m going to ask you to please summarize if you could.

SHERRI AXCELL: Okay, absolutely. Summarize – Purebred dogs can be, you can get a purebred dog from a reputable breeder that doesn’t come from a puppy mill, from somebody who cares about breed standards and things like that. We do not want to stop people from getting purebred dogs. We don’t want to stop people from getting puppies. Petfinder.com today lists over 16,000 puppies available in Connecticut. We have no problem with puppies, we have no problems with purebred dogs, we have a problem with bringing puppy mill dogs into our state to see to unknowing consumers. That’s what we want to stop.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, thank you and thank you Representatives. So I’ll ask Committee members if they have any questions? Senator Miner and then Representative Michel.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for being here and so I try to do a little bit of homework every year when these issues come up and one of the things I asked for in preparation of this issue is where do our dogs come from and how many come into the State of Connecticut and every year I get one of these printouts, I don’t
know if you’ve had an opportunity to get one of these from the Department of Agriculture but they are pretty revealing quite frankly. Over the last year in the State of Connecticut almost 23,000 dogs and cats have come in the State of Connecticut through a process called adoption and they come from all over the place. In fact there are countries on this list. There are other states on this list. Tennessee imports more dogs into Connecticut than are sold in the State of Connecticut through pet shops. And so I hear what you say about the conditions but when I go on the website and I look at these company names that I think are trying to do good things, one of the locations that they claim to rescue them from is puppy mills. And so we know that out of the 23,000 cats and dogs some of these are coming from exactly the places that you folks are here asking us not to let them come into. So my question is if we’re gonna continue to kind of go down this path, do you think it is appropriate for anyone to import a dog from a puppy mill and two, if I go into a pet shop right now and I think we’ve done some very good work there, we require them to I think it is a 60 or 90 day period of time where they can make, you know, take it to their vet and make a determination whether they want to return it and then there’s also a process by which the vet has to participate in the cost of care? Have we gotten to the time where the 20,000 plus dogs that come in to the State of Connecticut should have the same warranty and return policy as we’re putting on the five or whatever the number is now pet shops? So those are my two questions. One should we allow them to come in here if they have emanated from a known puppy mill which seems based on what I read,
they are and two should we have in place for adoption agencies the same rules in terms of warranty and a return policy? Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SHERRI AXCELL: So I can tell you, having volunteered for many rescues, I don’t think any reputable rescues would have an issue with a return policy because we all say, in our contract, if you cannot or will not keep the dog you must return it to us. You MUST give it back to us and we will care for it. So a 90-day return policy.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Sorry, I appreciate that. So if we were to pass legislation that says at any time within 90 days a person who adopted a cat or a dog through a nonprofit or for profit.

SHERRI AXCELL: I don’t think you’d get any pushback.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Okay thank you.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Yeah, I think that would be appropriate to both of your questions. I say, yes. You’re talking about the lemon law that was instituted in 2014, I think that would be appropriate to provide, you know, for rescues and obviously the intent of the Bill and the other states that have done it, and the other states that will do it, is to cutdown, like I said on an inhumane commercial practice. Obviously there will be, there will always be animals that are in need of rescuing and that are going to be coming into the State. I myself adopted a dog, adopted several dogs but most recently we got one that came in from Georgia through a Connecticut based rescue organization that we’ve been involved with for year.
The dog came with its paperwork from the State of Georgia pursuant to what is already prescribed in the Statute. So the Statute, this Bill would be amending 22-354(a) talks about dogs being imported into the State really from any source whether it is from a commercial source or otherwise and the subsection (b) which is what this Bill would be amending talks about the pet shops. So there is a procedure in subsection (a) again, where the State of origin has to produce paperwork and it has to be provided to the owners and to the State of Connecticut. AND I think we should certainly look at that again because as you point out just volume, there’s going to be more dogs coming in and if certainly we pass the legislation there is going to be more rescue dogs coming in. So yes, we should look at that as a matter of public health and for the protection and safety of the animals taking a look at what we can do to that.

Again I think that the point about animal welfare organizations, how we define that, needs to be looked at as well. So, again there is an issue in California since they passed this of what they are referring to sham rescues where they are getting a disproportionate amount of dogs from puppy mills still. We can learn from that experience and make sure that our Bill is tight on that point as well.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you and just the last thing. If you actually kind of follow some of these things all the way to the end the financial statements on some of these nonprofits is pretty eye opening and they already exist. So it’s not they exist because of us changing our law, they already exist and so again, for the record, I’ve adopted
cats and dogs in my life and I have purchased cats and dogs in my life so I am not opposed to either one of those. I am a little concerned that once again we’re going back to a population of business people that have kind of lives within everything we’ve given them to live with and at some point I think to myself so what’s the difference between a cat and a fish, or a cat and a lizard, or a cat and a turtle and at some point that is the road we want to go down, you know, that will be even more interesting conversation because I think we all know that’s how some young people develop love for animals, are those simpler ones, the hamster. And so I appreciate the fact that you’re here. I supported the drafting of the Bill because it is a conversation that I’m not opposed to having. I just think it is a complicated one, that’s all. But thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Yes, Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you Representatives, thank you both of you for coming to testify. I’m involved in business myself. Most people that I know that have pets are actually rescue pets and it seems to be that none of us go to pet shops. It seems to me that this, actually this Bill could incentivize us to go to pet shops. What is your take on that? I actually see a business opportunity there for the pet shops.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Yeah, I do think that is exactly right. I think the model is already there. There are pet stores in the State, like I said that partner with animal welfare organizations and I think that should be part of this Bill and I think there is opportunity there obviously to, you know,
to bring business in, like you said, to bring feet in the door of those shops.

REP. ALLIE-BRENNAN (2ND): And I just want to highlight, you know, the testimony from Barkery Boo-tique I found to be so interesting that they are a pet shop and they don’t sell animals that come from these places and they’ve been in business for 12 years. So this kind of excuse that we’re trying to shut down businesses it is working, it can work. And so we’ve seen it and that, you know, we do support the Amendment to be added to the Bill from Maryland which, you know, learned from California it’s mistake and the loophole in that bill to make sure that it’s secure and it’s sad to see the people from my area of Connecticut that, you know, have had so many animals die, that just have to deal with these sick animals. Who is going to return a sick pet just because it’s sick? I mean you’re emotionally invested in this. You bought this and you’re in it. Now you have all the stress, financial bills, $2,000 dollars in a month for veterinarian bills. So we’re looking out for people here, it’s not just about the animals. I just want to highlight that.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Right, I mean I would think this would be bringing a new crowd to the pet shop that have never had or probably don’t even think they would get. But when you have a rescue animal you need to get cater to the animal and I would rather go to a mom and pop store than go to a chain. But I don’t go to the mom and pop store if you own industry wide bought because I have a problem with the origin of some of the animals in those shops.
It seems logical to me that they would be bringing in a whole lot of new business. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for coming in. I am a little concerned about the anecdotes that you are using of a couple of sick animals here and there. It appears that you’re trying to extrapolate that and indicate that all animals that you get from pet stores are somehow bad or somehow sick. I hope that is not what you’re doing is it?

REP. ALLIE-BRENNAN (2ND): Not at all. I’m saying from the people that I’ve talked with from the Danbury area, they have gone to these pet shops and they’ve come home and these dogs have kennel cough a week later, they have other things and so most of the issues we’ve heard are that some of the dogs coming from there are sick and that is why there is this issue, that is why we are trying to stop this because people go home and it’s not what they saw when they were in the store.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, even when you say “these dogs” you are talking about specific dogs right? You’re not talking about all dogs that come from stores have kennel cough?

REP. ALLIE-BRENNAN (2ND): No, I’m talking about the experience of the people I’ve spoken with and those specific experiences. I’ve pointed out in my testimony as I said earlier Stephanie and Amanda who have submitted testimony from our area, I’m speaking specifically to their experiences.
REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay two dogs.

REP. ALLIE-BRENNAN (2ND): Out of the many.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, so two dogs out of the thousands of dogs that are sold in pet stores came home sick.

REP. ALLIE-BRENNAN (2ND): Well there are obviously more than that. I’m not saying all dogs are sick obviously. It’s just a semantics thing.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Do you have any numbers?

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): I mean, if you come to Danbury I would love to show you around and you could go to a protest outside the shops where people.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): No, I’m not interested in a protest. I’m asking if you have any numbers as to how many dogs are sick when they are sold at a pet store? Do you have any statistics?

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): No.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): You have two.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): There’s two from testimony, sure and many more that are in the testimony, I’m sure you could look at other people.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay and are you quite certain that none of the dogs that come from these animal rescues, none of them are sick.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): No, I’m not saying that.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay so it sounds to me that what you’re implying that somehow all these dogs are bad and that we should ban, we should prohibit
legitimate businesses from selling dogs and cats because a couple of them are sick. Is that what you’re telling us?

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Representative, if I may I think again the intent of the Bill is to be targeted at an inhumane business practice which is the business of commercial puppy mills which are happening outside of Connecticut. To my knowledge there are no commercial puppy mills in Connecticut. So, yes anecdotal with everything that we consider, there is going to be anecdotal evidence for sure. But again I think the point is to address the inhuman business practice of puppy mills and then there is a pipeline to the pet stores. The Bill is not about the pet stores, the Bill is not about just a couple of sick dogs, although I think all that information is there. There is data and I think there may be some advocates who work in animal welfare that can site all of that data nationwide as to how many dogs come out of these puppy mills and what. There are always going to be sick dogs. But the problem is the inhumane business of puppy mills is producing a disproportionate number of sick animals and they engage in inhumane practices which are again, I think, the animal welfare advocates can tell you it is very well documented.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Are you implying that the pet stores are engaging in any inhumane practices?

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): No.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): But they are the ones that are being hurt in this Bill aren’t they.
REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Because they are the end of the pipeline that starts with an inhumane business practice at the puppy mills.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Don’t you think there might be some better way to attack an inhumane practice in some other state than to go directly.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Here in Connecticut? No I don’t believe so. I don’t believe so. The 2014 task force, there may have been some people here, I know Senator Duff was on, I don’t know if Senator Miner was here then looked at this in great detail, come up with a pretty extensive list of recommendations which became codified in 2014 and again those were designed, were designed as a first cut of trying to address this practice but they have, as I testified to, become ineffective because of the USDA regulation or lack thereof.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, so is there is an inhumane practice of puppy mills in other states and there is a pipeline, you say to Connecticut, wouldn’t it make sense to ban puppies from puppy mills as opposed to ban all puppies.

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): Okay and I guess the question is and in 2014 this was looked at as well and as I thought about this Bill, I don’t think there is a more effective way to do that than what is being proposed in this Bill.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Well it may be more effective but it also, don’t you think it is going after very legitimate businesses that are not engaging in any improper conduct or any immoral conduct.
REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): They are involved in perpetuating an inhumane business practice that may be originating in another state and not directly part of their business located here in Connecticut but again that is a problem. And with respect, I do appreciate your point in defining puppy mills and then trying to and then you talk about the issue of trying to reach beyond state lines, you know to get to these but again I do believe this was looked at in 2014. It is being looked at nationwide. I think this type of legislation is the most effective way to address the problem but I would be open to having the conversation which is why, of course, we are here today.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions from the Committee? Yes, Representative Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want one question in following up on Representative how many pet stores in the State of Connecticut actually sell puppies, kittens, rabbits that’s referred to in this Bill? How many pet stores in the State of Connecticut actually sell puppies, rabbits, kittens?

REP. ALLIE-BRENNAN (2ND): So it’s, for the puppy mill there’s 12 pet stores but it is nine businesses.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): All right, thank you. Any maybe it’s just a freshman thing here, but I’m brand new. I feel like you’re lumping together a bunch of things here so I need a little bit more
clarification I think going forward because we’re talking about pet stores, we’re talking about puppy mills and there are the bad puppy mills out there. I mean I’ve adopted myself a few times. So I’m just a little bit confused because you’re lumping together I feel like and following on Representative Dubitsky’s questions I think we need a little bit more information. I think we need a little bit more details in this bill to go forward. So thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry, just to follow up with that. I read somewhere but maybe you guys can be more precise and maybe confirm it that most breeders sell to the public not to shops. I think it was something in the order of 90 percent of breeders. Do you have anything besides this information?

REP. DOUCETTE (13TH): I believe that’s correct and this Bill does not impact that at all.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Anybody else? Okay, thank you so much for your testimony. Next Eric Hammerling. Welcome and thank you for being so patient.

ERIC HAMMERLING: Good afternoon. My name is Eric Hammerling, I’m the Executive Director of the Connecticut Forest and Park Association. I am not a betting person but if I were I would bet that at some point during this session, perhaps even today, you will think, “I wish I were somewhere else recharging my spirit on a trail.”
Whether you picture yourself walking, on horseback, on a bike or on a unicycle who knows, you know that well-tended recreational trails are important for Connecticut. Today you will hear from a recreational oriented business about the immense economic benefits of trails, from a regional planning agency about how important trails are to connecting communities and from many trail users about how important trails are to them personally for health and well-being.

For whatever reasons are most compelling to you we ask you to support HB 7157 and reauthorize bonding for the State’s Recreational Trails and Greenways Program because the $10 million dollars authorized since 2016 has all been allocated to a number of great projects.

In our small densely populated State we have perhaps 1,500 miles or more of trails stretching across State, town, water company and private lands. To put this in perspective 1,500 miles of trails if straightened out would stretch from Hartford to Key West, Florida. We should be proud of our rich trail heritage and we should make sure to invest in maintaining it. In the current State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan – SCORP tells us that the public wants more trails and there are many existing trails with potential to be connected to each other that only lack funding to make those connections. Connecticut loves it trails and in fact Connecticut has more events on National Trails Day than in any other state in the nation and we lead the nation every year. We have to make sure that we care for these trails properly.
HB 7157 would authorize $2 million dollars in bonding for matching grants to municipalities and nonprofits to create, connect and improve the State’s recreational trails. These grants are leveraged with private investments of approximately 40 percent and we ask that you increase this authorization thought to $3 million dollars a year which would be consistent with the bond levels for this program for the last few years. I’ll conclude right here and would be glad to respond to any questions you may have.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Mr. Hammerling. Any questions from the Committee? Yes, Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): I can finally put my hand up because David left so you can see me over here [Laughter]. Dave’s a good guy. Quick question. As a proponent of more open space and as far as trails, trails have been shown to encourage people to spend more time outside cause sadly myself being somebody who works outside all the time and never gets sick, I’ve been sick since I’ve come into this building so I think outside is much better than being inside. That being said, with these, with proposing bonding and opening up more trails what is it the positives that your group sees beyond that?

ERIC HAMMERLING: Sure, thank you for the question. There are so many benefits from trails. Think about economic benefits and I know, you know, REI has some representatives here who will talk about the importance to their business of outdoor opportunities but it also adds $9 billion dollars a year in revenues to the State. That’s just revenues spent in Connecticut associated with outdoor
recreation. Trails are also good for public health of course, providing opportunities for recreation. Trails provide for connections between different towns, different places. Trails actually provide public health benefits not just in terms of physical health but also mental health. There have been a lot of studies that talk about how time outdoors on trails actually helps people with learning disabilities and there are lots of other benefits associated with trails. I could probably talk about that for a really long time but I appreciate the question very much.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): And if I could follow up on that, do you find that as people spend more time in the woods or on trails that they become more apt to support programs like that and are willing to maybe donate time or spend time finding resources to expand the program?

ERIC HAMMERLING: You know I wish I could generalize like that and say that the people that use trails were also avid supporters of funding for trails or of organizations like mine who have volunteers who maintain trails. I think people use trails for lots of different reasons, you know, walking dogs, for recreation, for running, you know, all of the above so it makes perfect sense that there would be that connection between going outside and enjoying trails and helping to support protecting land and trails and other things but I haven’t seen so far a one-to-one correlation of that.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Anybody else? Okay thank you, Mr. Hammerling. Next
we have Kristine Hall. Thank you so much for being patient with us today.

KHRISTINE HALL: With your permission I would invite up Carolyn Rowan how is one of my constituents. She will be, also has prepared testimony on one of the Bills I am testifying on. I think it would save us all time.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Please. Thank you.

KHRISTINE HALL: I’m Kris Hall, I am Selectman in New Fairfield and I am speaking today in support of both HB 7157 on the grants for Recreational Trails, Greenways and Bike Paths as well as HB 6673 concerning aquatic invasive species.

Walking, hiking, biking are probably the most healthy activities that almost any age group can undertake from toddlers all the way up to senior citizens. I view this Bill and the proposed funding of trailways in some ways as an extension of some of our renewed efforts on infrastructure because not only is it healthy but it also will take some traffic off some roads.

New Fairfield is as one speaker previously said, we’re part of the demand that has not been supplied. We’ve applied twice for a trailway that would run between the center of New Fairfield and the north end of Danbury along Margerie Reservoir. We have very few sidewalks in New Fairfield. We have lots of hills. When I knocked on doors two years ago when I ran as Selectman getting this trailway in was probably the thing that I heard most often, the single thing I heard most often from my constituents. So I too want to ask you to pass this Bill and to fund it.
I am also going to speak in support of HB 6637 on aquatic invasive species. New Fairfield is one of five towns on Candlewood Lake, the biggest lake in Connecticut. We share Candlewood Like with New Milford, Sherman, Brookfield and Danbury. New Fairfield has the longest stretch of shoreline on Candlewood Lake. The well being of our town is dependent on the health of Candlewood Lake.

Candlewood Lake is threatened by invasive species. We have a well-known problem with Eurasian milfoil as do a number of lakes. It’s been in past years, it’s been to the point where it’s been very difficult to take boats off. We also have problems with blue-green algae, with zebra mussels and we’re getting some hints that we are about to get hydrilla as well. There is need for some help in this area, an independent source of funding to help us understand these threats better, to map them and to help to find some of the solutions. We know what some of the solutions are but we don’t know what all the solutions are and to help provide some of the funding. Candlewood Lake is owned by First Light but they don’t view protecting the lake and the water quality and the recreational opportunities in it as part of their mandate, unfortunately. So it is left up to the towns around the edge of the lake working together with the Candlewood Lake Authority that I also know will be making a statement later today. So I ask for your support on this Bill as well. Carolyn, I don’t know if you want to say anything additional.

CAROLYN ROWAN: Hi, my name is Carolyn Rowan, I’m from New Fairfield, Connecticut and I am here in support of 6637. I would like to thank the Committee
first of all for hearing us and thank the sponsors of the Bill.

I am a founding member of Candlewood Voices which is a community grassroots group dedicated to the stewardship of Candlewood Lake as well as the Conservation-Inlands/Wetlands Commissioner of New Fairfield. Our group strongly supports the concept of the bill with a modest user fee based approach that both affordable and appropriate. We believe that it would make a big sustainable dent in the enormous cost of combatting Aquatic Invasive Species in Candlewood Lake.

Right now that is our greatest threat in the lake. AIS are increasing impact recreational use, environmental health and property values on Candlewood Lake. Let me give you a couple of examples. In certain areas it is now impossible to swim because of milfoil and the town beaches have to be weeded of milfoil by divers every year at a great expense to our local citizens. Lakefront homeowners go through huge expense to rid their dock and swim areas of milfoil. I know I personally spend $1,500 dollars a year to have my shoreline weeded by divers and to place expensive barriers on the bottom in front of my dock and swim area. The invasive weeds get tangled up in people’s boats so even people coming from other states to boat on our lake end up getting boat damage and our property values are contingent on being able to swim and use the lake recreationally. There are certain coves in our town now where nobody can sell there house because the coves are filled with milfoil. As far as we know we don’t have zebra mussels yet or hydrilla but it is just a matter of time before a boat hull transports
them from another local lake or a river that does not have them on Candlewood Lake. Zebra mussels are currently found on the Hudson River and Lake Lillinonah nearby us which could mean the death of Candlewood Lake as a recreational and sport fishing destination.

I don’t know if you know this but we are very proud that Candlewood Lake is ranked 22nd in the nation as a Bass Trophy Fishing Lake. Anglers come all across the country to fish in our lake which is a large part of our economy.

Algae that grows on hydrilla kills bald eagles and we have a beautiful population in our lake, outside of our lake which would mean that our bald eagle population could absolutely disappear if we get hydrilla in our lake. This is all extremely concerning to use as stakeholders and stewards of Candlewood Lake and we need financial help to combat this threat. I think this Bill is a sensible way to help create a sustainable fund to fight aquatic invasive species. And I did put in testimony that has a little bit more detail. Thank you. Oh, do I have two seconds, please. I want to put in a plug for the Greenways Bill as well. I am also a Planning Commissioner in New Fairfield and that is our number one issue in our plan of conservation and development, more hiking trails, more Greenways, that is what our citizens want. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Any questions from the Committee? Yes, Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): First of all I want to thank you both for coming, you get to see the drive I take every day and the joys of Waterbury when they are
shutting down lanes for whatever reason they deem to be appropriate at the time. So since you brought up two points here, I’ll start off with the trials being first. What is the net positive that you see in your community with having support from the State here to help I believe start the Marjerie Trail which is a big project that New Fairfield has been trying to get off the ground since 2003 so for 16 years they have been met with the political base saying this is a great idea and not helping with getting there so do you see this Bill helping you get there and what are the benefits that you see in your community as a result of that?

KHRISTINE HALL: This Bill would help us get there presuming we would qualify for funding under it and I think we would but as has been pointed out, the demand exceeds the supply. It would provide a place for all of our citizens including our seniors to walk on a level surface. Right now people used to walk at the high school, the high school track was shut down for legitimate security reasons for outsiders. We do not have another flat sort of place for people of all ages to walk. Walking is of course very, very healthy. It would connect Danbury and New Fairfield so that maybe you could use it for bike traffic and would take some cars off the road. It would also, I think, at either end there are small businesses at either end of where we’re proposing to start the trail and end the trail and I think they would benefit as well. It would connect two nature preserves, Komlo Preserve in New Fairfield with the Bear Mountain Preserve in Danbury and provide a bit of a greenway through an otherwise urban area. So those would be the benefits that I would see.
REP. GUCKER (138TH): And would you, could you see maybe down the road a program like the do in New Hampshire and other places like adopt a trail program to maybe some independent businesses or maybe some of the members of the town to get involved in helping support and maintain and maybe help with some of financing of this?

KHRISTINE HALL: I think absolutely. I mean one of the things that when you apply as we have for grant under the Trail Program what they ask you to do is provide a maintenance plan and we just need to get a start. It is awfully hard to get it started but I think once we get it started, that this is going to have a lot of backing and I think we’ll probably be able to get community groups, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Lions Club among others all helping out in pushing it forward and maintaining the trail once it’s established.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): And if I could just go onto the other topic? Well the trail sounds like a great idea, some who was an Eagle Scout and a Boy Scout and spends a lot of time outside as you’ve heard, I think it’s something that is missing in our society as far as encouraging people to put down their iPhones and computers and actually go outside and experience the world first hand.

Going to the next point with the situation in Candlewood Lake and the other Bill dealing with the stamp for motor boats from out-of-state to help combat invasive species, what has been some of the methods that have been used in Candlewood Lake which I believe is 200 miles of lake shore, what are the methods that have been used, what do you see being a positive and how do you feel that this Bill could
help with ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of that lake and it’s community?

KHRISTINE HALL: One of the biggest threats to Candlewood is Eurasian milfoil, it’s not the only one but it is the biggest one. And the method of dealing with Eurasian milfoil at the moment first of all is every-other-year a deep draw down of the lake which if it is timed right, and it is not always timed right, exposes the weeds on the bottom of the lake and freezes them so that they can’t grow any more. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t work. The other thing that we’ve just started doing is to introduce and again this was through the leadership of the Candlewood Lake Authority, introduce sterile grass carp that have a preference for eating down on the milfoil and they eat it from the top down. They’ve only been in the lake, I think this will be the third year, and we’ve had one restocking following the initial stocking of the lake. They are sterile so they only live a certain amount of time and they will continually need to be restocked. We haven’t had enough time to scientifically say they are doing the job. I can tell you that in the cove that I live on the weeds last year, even though it was not a deep draw down were much less than they were. But it is not a problem that has been solves. We’ve got some indications, we’re having trouble maintaining the kind of funding we need just to define what the problem is with regard to milfoil. The weeds need to be mapped so that we know whether we are making progress and whether there are other measures to be taken, whether these are being effective. Our source of funding for the weed mapping has been First Light. This last year they showed themselves
to be a very undependable source of that funding when they switched consultants in the middle of the year after almost a dozen years of using one consultant with the same methodology from the State Agricultural Station, very reputable, independent and went with a consultant that used a much lesser methodology and much less data and we’re not sure what we’re gonna get out this mapping. Having the ability to get some money from an independent source to help us define the problem and deal with it would be very beneficial.

CAROLINE ROWAN: Could I add to that as well a little bit? As far as zebra mussels go I know we are going to have an expert talking about the studies that are being done on Candlewood Lake right now but our only way of scientifically monitoring whether there is zebra mussels in the lake right now is through West Con and their college students. They’re actually learning about our lake and they are monitoring. They have zebra mussel hotels placed on peoples docks all around the lake and we monitor whether zebra mussels are showing up or not. That is not enough. Zebra mussels can cause severe damage actually it could shutdown our power plant. I don’t know if all of you know this but Candlewood Lake is actually a battery. It is owned by First Light and they use it to do peak shaving so the water is stored, when they need extra power they open the penstock and water rushes down into the Housatonic and it goes through a turbine and they make power, but then they have to pump it back up. That is really expensive for them. It is one of the reasons why we have to keep pushing for deep draw downs. The power company is charged by FIRC to do it however they tend to give us excuses that they
aren’t doing deep drawdowns so this is the first deep drawdown that we’ve had in I think four years when we should be having one every-other-year. During the deep drawdown the milfoil tends to die off when there is no water and it is really cold but it doesn’t always work so it is not the only way that we can fix the milfoil problem.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Thank you for coming up. I’m sure we’re gonna hear a lot more on this and I am sure I could keep you forever but I think you’ve sat her long enough for today and probably want to get back to New Fairfield before you have to sit in that Waterbury traffic. But thank you for coming up.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative and thank you. Does anybody else have a question before they? Okay, terrific. Okay, you’re fine I just wanted to make sure, yep, you’re all good. Okay and next we have Andy Hodgson. Thanks for being so patient.

ANDY HODGSON: Good afternoon, I am Andy Hodgson. First I’ll say I apologize for reading, this really isn’t in my wheelhouse. So I am going to go ahead with this.

Thank you, like I said this isn’t in my wheelhouse so I’ll be doing a little bit of reading. I am here to testify in favor of 7157. I grew up in Connecticut and I am raising my family here. I serve the REI Co-op as one of the lucky 50 employees in West Hartford Store and my role is store manager there. REI has a 150 odd employees in Connecticut. We added 15,000 new Co-op members in Connecticut this past year and currently have a couple hundred thousand in Connecticut, 17 million nation wide by
the way. What ties us all together is a knowledge that a life outdoors is a life well-lived. The co-op came to Connecticut 11 years ago because of the large number of co-op members and outdoor recreation enthusiasts living in Connecticut and enjoying what our State has to offer in the outdoors. We since added two additional stores in Connecticut as the demand for outdoor goods and services here has continued to grow. The success of the co-op in Connecticut is absolutely tied to the outdoor venues that we have in our State.

The Recreational Trails and Greenways are the foundation of those outdoor opportunities, that is where we most often direct Connecticut residents who come to us looking for places to get into the outdoors. A big part of our business is introducing people who don’t know how to get outside. In order to maintain the quality and quantity of the trails, paths and Greenways in Connecticut, we need to maintain a sufficient level of funding. For that reason I support 7157 and ask that the funding be brought to the level recommended by the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association. They have over a hundred year of experience in maintaining many, many of these valuable outdoor venues for the residents of Connecticut. I think opinion is worth trusting.

Finally as a resident of Connecticut who chooses to raise my family here, I speak from personal experience that the time I spent in the Connecticut woodland areas is the most important to me and my family. I am going to ensure that all our kids have the same resources available when it is their turn to raise their kids. You are going to hear from Mason, one of my colleagues a little bit later. If
you have any business questions, he’s the guy. I’m just the store manager, mostly I sell backpacks and sleeping bags most of my days but I’ll take any if you have any. Thank you very much for allowing me to be here.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you for your heartfelt and passionate testimony. Does anybody have any questions? Yes, Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): You get bonus points, you beat the buzzer.

ANDY HODGSON: Yes! Is there a prize for that? [Laughter]

REP. GUCKER (138TH): You get to leave before everybody else in the room does [Laughter]. So I’ve already asked this question to the previous person testifying, what do you see as the biggest benefit to Connecticut, what do see business wise, number (1. (2 health wise, number (3 do you envision that as this project gets going that we may get an adoptive trail program or something of that sort that would, would you see more people wanting to get active in supporting these things and maybe get volunteering more or maybe try help raise funds for future expansions.

ANDY HODGSON: Sure. I think I’ll go in reverse. It might seem odd but the business aspect of it is kind of last on my list frankly but I think in terms of voluntarism that is something that we advocate for greatly. I don’t know specifically if you adopt a trail type of program is the most effective. Frankly I see more signs than volunteers out there typically speaking. So I don’t know but I do believe that the more people get involved the more
they understand the impact it has on themselves and their families the more they want to help and I definitely have seen that. And we have seen that in our small store in West Hartford. You know, we do a lot of programming in the store, a lot of education in the store. We have grown our reach more than I’d say more than any other store in the country and I think it is just because of how we feel about things and the access we have in Connecticut. I’ve worked in many different stores, many different states in the country and it is a rare thing to have nonprofit as vested, as involved as we have here and I think that drives people to want to help. So there is no question about that.

Getting to the business aspect of it, I know $9 billion dollars in Connecticut was the number I heard and certainly I would imagine that would continue to grow. We are seeing growth in economies when there is no growth. So I think that probably would speak to let’s invest where we are going to be able to get some tax revenue.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Through you, Madam Chair. So this is a win-win. We get people outside in the first air, they get exercise which requires basically just having to maybe take some water and some energy bars, you’re not using any utilities. You’re using your own power and it looks like it’s a generator of business, and jobs and income to where possible some of these trails could be paying for themselves in the short-term.

ANDY HODGSON: Absolutely. I would say the hard part, like anything else is, we need to invest to continue that growth.
REP. GUCKER (138TH): Well I thank you for coming forward and Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions from the Committee. Okay, thank you so much for your testimony. Next we have Representative Candelora. Welcome. Thank you again for being so patient.

REP. CANDELORA (86TH): Thank you Chairman Cohen and Ranking Member Miner. I’m here today to testify against Proposed Bill 5386 and I am not going to specifically speak about the Bill other than that I am opposed but I am bringing two members that have far more expertise than I do on this issue Courtney Hogan, she is the Government Affairs from PIJAC and we have Butch Foucault from All Pets Club in Branford who are both here to speak on the Bill.

COURTNEY HOGAN: Thank you, can everybody here me okay? Okay. As Representative Candelora said, my name is My name is Courtney Hogan and I am with the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, PIJAC for short. We work with the American pet care community including breeders, transporters and retailers and also serve on Connecticut’ task force in 2013 and 2014 to help create those sourcing centers that came out of this very Committee five years ago.

Since then we have used Connecticut’s model in different states across the country working with law makers to creating similar sourcing restriction in New Jersey, Arizona, Virginia and elsewhere. We believe that Connecticut should be proud of that leadership and that model they set for the rest of the country that we’ve tried to put into place elsewhere. Instead today you are being asked to
throw out five years of successful oversight and transparency in favor of California’s ban them all mentality that has only been in effect for 60 days as of today.

It doesn’t really make any sense. In reality Connecticut pet stores demonstrated good faith over the last five years. They have complied with every sourcing, signing and warranty requirement and yes they have been criticized for sourcing dogs from USDA licensed breeders but they are doing so because the Assembly required them to do so and I would also like to draw attention to the fact that not only are they required to source from USDA licensed breeders but the State even took it a step further to make them source from only the best USDA licensed breeders. In fact, if you look at for example the Humane Society’s horrible hundred list that comes out every single year, Connecticut breeders cannot buy from 98 of those breeders.

Senator Miner touched on this earlier, but Connecticut has imported 23,000 dogs in 2017. He is right when he says that they are from different states. There are 6,300 from Tennessee, 4,900 from North Carolina and 2,300 from Texas and Georgia respectively. They’ve even come from other countries and while this is a great global effort on the part of Connecticut the reality is that several of the organizations including the Connecticut Humane Society alone brought in more animals in a year than any pet store has sold.

We don’t believe that Connecticut needs to jeopardize the dozen local businesses that operate as pet shops to have an impact on the national or international animal welfare conversation. In fact
it would be our recommendation to you today that in light of the five year anniversary of the task force has come up, you are in the best place to conduct any kind of data and research to see how your laws have been effective. This would be great for other states that are considering bans of a similar nature. It is better to have research to fall back on than anecdotes.

We would strongly encourage Connecticut to adopt a task force or look into the affects that the sourcing restrictions have had in the last five years so that they can continue to be a leader rather than a follower in animal welfare. I urge you not to abandon this role on this issue in response to any emotion and pressure that you feel coming from all outside sources. I encourage you to stay strong as leaders in the animal welfare front and I encourage you to oppose this Bill. Thank you.

EDMOND FOUCault: Well she just showed me up! [Laughter]. Good afternoon, my name is Edmond Foucault and I am one of the owners of All Pets Club. We have four locations Wallingford, Branford, Southington and North Windham.

It’s not easy to be in a small business in Connecticut. Taxes, energy, rent, workers’ comp and health insurance costs are among the highest in the nation. This year we may be facing an increase of $15.00 dollar an hour wages adding a paid family leave. Competition from the internet sales, big box chain stores is a constant challenge. One of our locations have a Pet Co, Pet Smart, Walmart and Tractors Supply within one mile of us. We have 85 to 95 full and part-time employees working our four stores. Our employees range from 16 to 76 years old.
At least nine of my team members have been employed with All Pets Club for over ten years. They quickly learn that we have very strict and high standards at our business. We are a very structured company. We strive for excellence with all our employees and we don’t settle for less.

Animal welfare is our number one priority. This has been our personal and business concern. This is the reason why we employ so many people and we are very proud of our staff. I am also proud of the many staff members who love their jobs here, working with the pets so much that they went on to become vet techs. If the ban on puppies and kittens and rabbits are enacted easily 35 percent of my staff would immediately lose their jobs and I would be forced to close stores. We take pride in matching families with the right pet for them, families who deserve the right to chose how and where the obtain their next pet. In January we had 1500 puppy visits logged into our books by individuals and families company wide. Out of that number we found loving homes for only seven percent of those visits. This proves that customers do not impulsively buy their pets at as opposition will tell you. It demonstrates that the families depend on us for education and hands-on experience to help them decide what breed will be the best fit for the family and circumstances. No matter where they chose to obtain their pets, I believe this experience is why there are so pure bread dogs relinquished to the shelters.

We are transparent with every puppy sold. We provider breeder’s information, USDA inspection reports, puppy information, shot and health records
and even pictures to everyone prior to purchase and follow the State’s warrant law with all of our customers. We know this information is important so they can do the research and are comfortable doing that the breeder is compliant and the parents are well taken care of. Under a ban we would no longer have this information to be able to guarantee the animals’ health history to our customers.

I testified five years ago on the same type of ban as a result of a year’s worth of hard work by a task force, some of the strictest guidelines and warranty requirements in the country were imposed. We have been proud to follow these guidelines. We are very proud of our breeders who all have clean inspection reports not only with the USDA but also with their state inspector and AKC inspections to. We have reached out to 20 local rescues and shelters recently to ask if we could source animals from them and have only received a positive response from two. I will not be able to meet my customers demands yet alone the needs if this ban goes into effect.

In short we love the work we do and the joy of matching a customer with the perfect pet for their family. We take pride in being a partner in their care my providing them with information to make responsible decisions. This ban would take that partnership away while taking away the only regulated source for pets in our State. Please protect pet owners and small business and do not advance this Bill.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you so much for your testimony. Do I have any questions? Yes, Representative Michel.
REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. I am currently on the internet and looking at articles from Branford Seven and a couple of other articles online that mention minutes from 2017 that you are selling puppy mill dogs and that you know it and probably so. Can you address that please?

EDMOND FOUCALUT: That we’re selling puppy mill dogs and we know it?

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Let me go back to the link if you want and I can actually read it. I’ve got it here. I’ve got one here. There’s a couple of articles but this is one of them. All right so it is called “Letter: The truth about All Pets Club Puppies” and it is from Branford Seven. So they say that there was a petition, I’m sure that you are aware of the petition that was made in 2017 to ask you guys to stop selling puppy mill dogs. Are you familiar with that petition on change.org?

EDMOND FOUCALUT: Yes.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): You are. Thank you. Technical difficulties, I am so sorry about that. But in any case so are you, what’s your comments on this?

EDMOND FOUCALUT: Well the opposition always calls our puppies puppy mill dogs but the fact of it is that our breeders are established, regulated breeders. Call it what you want. I guess if you want to call everybody a puppy mill than that is your choice to call that. But there are 10,000 breeders, those are HS US statistics from 2018. Okay, there’s 10,000 puppy mill breeders out there, less than 3,000 are USDA licensed which I think is still high. So in other words what are we gonna do
to get rid of the other 7,000 if we just got rid of the breeders that I do not consider to be puppy mill breeders.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): In the couple of articles is says that you mislead the public by saying the dogs come from small breeders who care about the dogs they sell. Have you ever sold puppy mill dogs and by puppy mill, I’m not calling a breeder, an official breeder a puppy mill?

EDMOND FOUCALUT: No and I’m not sure who is quoting this. Was it me that said something like that because I never said it?

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Would you actually be caught quoting saying that?

EDMOND FOUCALUT: Well this is what I’m saying, is that you’re asking me about an article that somebody wrote against our company. I can’t answer that.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Okay, well I maybe after will refer you to the change.org petition that has been focusing on your All Pets Club. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Any other questions from Committee members? Representative Harding.

REP. HARDING (107TH): Thank you Madam Chair. First I want to thank you for coming today and I’m sorry. One of the things I’ve heard a lot of problems with this puppy mill issue and I understand what you’re saying is look you can define any pet shop the way you want to define it. I support this concept of having to address this issue of puppy mills, the true puppy mills and so I am behind this Bill to address this issue but at the same time from everything I’m hearing, I’m hearing and from your
advocacy and other’s it seems like this concept is really devastating to the pet store community and also from what I’m hearing is that in an odd way it would actually reduce some regulations because if you’re getting it from the animal rescue and this is something that I learned today and this is the reason why we have these public hearing is because you are the experts on these issues. So I am happy that you come in to testify. So I mean, maybe you just want to elaborate on how getting these animals from the animal rights organizations in some respect would actually reduce some of the regulations.

EDMOND FOUCAL: Oh, absolutely. Like you’ve heard testimony already these are already coming from puppy mills. There are puppy mills that are breeding retail rescue now and that means rescue organizations so to pass a law and ask us to get this is not protecting the customer and is not gonna put us into a world where everybody is gonna embrace us that we’re doing this but on the other hand, you know, its going to affect our customer base. We depend on these pure breed puppies that are regulated form USDA established breeders, that’s the type of people that we have that come in already. Not only that the reason why I say this is not gonna work for us is that it would put us out of business is number one. We’re not gonna get into that rescue business. Our puppies right now create a high traffic and they are spending hours in our store learning and getting educated about the different breeds and these are all young full breed puppies. Without this traffic we’ve lost sales because this still drives the sales of them coming in and going out. Then as I also say using two out of these 20 that I’ve already reached out for is, well I don’t
know what I’m gonna get and I’ll have to take whatever I can get but it’s not gonna keep us in business either. And on top of it we have to compete with them, collect the tax, warranty the animals. I mean it’s just not a good business model, it is a setup for failure and that’s just what we’ll do. But yeah.

COURTENY HOGAN: Do you mind if I answer, elaborate a little bit if that’s okay? The concern about, you’re absolutely right about what this would do to the regulation that Connecticut currently has. So right now with all the information that is available to any consumer that goes into a pet store, not a time of purchase, anytime they are in the store, would just not be able to be available to these people. So now you’re talking about going into a rescue or going into a store with a rescue animal and there is no information on, you know, where they came from. There is no information how they were transported. There is health information that is required by Connecticut and the Department of Health but as we’ve seen as nearby as New Hampshire and recently as in Kansas that is very easily incorrectly provided. In Kansas recently on Monday, there was an incident of rabies coming from a rescue even though they had all of the health paper work they were required to have. In New Hampshire there was an incident where puppies at a rescue event were around humans and other animals and had a bacterial infection. Both of these things are easily spreadable to humans. But without this health information that the pet stores are all currently required to have, you’re still requiring them to follow the warranty law that Connecticut has but you are not allowing them to have any kind of way to
verify the health of the animal in the same way they can now with these breeders they’ve built relationships with over time. So you are taking away regulations in the sense of information that is know about the animal and the information and the protections you are providing to consumers.

REP. HARDING (107TH): Thank you for your testimony. Thank you, Madam Chair. Just quickly again today these are concepts not Bills yet. There is a reason why we have these Public Hearings is to gain this information, that’s why it’s so critical to have you here and provide your testimony. Regardless if its pet stores or other avenues, there are puppy mills and we do need to address them and my hope is that we can work collaboratively with the pet stores like we did five years ago and make something happen to address both issues because often times I find, you know, pet store owners are just as much animal lovers as anybody else. So we want to make sure we address these issues together and I really hope that we can work in a collaborative fashion both pet store owners, animal rights groups and my legislative colleagues. So thank you so much for coming up. Thank you for your testimony.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative and to echo the Representative comments and sort of build upon what you were saying and what he was asking do you see a space where perhaps some of the regulatory pieces pursuant to the current legislation with respect to warranting the animals should some of those be lifted or changed in someway to allow for something like this to happen and do you see a space for this type of commerce?
COURTNEY HOGAN: I’m sorry I need you to clarify a little bit.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): So in a space if we were to lighten up some of the regularity requirements right now with respect to warrantying animals from breeders and your sources that you obtain them now, if that were to happen do you see a space for the type of commerce that this bill legislates?

COURTNEY HOGAN: Like Representative Harding put so well, we’re so early in the stages, we’re certainly open like I said to being a collaborative partner going forward trying to find a solution that helps animal welfare going forward and gets rid of these bad actors and whether that’s, you know, something that we call come together on a task force again to do or go outwards and get more information we are happy to be part of that. I can’t give a clear answer on whether or not that I see a space because I, like I said there is no concrete information on how this has already been in effect in the last five years. So without real data to back that up I can’t answer your question, I’m sorry.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, thank you. Yes, Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Thank you for coming in and testifying today. I have a little bit of cold, I think I get over it and I get it back. So I think the only answer is gonna have to be we get out of here and go outside for a while. But I don’t think this Bill is made or put together to put pet stores out of business. I myself have always, all of my animals have always been rescues whether they be cats, dogs, even the occasional chicken. You know,
to try to help them have a better life. Many times, I mean people talk ill of pit bulls. I’ve had a number of pit bulls that were used, you know, in intercities for, you know for fighting, they had emotional scarring and they had, you know traumatic things with their bodies that they had to deal with the rest of their life but you know, I adopted them anyway because my attitude is all pets deserve a home somewhere. I do get concerned with the idea of puppy mills myself and I know it’s normally not here in this State so much, it is rampant down south. And you know a lot of the health issues that I had witnessed with these puppy mills was besides the inhumane treatment was just the genetics behind it. You know there is no diversity in the genetics so the pets become more susceptible to disease and other things that have normally been bred out of there. I do get concerned when I look here on the internet apparently news Channel 8 did a story on our store in Wallingford a while ago and about, you know, dogs being purchased there and given a clean bill of health by your own people to only have to go to the vet 10 days later and had subsequent problems and sadly like what has been said earlier by other people testifying is that once you tend to adopt an animal you kind of put in a special part of your heart so you want to really fight to, you know, save it and unfortunately sometimes it’s very negative on the animal but its also negative on those who may not have the resources to give that animal the proper treatment that it may or may not need.

So I think the Bill is not so much about restricting, you know, pet stores, not everybody has the ability to go the animal welfare, maybe the animal welfare may not have what you’re looking for
so you may have to go to a pet store. But it’s trying to put this practice out of business because, you know, supply and demand brings up, you know, desire and need. If nobody is going to the pet store to get a puppy mill product then maybe the puppy mills might think about going into something different. Maybe they could start growing hemp down there again since we’re trying to get hemp through [Laughter]. We can get away from the puppy mills. So this is, I don’t think this bill is an attack on, you know, pet stores. Yes there is always bad actors in everything. I don’t care what area you’re in but sadly we have to respond to those bad actors. So that is kind of where we’re at and you are right, this Bill is in the beginning of trying to put something together and not everything is going to be the way everybody wants it but we have to start somewhere and I think coming in and expressing what you are experiencing is what we need to hear because again, I have never gone to, I’ve gone to pet stores to go pet the puppies and see the kittens and all, I just chose to get my animals from animal welfare and other rescuers. So I want to thank you for coming in. You know, don’t take this all as a personal affront, we’re just trying to craft, you know, the best Bill for all but also at the same time ensuring that we, you know, provide for those who can’t which are these animals. So I thank you for coming in.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Representative Muchinsky.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Thank you. Your Wallingford business I occasionally buy pet food there and the reason we put these Bills in is we still get complaints on occasion on an animal was purchased at
your store and died soon after. The last time I got a complaint like that was two years ago. There has not been as much recently. I will tell you it has been getting better and I think it is because we are doing a better job of tracking the, I worked on this Bill originally the one about tracking the origin of the dogs and it is possible that some of the breeders have figured out a way around our tracking system. I’m not sure. You might know better than me but it is possible that there is some laundering going on where we’re.

EDMOND FOUCALUT: I don’t think so.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): You don’t think so. Okay. Well when people want to return a dog because it’s sick in the past you’ve said, not you personally but your store has said they will replace the animal but you won’t pay for the medical care. Well that was the policy?

EDMOND FOUCALUT: No, never, never, never.

REP. MUCHINSKY: Well this is what my constituents told me, they could get another dog but they couldn’t get the, if they spent $800 dollars on the vet bills for the sick dog that would not be reimbursed.

EDMOND FOUCALUT: No. Not at all. Actually you know what, I would rather some of these families that if they do have a problem that they would bring it back to us. We are there for them to give support but we would never say, you know, bring it back and you can’t even get this back. We give them that option. We tell them right up front but a lot of people do not want to return them because they’ve already. So they are going to take it to their vet,
do whatever they need to do but we will take that puppy back. That puppy will not be sold until it gets a clean bill of health from our veterinarian after it is done with medications and everything and that customer has the choice if they like, they can repurchase that pet. We will hold it for them. We do not?

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): You don’t euthanize it?

EDMOND FOUCALUT: Oh, my God I have never euthanized a dog in my life. I never ever, it’s such a fictional thing. Its awful.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Well this is what they think and this is what they tell me.

EDMOND FOUCALUT: But then, you see, I know they say that their vets tell them this too. Okay and I think that they are so irresponsible to say something like that. That is like the biggest lie of the industry here. People think that we euthanize the dogs because they are too old and we can’t sell ‘em which never in my entire career have I ever put a dog down because it was sick and I didn’t want to cure it or if it got too old, never in my entire career would I ever think to do this. I have four dogs of my own. I have always had these. I am an animal lover. I’ll take the dog home before anything has to happen. I’m sorry but that is an absolute, that’s absolutely not true.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Well this is what I’ve been, the complaints that come to me say. So I guess what I should do next time is bring them to your store and have both of us [Cross-talking].
EDMOND FOUCALUT: Absolutely. You know what, if anybody has a problem like absolutely. We haven’t been in business for 30 years because we’ve been turning our nose or putting people down or mistreating animals. We’ve been in business 30 years because we have built a trust with our customers where now it is not just them that bought it’s their families, it their kids, grandparents and it goes on and on. I mean, that to me and these types of things that are. I’ll work with you on this one. You come on down. Well call the customer up on this one. I don’t mind.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): This particular customer was mad enough to picket your store and.

EDMOND FOUCALUT: Well let me tell ya something a lot of people picket my store, you know, and even whatever, whoever the customer was but, you know, it is such a questionable thing, I don’t know. I can’t answer who it was because I have no idea. But I can certainly say that absolutely call me, come in and we will work on these things together.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): I think that the next time this happens, I’ll just come with the constituent to your store and face-to-face and get this addressed.

EDMOND FOUCALUT: Absolutely, I have nothing to hide, nothing to hide.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): All right, thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any body else have a question. We lost most of our Committee. Thank you for your testimony. Okay, Mason Trumble.
MASON TRUMBLE: All right thank you. I just got a notification on my phone that a Hartford Air Quality is low today so I am going to try to limit by contribution to Hartford’s hot air problem.

I’m from REI. My name is Mason Trumble and we’re a little bit of different type of company but I do want to throw some business numbers at ya and then I’ll talk a little bit about our grant program.

So I am here just to be clear in support of HB 7157 and a couple of things about the Outdoor Recreation Economy. First Connecticut has a lot of outdoor recreation businesses that are actually headquartered here, Cannondale Cycles, Denali Outdoors, Thule, Eastern Mountain Sports, Lowa, and Outside TV all call Connecticut home which is quite an impressive list for a small geographic state. A couple of numbers for ya 2.2 percent of the US GDP was actually attributed to the outdoor recreation economy that is from the Bureau of Economic Analysis and then $9 billion in consumer spending was contributed to the outdoor recreation economy just here in Connecticut.

So what does that mean? So at REI we have found that the strongest outdoor recreation economies exist in places that offer exceptional outdoor recreation. That’s why you see more REIs in Connecticut than Nebraska for instance. I am going to read you a quote from actually the first sentence in our grant strategy and part of my job is to give away money which is pretty cool. We fund a lot of outdoor recreational nonprofits including the Parks Association but the first sentence in my grant strategy is to, “Reduce barriers to the
outdoors by creating access to nature for all by supporting place investments.”

So the key word there is place. For Connecticut, those outdoor places are trails. And we actually funded, we have actually funded some of the same organizations that the Recreational Trails and Greenway Program has funded. I’m gonna give you a quick little list here:

Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, New England Trail, Appalachian Trail. Shoreline Greenway Trail, Hartford Riverwalk Extension Project, Singletracks of Rockland, the list goes on.

So we believe that trails are important for our business and Connecticut has really been ahead of the curve in implementing some of this outdoor recreation infrastructure. So I am just here to say that we’ve seen a significant return on that investment. We’ve noticed the outdoor recreation economy actually grew faster in 2016 than the U.S. Economy did. So I ask you, please to support this at the $3 million dollar level. We believe that will be money well spent economically and health wise for the State of Connecticut. Questions?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you so much for your testimony. Does anybody have any questions? Thank you so much Mr. Trumbull. Have a great day. Okay Representative Kupchick. I don’t think she’s here. Okay is Bonnie Burr here? Welcome, thank you for being so patient.

BONNIE BURR: Thank you so much for your patience we apologize for not being ready at the instance that you called us up. For the record my name is Bonnie Burr and I am the Assistant Director at the
University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension and I work with the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources. We’ve got some folks here at UConn today that are hopefully going to answer some of the questions that you’ve got regarding industrial hemp.

The colleagues I’ve got here today are Peter Acapella. Peter is a UConn student, he came through our plant science department and is now a grad student working with our research projects on hemp. We also have with us today Chris Perkins. Chris is with the Center for Environmental Sciences and Engineering. He has a lot of expertise in environmental chemistry and testing. And with us we also have Nathan LaValle who is our General Counsel that has been working with our hemp project that we’ve got going at UConn.

So you got our testimony. A little background in 2014 Congress passed the Farm Bill which allowed us to go ahead and start looking at pilot projects with regards to hemp. One of the things that we decided at UConn was that this was an area of expertise that we wanted to enhance so we began working on a team with folks around the industrial hemp project and research and this past year, for those of you who might not have seen it, we had 400 students in a class that are looking at what are the opportunities and things that we need to do to make sure that hemp becomes a profitable crop for us in the State of Connecticut. We greatly appreciate all the Bills that were put before us with regards to hemp and certainly appreciate them all in concept. Also would mention that we’re also working with the Connecticut Department of Agriculture with regards
to the Bill they are putting through with the Governor’s Office. So looking to make sure we’re here to support not only the Bills before you today but the one that comes through the Governor’s Office as well.

One of the things we want to get to fairly quickly is regard to, there was questions this morning with regards to the economic impact. You heard there is the opportunity to get close to $60,000 dollars per acre with regards to the impact of that crop. One of the most important things that we can be doing with regards to any kind of a crop is making sure we do the right enterprise budgets. Those enterprise budgets around hemp are still developing. We’ve been talking with colleagues in California and Kentucky, Michigan, and Wisconsin who’ve got leading programs. Also been reaching out to folks in Vermont who also have a program that’s more evolved than us. Only nine states, let me be clear about that, nine states did not take advantage of the Farm Bill in 2014 to create a pilot program. Connecticut is one of those nine.

One of the challenges we also have going forward is a 2018 Farm Bill which passed in December. The Congress decided that we would legalize hemp and they need to write regulations as well so we have states which created pilot projects and regulations that they submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Connecticut was not one and then they have new regulations that are being evolved. On Wednesday, Secretary Purdue U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Purdue was on the Hill and shared that he did not see the U. S. Department of Agriculture promulgating their regs until 2020. So
we heard from Congressman Joe Courtney who has been very, very active in trying to get the opportunities here in his district and for Connecticut to go forward. He let us know right away that he was going to be talking with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to see what the challenges were and why they felt they needed to wait that long to bring regulations forward. We are going to be in DC next week and we will be visiting with him to see what his information is and to see if there’s ways that we can go ahead and go forward with our regulations here in Connecticut. The Connecticut Department of Agriculture again has started doing just wonderful work with regards to pulling those regulations forward and are in the process of developing them. UConn are standing ready to make sure that we can assist them in any way.

Probably what I should do at this point is turn it over to Chris. Chris do you have some things that you want to be able to offer with regards to testing?

CHRIS PERKINS: Good afternoon, my name is Chris Perkins. I’m the Laboratory Director for the Center for Environmental Sciences and Engineering. One of the things we want is to testify to you, the Center at the University is looking to do is to provide reliable and certification testing support for both research within the University and other universities within Connecticut but also within more supportive commercial applications with industrial hemp in Connecticut. We have a tremendous amount of experience in testing biological materials including plant tissue for contaminants, things like pesticides and other herbicides but also for a large
number of bioactive compounds. We are presently working in supporting research within the University both on the health center side but also on the stores campus for CBD or cannabinoid analysis so we have extensive experience as well as the equipment and the expertise to do this as well as for the testing and quantifying the concentrations of THC. Even with industrial hemp the low amounts of THC is regulatory requirement we can meet.

One other thing that we bring to the table is we have a long-term experience working with State agencies through the Connecticut DEEP but also with the Department of Consumer Protection we were a certification and testing lab for biofuel for the State of Connecticut for many years before sort of the, a lot of the production within the State has gone down. So we do have quite a bit of experience with certifying for commercial applications within the State of Connecticut. Thank you.

BONNIE BURR: Thanks, Chris. Peter, if you could share some of things that you’re doing with regards to teaching and research.

PETER APICELLA: My name is Peter Apicella and I am a graduate student at the University of Connecticut. I am here to represent Dr. Gerald Burkowitz’s lab. I am a faculty member of Advanced Science Department at UConn.

So the Burkowitz lab sort of spearheaded the effort in industrial hemp at UConn so are efforts have been twofold. First there is research and then there is education. With research some of the things we’re looking at right now is increasing CBD content in the cannabis flowers while maintaining the level of,
the virtually zero level of THC in industrial hemp/Then some of the other projects we’re looking at are using microbiology and gene editing techniques to actually delete the THC gene and then other things we’re looking at with gene editing are to sterilize males which are a huge problem for farmers. If you have a male in your field then that will cause the pollen drift will pollenate the female flowers which contain the CBD, that yield the product and that will cause your crop to be ruined essentially. So that is one of the other things that we’re looking at in addition to screening for organic compounds that can be used in place of the pesticides which cannot be sprayed on the crop.

The other thing that we’re actually doing now is education. You may have heard in the news that we have a cannabis class at UConn now. The initial enrollment was over 400 students and we have filled the biggest lecture hall on campus with students eager to learn about the horticulture of cannabis. It’s called “From Seed to Harvest” and students are sort of walked through and they learn about everything that goes into caring for and solving problems that come up with cannabis growing in a greenhouse setting or field setting. For the research and the class we grow all of our plants in the greenhouse so one of our major limitations is the actual space we have to grow plants. We would like to have grown in the field but it hasn’t really been possible. The class, we’re hoping to have it go online this summer and we believe that the revenue generated from the online course through the UConn E-Campus will general enough revenue to make a cannabis minor. So I am a graduate student and I am hoping to work on hemp as a plant scientist when I
graduate but if there isn’t quite an economy for me to fit into in Connecticut what I’m gonna have to do is find a job elsewhere. So thank you for your time. Appreciate it.

BONNIE BURR: Thank you, Peter. Nate do you have anything that you would like to offer from the General Counsel’s perspective before we take questions? We are more than happy to take questions now, Senator Cohen and is if we can clarify anything that came through this morning.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Yeah, Thank you. Thank you for your testimony and also thank you for the good work of the program. I think this is potentially exciting new industry for Connecticut and I know that you’ve really been at the forefront of making sure it happens in a safe manner. Yes, Representative Gresko.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at testimony submitted by Acting Commissioner of Agriculture Currey and in it she is indicating that apparently in the Bill that the Governor has submitted there is no language necessary to create what we need to create unlike the other two Bills. Is that your impression as well?

BONNIE BURR: So our understanding again and you need to talk with your Staff Counsel is that when we were not able to get regulations, pilot regulations and pilot programs to go into USDA after the 2014 Farm Bill there were things that needed to happen legislatively here in Connecticut which would allow us to create those regulations and then submit them for consideration by the USDA. My understanding is
the Department is vigorously working on that right now to get those regulations done and that is where Representative Courtney got back to us and said he is going to do whatever he can to try to make sure we can get in on that original pilot program that was in the 2014 Farm Bill.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): But I also refer back to testimony from Acting Commissioner Currey that says and I apologize for, here it is, "The need for a pilot program was established in the 2014 Farm Bill but subsequently eliminated in the 2018 Farm Bill."
Meaning that because we weren’t one of the original nine states the door is closed?

BONNIE BURR: Right, so one of the things that we’re seeking clarification on that. One of the things that USDA Secretary Purdue discussed on Wednesday when he was on the Hill was the need to really go at this at a very cautious manner from USDA’s perspective with how they are entertaining those pilot programs and how they will be looking to do more with an uncodified or the ones that are already coming in. And again I apologize my expertise is not on the Federal 18 Farm Bill regards to hemp but it is my understanding that Representative Courtney is seeking a way for us to be able to get in and present our pilot program so that we can take advantage of the opportunities that 41 other states have done.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): And last question. From what I understand there would be a need for a certain number of staff members either at Department of Agriculture or DEEP preferable, most likely Department of Agriculture that would need to administer this as well.
BONNIE BURR: You would have to talk with them, I don’t know what that is. I apologize.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Representative Harding.

REP. HARDING (107TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Ms. Burr I want to thank you for coming up here. I also want to thank you for all the work you’ve done on this but all the work you’ve done up at UConn. I don’t think the State realizes how valuable of a resource you are to this State and UConn and I want to say that on behalf of Senator Miner and myself. You’re my favorite constituent {Laughter}. I don’t know where he falls but in all seriousness Bonnie I want to thank you for all you’ve done, you’re an amazing resource to this State and we are very lucky to have you.

BONNIE BURR: So Representative Hardy I appreciate those comments but you have to understand that we have an amazing team at UConn. We’ve got so many wonderful researchers, teachers. We’ve got a tremendous outreach effort that we do with UConn Extension, all the minds that we’re putting on hemp right now you can see three of the best right here. So we’re pretty excited about when we collectively get together at UConn, you know, we can make economic opportunities happen for our constituents. That’s what we do at UConn Extension so we will look forward to working with not only with the proponents of the three Bills that are here but with the Governor as well to see what we can do to come forth with some policy that really addresses our change to work with some new crops and new processes and new
economic opportunities for those that are gonna be looking to move into the CBDs and other plant products.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Thank you, Representative. Anybody else? Yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks for comin in, very much appreciate it. This study of hemp is very interesting to me and I was just wondering one of the reasons why hemp is kind of grouped in with cannabis is because it looks the same, is there any research to making it look different? {Laughter}.

PETER APICELLA: I don’t think that would be possible. It actually so, hemp is cannabis sativa, marijuana and hemp are both cannabis sativa but I mean I’m sure you’ve seen that.

NATHAN LAVALLE: I would just weigh in that industrial hemp has been defined under Federal Law differently than marijuana specifically because it has an extremely low THC level in which you will not be able to get high and the derivatives thereof are deemed that they also would not be classified as a Controlled I substance.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): But what I’m saying is, you know, you’ve got a lot of research into gene editing and things like that, ways to change plants. Can you make the thing purple? Can ya add an extra leaf, [Laughter] is there any way to make it so it isn’t always associated with cannabis?

PETER APICELLA: I’ll talk to Dr. Burkowitz about that.
REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you.

BONNIE BURR: So I think, Representative Dubitsky we were at a, I was at a conference back in January and one of the really good ways it was described was if you take a look at some of the vegetables we already have and if you have broccoli and you have cauliflower they are very different vegetable but they come from the same genesis, they start at the same place but they grow and how they taste and what they do is different. So it is the same thing with any kind of a plant such as cannabis. You have different uses and there are different opportunities that each one of those has and again the work that we’re really working on right now at UConn as Peter had shared is really to take a look at how we can increase the CBD which are derivates that we want to be able to use some of the oils and things like that to make, you know, not the illegal marijuana’s or things like that. So again exciting opportunities on the various varieties that we’re looking at the UConn but right now our focus is absolutely on how we breed more CBD into cannabis and again keep the THC low. That is part of the whole balance that we have to do in our research.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you. Thank you for coming in. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you all for testifying today. I just I got sort of a technical question. Without changing or without additional research is there a higher content of CBD in medicinal cannabis which is legal, I mean under
medicinal conditions and then or is it higher in hemp or can you talk about that. And by the way purple is a bad color because there is actually with high level of THC purple string. [Laughter]

PETER APICELLA: Is the question about like medicinal, what do you mean?

REP. MICHEL (146TH): The cannabis and the hemp, if we can differentiate these. I’m sure you understand what I mean.

NATHAN LAVALLE: Under Federal Law any CBD which is derived from marijuana which is any cannabis plant including hemp that have a THC more than 0.3 percent is illegal. Right, it is a Controlled I Substance that would be illegal. However if that same substance CBD comes from a cannabis plant that is below the threshold, industrial hemp, now it is legal in the United States.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): SO then the CBD coming from hemp is legal but the CBD coming from, okay.

NATHAN LAVALLE: That is correct.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): And are the levels the same in CBD like naturally in the plants or between the two types.

PETER APICELLA. What’s the question, sorry?

REP. MICHEL (146TH): The levels of the CBD content between the cannabis and the hemp if we can differentiate that way.

PETER APICELLA. So cannabis refers to marijuana then? Yeah, typically marijuana has lower levels of CBD but in hemp the levels are very high. We have verities that are as low as four of five
percent and then we have a variety that is about 15 percent and it doesn’t go much higher than 15 percent in terms of the CBD content.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Okay, thank you, appreciate it. Reference to the color earlier is because I did visit a medicinal grow lab, that is how I found out [Laughter].

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Any other questions? Yes, Representative Wilson.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you, Madam Chair and thank for coming today. So I have a curiosity question tied to the potential employment and job future if you will. And I think you said 400 students are in the class now, are they all freshmen?

PETER APICELLA: It’s mostly juniors and seniors. The people who enrolled, the juniors and seniors get to enroll first so those were the first people that made it but I’m sure more people wanted to enroll.

REP. WILSON (53RD): So the ramp up time, have you looked at that and said, okay one of the concerns in Connecticut is that we’re not creating jobs or job opportunities for graduates to stay in the State and then they relocate to other states. Have you looked at that analyses at all?

PETER APICELLA: I can’t say I have.

BONNIE BURR: So I think, Representative Wilson one of the things we would look at as we start talking about what are the economic opportunities for our students one is going to be plant propagation and again there is a variety of ways those plants are propagated. There’s field grown crops which are
outdoors and then there is gonna be the cannabis which is going to be indoors under 365 growing or controlled environment agriculture. Once you start getting into the greenhouses you have a real systems approach how those plants are put together. You have people who need to build those greenhouses. You need welders, you need people who understand water systems, you need people who understand the computer systems that affects the lights and how those plants are fed. So the opportunities once we get into more of an intensive greenhouse opportunity certainly starts to extrapolate with regards to what kind of students might be interested in entering the industry and that is not to say that once you start talking about the people who are going to process the hemp, not to say once you get into the people who have to create the creams and the other things that we’ll be seeing with, you know, more intense CBD use and then you’ve got marketing, you’ve got sales, you’ve got retail so it all starts to continue to move down the line but right now in our college our focus is certainly gonna be with regards to plant propagation and plant breeding. But again in engineering we’re already looking at what are some of things we need to have from a systems approach.

REP. WILSON (53RD): So I understand and I appreciate it and what I would like to get to and I am not expecting you to have that information right now, but I would like to get to are you actually looking at the job creation chain and how that is going to play out, let’s say whether it be two years, four years, five years down the road, that’s I think important in the decision making process.
BONNIE BURR: Oh, no question about that. We do have a team of folks that are involved in our hemp project. One of the things we’re looking at doing is creating a whole, a minor, around how we’re going to address the very thing. How are we putting people out that are workforce ready, that are eligible to get into the entry right now? What we’re hearing is folks looking for people that are already doing it in other states, are calling us and asking do we have people that are ramped up and ready to go with regards to plant management. So what we’re doing already in plant science is we’ve got students who are, you know, coming out that understand greenhouse production not specifically to the hemp growth but it is something that we’re looking at and looking forward to seeing if we can create a minor around hemp production.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Oh, yeah please.

PETER APICELLA. I just wanted to add to that point I mentioned that there is 400 students in the class, the minority, well there is a great diversity of students in terms of their majors. There is a student engineering, also sorts of engineering at UConn, business majors, theater arts majors, marketing majors. We have all sorts of students that are coming to this and to gain this horticultural perspective that they then can bring to the industry when they graduate.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. I just want to mention I know it was touched upon earlier when we
started the hearing and I wasn’t here for the first portion but I was listening on my drive and Senator Somers was here discussing these Bills and I just wondered if you could speak a little bit to the growing season and we’re talking a lot about how this could really help some struggling dairy farmers sort of, you know, change with market and perhaps get into an industry that could save their farm. Is there a sense of, any sense of urgency that we have with respect to the growing season and when we would need to pass legislation in order to take advantage of this upcoming growing season?

BONNIE BURR: So one of the things we’re looking at that we’re really concerned that plays to the question we had with regards to the regulations. Those regulations have got to be promulgated, they’ve got to be passed. Again they have to go down to DC for review. If you’re gonna start getting in, so there’s two ways that we would be growing plants right now. One is field grown crops and the other is in the greenhouse. So the greenhouse crops can essentially be done anytime. The field grown crops, that we would want to make sure we make we were starting to prepare land in April and May to get those crops in. We can get them in as late as the end of May, early June if that is gonna be something that we’re going to seek to really push and push hard for. So that would be the timeline is ideally those plants go in, you know, we are doing bed preparation by April.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Is there are chance that could be extended slightly? I mean.

BONNIE BURR: Yeah it depends on the variety of hemp that is being grown. So there is any number of
varieties that again would be available on the market, seeds that are being planted. One we would want to make sure though that those plants are probably in the ground by June.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, so that is sort of the point where all hope would be lost of having, reaping the benefit.

BONNIE BURR: Unless we’re going to greenhouse production. Again greenhouse we can go into any of the bid greenhouses and start working on production in greenhouses at any time because it’s a controlled environment.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, I appreciate that. Thank you. Any other questions? Okay thank you so much for your testimony. Okay, so we don’t have anybody testifying on 5689 and so we will drop down to House Bill 6637 which is AN ACT REQUIRING AN INVASIVE SPECIES STAMP and we have Bill Hyatt. Thank you Mr. Hyatt for being so patient and welcome.

BILL HYATT: Thank you. My name is Bill Hyatt from Glastonbury and I am here to talk in support of HB 3357 AN ACT REQUIRING AN INVASIVE SPECIES STAMP FOR THE OPERATION OF A MOTORBOAT ON THE INLAND WATERS OF THE STATE.

So as a former a former Bureau Chief of Natural Resources, I was at DEEP and as a former Chair of the Invasive Plant Council I’ve had a front row seat to the incredible expansion of aquatic invasive species throughout the State of Connecticut in our waters and the damage that they have caused. Coincident with this expansion in aquatic invasive species throughout our waters has been a concurrent
decrease in our capacity at both the Federal Government level, State Government Level and municipal government level to do anything about it. So as the problem has gotten worse our capacity to address it has gone down.

As an angler, as a boater, as a professional biologist I am obviously concerned about the environmental damage that the aquatic invasive species do. They are the second largest cause of species being listed as endangered or threatened throughout the nation.

But I am also concerned about the threat aquatic invasive species pose to the free and open public access that we have enjoyed for so many years and become accustomed to our States waters and the recreation that they provide.

This proposal 6637 will enable implementation of effective prevention, education and control work for four aquatic invasive species in the waters of the State of Connecticut. The source of funding that is being suggested, a modest user fee is appropriate. It is a fee that is paid by those who on one hand are the greatest risk of moving invasive species throughout our waters and on the other hand the same group is the folks that will benefit the most from their effective prevention, management and control.

Hydrilla makes it absolutely imperative that we act now and I am sure you will be hearing a lot about hydrilla in the course of the subsequent speakers. Hydrilla was found in the Connecticut River a couple of years ago and it has since spread dramatically throughout the river and its coves and this plant, this invasive species more than any other represents
a future liability to every municipality in Connecticut with a lake within its jurisdiction. Hydrilla is a long-term financial commitment to control and eradicate. I think you will be hearing some stuff from folks from Coventry.

Lastly I want to point out that I support this substitute language from the Connecticut Federation of Lakes. There is a copy of that substitute language attached to my testimony. The substitute language is totally consistent with the drafted Bill but provides the detail to make it work. So please consider this substitute language in your deliberations. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you so much for your testimony. Any body have any questions? Yes, Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Talking about my favorite subject. So do you see this Bill being a net positive and not a net negative and this would further help you with combatting these invasive species?

BILL HYATT: Oh absolutely. I think it is by far net positive. It certainly provides a source of funding that would be available to the municipalities dealing with the problem. It provides monies that could be used for education, outreach, research, etc. I mean it is a net positive across the board and the key point is it is supported by involved user group that both will carry the burden with a modest fee but also reap the benefits.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): And if I can follow up? Would you also say that this is also positive to the
recreational boater or people that use these lakes that this would also be a positive for them as well?

BILL HYATT: Absolutely and that is the point I was trying to get across. I think recreational boater as well as the angler should look at this as a positive thing. This is a problem, aquatic invasive species that really does threaten their sport, it threatens their recreation and this is a way that they can be part of the solution.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Well I want to thank you for sitting here for what seems to be an eternity but thank you for testifying.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Any other questions? No, thank you so much. Okay I don’t see Representative Kupchick. We will go to Representative Ackert. Welcome.

REP. ACKERT (8TH): Good evening. I am here to speak on two Bills I know will be saying probably tomorrow or maybe not.

Dear Senator Cohen, Senator Kushner, Representative Demicco, Representative Gresko, Senator Miner, Representative Harding, and other members of the Environment Committee,

We are here to support two pieces of legislation today. The first one I am not going to speak on because Bonnie Burr from UConn spoke so eloquently and that is HB 5481 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE LEGALIZATION OF INDUSTRIAL HEMP.

What I will focus on is HB 6637 AN ACT REQUIRING AN INVASIVE SPECIES STAMP FOR THE OPERATION OF A MOTORBOAT ON THE INLAND WATERS OF THE STATE.
Since the time I have served in the legislature, the lakes in my district have had to deal with combating one or another type of invasive plants. In Vernon and Bolton, it was Fanwort and myself along with other local legislators were able to secure funding for the treatment of that lake. Coventry Lake has been battling with success a more aggressive plant, Hydrilla.

I’ve got a definition of a Hydrilla in there. I’ll skip that.

As you can see, treatment needs to be ongoing — it costs about $100,000 dollars to treat it a year to combat it in one water body. Hydrilla is now in many lakes in New England and the Connecticut River. The answer unfortunately is money and education. Boaters need to clean their vessels to stop the spread from one lake to another and we need to fund the treatment of lakes currently infected by invasive species.

So how do we fund it? Rather than a stamp, which needs monitoring to work, how about a program similar to our Passport to Parks? This would be ‘Passports to Ponds and Lakes’. When someone registers their boat, they pay a nominal fee. We have about 95,000 registered boats in Connecticut and it would be simple to charge a flat fee of $5.00 a boat. But some boat registrations don’t even cost $5.00 dollars.

So I broke down in my testimony, there are 41,248 boats under 16 feet and they so they have a nominal registration fee, so I’m thinking of a non-charge on those.
There are 42,328 boats registered from 16’ to 25’ put a $10.00 dollar charge on those. They pay anywhere from $92 dollars to $300 dollars so $10.00 doesn’t seem to be a lot.

And there are 11,110 boats over 25’ registered in Connecticut charge them $20.00 dollars on that.

These charges would be accessed at the time of, right now if we would add all those up right now, it would be $645,480 dollars annually. It is assessed that we need $600,000 dollars to combat invasive species treatment in Connecticut. If you want to do a stamp of some other fee on the out-of-staters you can then actually add a fee to that.

But I looked at the smaller boats and under 16 foot wooden hull boat is $1.30 a year in registration which brings up another point.

DMV is going to complain about doing this because it is going to be extra work, an extra charge and a boater came up to me and said, “Tim I pay $5.00 dollars for my boat registration a year. What does it cost for you to send me that bill and administrate the $5.00 dollars? Why don’t you like other state and do multiyear boat registration?” So a two-year boat registration would make more sense and that would save the cost. So I think that is an idea, a concept I think would work, you know I think we talked about the stamp component, there’s got to be an inspector to see if you’ve got a stamp but I think we created. Listen I got push back like many people did about the $10.00 dollar fee on my registration, you know, but I can tell you what, it drove me to use our own State Parks. So I think this is a similar concept that we should take a look
at and look at that for additional fees but guess what my towns and many other towns are gonna spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to combat invasive species that was brought into our lakes which is what’s gonna happen to all the lakes in our areas if we don’t stop this spread. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative for those ideas. Any other questions? No, thank you. Okay, Chris Sanders.

CHRIS SANDERS: Good morning, oh, sorry. [Laughter]

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): At one point it was.

CHRIS SANDERS: I thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of House Bill 6637. My name is Chris Sanders. I am President of a small non-profit called the Friends of West Side Pond. It was founded by citizens in Goshen, Connecticut to address ecological issues impacting West Side Pond including both invasive and cyanobacteria.

The ecological and economic impact of invasive aquatic invasive species on our lakes and ponds is significant and it is a big problem and it is getting worse as new potentially more damaging species such as Hydrilla, as you’ve heard about, All across the State those who love and use our lakes and ponds are doing the best to deal with this problem but we need your help. House Bill 6637 is a fair approach to creating a sustainable source of funds for the fight against the invasives. It is the boats that move from lakes to lakes using the State boat launches that spreads the problem. However it is those who live in the lake communities
that must deal with it. Even small amounts of funding can be important.

Our lake, West Side Pond in Northwest Connecticut was pleased to have been part of a group of three local public lakes all having boat launches that one deep aquatic invasive species grant for $4,000 dollars was back in 2014 through our town of Goshen. That grant enabled are three public lakes to organize and take the first steps in dealing with the problem. Today each of these three public lakes has a formal lake management plan in place to fight invasives and related cyanobacteria blooms.

The State funding programs can make a big difference and even in smaller amounts. But even as I said, the problem is large and growing. In 2018 alone our tiny lake, and we are I think one of the smallest if not the smallest lakes in the State with a boat launch raised and spent over $40,000 dollars on this problem. And you will hear similar stories from others and you will see testimony to that affect. If the funding for invasives and cyanobacteria through DEEP has been sparse and inconstant over the last several years. HB 6637 is a fair solution as it will create a sustainable fund dedicated to DEEPs efforts to fight invasive species that enables those who enjoy boating on our public lakes to participate in the solution. It will also add to the revenue that will be generated by the Save Our Lakes license plates that this Committee and the Legislature approved last year and it will put into production next year. It is another step in the right direction and I encourage your support for the Bill. Thank you.
REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Mr. Sanders. Does anybody have any questions for Mr. Sanders? I have one. I’m looking at Representative Ackert’s testimony, he preceded you there in the chair and he is estimating that it would cost about $600,000 dollars to take care of this problem on an annual basis. Does that sound about right or wouldn’t you know?

CHRIS SANDERS: No, I think the cost of dealing with this problem is many times that. My understanding is that the stamp that has been proposed in this Bill is estimated to generate about $600,000 dollars in revenue a year and I’m not sure where that estimate came from but I think some people will be speaking after I maybe have some more data. As I said, tiny lake $40,000 dollars. I know other lakes in our area spend hundreds of thousands of dollars as the Representative said. You add it all up I’m sure this is a problem that the State is spending multiple millions of dollars a year on.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, sir. Any other questions for Mr. Sanders? Yes, Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Thank you for coming up and testifying. Do you see this program being a way to try to maybe slow down or try to deal with the problem before it gets out of hand?

CHRIS SANDERS: Absolutely. This is exactly that. I mean this is a problem that once it gets out of hand it costs many times what it is going to cost to deal with the problem and sometimes it really can’t be stopped. So this is a problem that we need to get ahead of. There again will be some people to
speak after me probably that are smarter about this. For example Hydrilla has been found fairly recently. It is understood that it will grow very aggressively and the sooner that we deal with that the better and if we wait too long it will be extraordinarily difficult to deal with it.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): And if I could? Do you find that once we start to notice the evasive species that maybe we’re bordering on too late and move sooner rather than later?

CHRIS SANDERS: I think it’s different. I think invasive species is not something you, it’s not an event anymore. It is an ongoing condition that the over 2,000 lakes and ponds in Connecticut have that we will have to deal with probably forever. It will never go away. New species will be introduced. So the best that we can do is have a mechanism for effective management on an ongoing basis. It’s groups like this non-profit that we formed, we formed it because we had to raise and incredible amount of money for our tiny little lake. We have 14 property owners on this lake so we can’t afford to pay for it by ourselves so we’ve done foundation grants. We were appreciative of the grant from the State but it’s something that we have to do every year and it’s something we have to manage, something we have to work together on. This Bill alone is not a complete solution. We still have the problem that recreational use of our lakes provides an easy vector for these plants to move from lake-to-lake and we have to understand how we can do better at that. We have no program of monitoring the boats for example.
REP. GUCKER (138TH): Could you, this will be my last question, I know there was talk with the Candlewood Lake Authority about at points of entry could we use maybe some of this money to do cleansing stations or things of that sort to where boats that are coming in from other lakes or other areas can be cleaned of any invasive species to maybe stop it?

CHRIS SANDERS: My understanding of the legislation is that it is not prescriptive as to what will be done with the money other than that DEEP will allocate it to invasive species. Things like monitoring programs and cleaning stations and so forth are the kinds of things I think the grants that are talked about for this program might well go toward. Let me just add one thing, I heard that DEEP has submitted a letter in support of this legislation which is great to hear but that it also recommends that the funds from this be put into the general fund. Now last year this Committee was very good about creating a separate account for the license plate program and this legislation proposed that these funds will go into that same account which, and I don’t understand the mechanism myself, will hopefully prevent the funds from being used for other purposes. We are talking about a tiny bit of money relative to the total budget and it is incredibly important we think, I think, that these funds go towards this problem and not end up someplace else in the budget. So I hope?

REP. GUCKER (138TH): I couldn’t agree with you more and thank you very much for testifying today.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): All right. Thank you, sir. I guess we’re gonna move on to the next person is
Connie Trolle. Is Connie here? Connie is there, and then after that Larry Marsicano and Alicia Charamut are the next two. I’m glad everybody is hanging in there. Welcome.

CONNIE TROLLE: Good afternoon. I am not going to speak about weed I am going to speak about weeds. Anyway thank you very much Senator Cohen and Representative Demicco and Senator Miner. Thank you all to the Environmental Committee and just to introduce myself, my name is Constance Trolle. I am here today as President of the Connecticut Federation of Lakes, President of Bantam Lake Protective Association, and also a member of the Invasive Plant Council.

The proposed Bill, I’m going to give you a little history because other people will take about some of the scientific things, but this proposed Bill is a direct result of Senator Craig Miner and Representative Arconti who braved a hot summer morning on a boat ride in Candlewood Lake and actually did Secchi disk measurements and they got in there and we saw first-hand some of the problems with invasives and what we, on the grassroots level are trying to work with and work for.

The Connecticut Federation of Lakes poled our members after this to ask what their concerns were, then we complied this information and held another meeting in October with Representative Arconti, Senator Miner, Representative Ziobron at the time and the Deputy Commissioner Susan Whalen. Larry Marsicano and I represented CFL have been spearheading a working relationship of all of the above.
I wanted to mention that the Invasive Plant Counsel was not able to write a testimony but I heard from them and they are supportive of this Bill with the subsequent draft from Connecticut Federation of Lakes. With a great deal of input and leg work by Bill Hyatt who was here earlier, Larry Marsicano and myself we have been pleased with the support of many members of your Environmental Committee and worked on drafting this Bill.

We believe the Bill is very much needed for the help with the invasive plants and we also want to encourage the fact that the CFL will be an active participant and will work with the administration of the fund.

I wanted to reiterate that we do thank you all for approving our license plate program and there is a fund already setup so that this funding could actually be put into that same fund.

Speaking for Bantam Lake Protective Association I just wanted you to know we are a lake of about 947 acres and we spend annually well over $100,000. We have worked with all, we are all volunteers, it is a non-profit group and we have a struggle every year to get that kind of money. Last year we had to not treat as much as we could or do as much as we could because we didn’t have the funding so we appreciate this opportunity to present this Bill and we feel it is very important for our whole state and especially for lakes and rivers included. And I thank you very much for your time. I hope you will support the Bill.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you very much for your testimony Ms. Trolle. Yes, Representative Gucker.
REP. GUCKER (138TH): May have to take up the time that my partner usually gets over here [Laughter]. It is more of a comment than a question. I just want to thank your organization. I have gone up to your yearly meetings and I think at one ‘em the guest speaker was Senator Miner and it was very informative and I encourage anybody who is sitting on this Committee or even in the audience to sign up for their newsletter and get involved in their various programs because they do bring together science and recreation together to educate people as to how fragile the lake system is and how important this subject matter is so you really get a different perspective. I would encourage and say thank you again for coming, number one and number two for your advocacy in the things that your group does and by the way, they don’t charge. They would like you to donate and become part of their organization but you’re welcome to come and at least learn about the lakes. So I want to thank you for that and thank you for coming up.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Representative Wilson.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you, Madam Chair and I would be very remiss if I didn’t greet you today Connie and thank you for all your activism and advocacy and great work for our great Bantam Lake and it is good to see you up here. Thank you for your patience sitting here for so long. I do have a question. So I know you were sitting over here when Representative Ackert gave his views on the possible way to charge for these stamps. Would you have some flexibility in your view of the Bill to say, okay, if there was another way to charge, I think his
example was well made when we talked about boats that have $1.30 dollar or something registration fee does it matter to you how those funds are collected or?

CONNIE TROLLE: I think it matters more what we do with the funds and where they go to be honest with you. But no, I think we’d be flexible. We would like to work with whoever puts that together and that is why we did have that subsequent, I don’t know what we called it, but we had that, any attachment that came with Mr. Hyatt’s testimony if you wanted to look that up.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Okay, thank you so much. Good to see you.

CONNIE TROLLE: May I just say that Bantam Lake is very, very lucky to have two people that sit on the Environment, Representative Wilson and Senator Miner who have been supportive, helpful and always out there for us so we appreciate it.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thanks, Connie. Good to see you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Anyone else have any questions from the Committee? All right, thank you so much. We actually have Representative Gibson here I understand. Thank you, Representative for your patience. How are you today? Welcome.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): Good evening. Thank you Senator Cohen and Members of the Committee. I appreciate you allowing me to do this, to come and testify. However I am going to turn this over to my
FRAN JOHNSON: Dear Members of the Environment Committee, my name is Fran Johnson. I reside in Bloomfield, Connecticut and I am here today to offer my testimony in support of House Bill 7158.

I am a senior citizen who used to have two Maltese dogs and I loved them very much. They are no longer with me unfortunately but I loved my dogs and miss them very much. We are also on a limited income so I saw an opportunity with Rover. We had some unexpected financial setbacks with a home repair and a car repair so I was looking for a way to make some extra money. I saw Rover as an opportunity to both love dogs and make extra cash. I began building my profile with dog pictures that I had my dogs, I had experience with them and I set up my account in September and just began last September 28th. Since then I have been blessed to have dogs that come and watching the dogs is a rewarding experience. I love the dogs and their little personalities and they get personal care, I am with them all day long, taking pictures and sending them to their owners and they can feel comfortable while they are away. I only take one dog at a time. I focus on that dog and we have a great time together.

So it has helped me because I go for walks, builds community with my neighborhood. I have extra cash that I can use for things that come up. We have just different things that come up. I have a granddaughter is having a birthday and I am going to be able to give her a nice birthday present because I made a little extra with Rover. I also get the exercise walking the dogs which is healthy.
I do hope that you will continue to allow pet sitters like me to continue offering much-needed services through Rover. The pets and the sitters will always appreciate it. Thank you and please advance HB 7158! Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you so much, Ms. Johnson. Could I ask you, could you take me through the process that you needed to go to in order to become listed on Rover.com?

FRAN JOHNSON: You go onto the app and they ask you questions, do you smoke in your home, they ask you questions and you just answer the questions and then you also pick what size dogs you want to take. Then you set a price for the service. They also have if you have any problems there is a number to call for any emergency assistance. One of the things I do is take pictures of the dogs so that throughout the day their owner feels, while they are away, they can see what the dog is going through the day, the daily activities and they know the dog is taken care of well. They ask you to set up a meet and greet so you can meet the dog before they drop the dog off and the owner can see where the dog will be and you can meet the dog and get a feel for if’s it a good fit.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Are those like taking pics of the animal that you are pet sitting or setting up a meet and greet with the dog prior to having the dog stay with you, are those things that are suggested by Rover, required by Rover or just something that you do personally?

FRAN JOHNSON: They suggest you do a meet and greet. They don’t require pictures but the owners like it
and I’ve had, well I have my clients that all love that I send the pictures. They say that it makes them feel comfortable that they know that their dog is being taken care of and they just feel like they can have their vacation and not be worried that their dog is okay.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, thank you. Any questions from Committee Members? Thank you so much for coming.

REP. GIBSON (15TH): Thank you so much, Madam Chair. Thank you, Representative Demicco. I think it is a good service and I think it is actually bringing dog sitting into the 21 Century. Thank you for listening and please consider it.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Okay, next up on the list is Larry Marsicano. Welcome, thank you for your patience.

LARRY MARSICANO: Chairman Cohen, Chairman Demicco and Members of the Environment Committee, I wish to start by thanking those that introduced and cosponsored House Bill 6637 and the Committee for putting it on the Agenda today.

My name is Larry Marsicano, my family and I live in New Milford, Connecticut. I am a board member of the Connecticut Federation of Lakes, and also past president, the former Executive Director of the Candlewood Lake Authority for 14 years. I still help lake communities in our State as a private practice with their lake issues and I have seen firsthand the ecological, recreational, and economic damage that is caused by aquatic invasive species) in my 30+ years studying and managing lakes. Several years ago, I had the pleasure of working
with a former colleague of yours and an alum to this Committee, Senator Clark Chapin, who through hard work and your support made available in the State’s budgets $300,000 in 2015 and $250,000 in the following year of financial assistance to municipalities for aquatic invasive species but that was one time kinds of funding that were made available those particular years. The response to those allocations was overwhelming with grant applications greatly exceeding the available funds.

If we are to protect our beautiful Connecticut lakes, reservoirs and ponds from the environmental and economic degradation brought from aquatic invasive species, we must have a sustainable source of funds and that is why I wish to express to you my strong support HB 6637 and the substitute language from the Connecticut Federation of Lakes on this Bill. You have all heard the adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. This is especially true for aquatic invasive species. It is estimated that on an annual basis in this country we spend $137 billion dollars on invasive species. We spend $30 million dollars alone on one species of zebra mussels in the Great Lakes. So there are 13 aquatic invasive species in Connecticut and plants and a number animals and we, as you hear are having more and more come to Connecticut like Hydrilla, like Zebra mussels.

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station estimates that 60 percent of our lakes and ponds in Connecticut already have at least one aquatic invasive species. That number will continue to grow. Imagine zebra mussels are knocking on the door Candlewood Lake. If they were ever to get into
Candlewood Lake their spread to other lakes would be imminent because of the recreational, that lake tends to get a lot of visitors and a lot of boats so the zebra mussels will have a lot more places after that.

So revenues from the proposed bill would aid in both the critically important prevention work needed to slow the spread as well as cures, cures might not be the best term because really once they get into your lake and get established you don’t really get rid of an aquatic invasive species you just manage them on an annual basis and it becomes an annual line in your budget.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Mr. Marsicano, if you could just wrap it up, we’re past the timeline.

LARRY MARSICANO: So I am here to support that Bill and I can take any questions you may have.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you I just want to say as somebody who grew up in Richfield I enjoyed Candlewood Lake on many occasions and hope to keep it that way for generations to come, it’s a beautiful place. I believe Representative Harding has a question.

REP. HARDING (107TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Mr. Marsicano for coming today and your many years as executive director of the Candlewood Lake Authority and all the work that you put into that and your advocacy for the last which is obviously vitally important to my district which is Brookfield and Danbury, both towns border the lake, have shore along the lake. One question that I have for you is not necessarily today’s agenda but the Committee has adopted some Committee Bills and one
of those Committee Bills is to allow waterways or allow different municipalities or authorities to tap into the Community Investment Act to address aquatic species and invasive species for waterway. Do you have any opinion on that?

LARRY MARSICANO: I do know some of the opposition to those. I can give you another old adage that, “beggars can’t be choosers” and right now there is no funding right now available for lakes so I am open to any potential source of funds that we could use to address this very expensive problem in Connecticut.

REP. HARDING (107TH): Thank you, Mr. Marsicano. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Representative Gresko.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a question and I don’t expect you to have the answer but how do the boaters feel about this?

LARRY MARSICANO: It’s interesting. You know, I think there is support from the boaters that are there to fish. A lot of times the fishing community are looked or frowned up or looked upon as those that are transporting the invasives from one lake to the next. Most times they are probably more aware and conscientious of the problem. I think there will probably be some pushback from the boating industry on that but this is a problem that we’re all gonna have to deal with at some point.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): I don’t see anyone on the list to speak here that I would assume would be against this and I might be remiss, I should check again to
see if there is any testimony from any of the boaters that potentially wouldn’t like this so, what am I trying to say? I’m trying to say you mean to tell me that they’re willing to pony-up a small fee in order to protect the natural resource that they take advantage of.

LARRY MARSICANO: I think they will be and I’ll give you a great example. One of the more renown programs where monies are generated to protect the lake from an invasive species is Lake George. There, if anyone who goes to Lake George knows you have to get a sticker on your boat to go onto Lake George. Well, the folks that live there are probably the most supportive of the program because they know that without keeping the invasive species in check their economy would take a great hit. So the people who live around the lakes and live on likes are largely in favor of this kind of thing, you’ve heard from some of them and the amount of monies they’re already spending so I think we would see support for this from our boating and lake communities.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): I would only hope that other entities and advocacy groups would take a page. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Thank you for coming up, Larry. I think you would feel sad if I didn’t at least ask you a couple of questions after sitting here for an eternity. Number one, with dealing with our favorite subject of Candlewood Lake you would see this as a positive, correct?
LARRY MARSICANO: Oh, absolutely they spend quite a bit of money there as well with the grass carp program and so, yeah, yeah.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): And would I also be safe to say that during many of the testimonies that DEEP heard dealing with the possible pesticide application that New Fairfield tried to put in the lake that many of the sports fishermen and boaters and bass fishermen came out in favor of doing more medication, no chemicals but more natural ways and they understand this environment is very important to them as well?

LARRY MARSICANO: Sure, that was the, on that lake that was a good solution. It is not always “the” solution for every lake but it’s certainly there, and you’re right they came out in support of trying to mitigate that problem and Candlewood that way.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Lastly if I could, my vision or what I’ve been seeing because I live by the lake as you know. I don’t live on the lake but I get to see all those sport boaters who are there. They’re not just there on the weekends to compete they are there during the week to practice and to kind of map out areas that may help them in the tournament, that being said, with the amount of expense that they pay for their boats, their equipment and everything else, do you really think they would have a problem with a $50 dollar fee to preserve the area that they recreate in quite often?

LARRY MARSICANO: Um, $50 dollars, that might be a little substantive. I think we were proposing for out-of-staters $25 dollars and $10 or $5 dollars for the in-staters. So, you know, we want to keep it so
where we’re not excluding anyone from using our resources.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): I could be wrong I thought the Bill was written to where it was just out-of-staters would be paying $50 dollars for this stamp.

LARRY MARSICANO: Yeah, I’m thinking of the substitute language so I’d have to go back and look at the current language.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Well I thank you for sitting here for all day and I continue to thank you for your advocacy for our lakes and it is good to see you again.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you so much for your testimony. Okay Alicea Charamut, welcome. I hope I didn’t butcher your name too much.

ALICEA CHARAMUT: It was actually very close. I am Alicea Charmut, I am the River Stewart for the Connecticut River Conservancy. You have my almost three pages of testimony here in 11 point font, don’t worry, I’m not going to read from it.

But I am here to beg you to stop thinking about only lakes and ponds when we are talking about aquatic invasives. I am out on the river at least twice a week for my job. I’ve been at ground zero, watching Hydrilla for the past two years and let me tell ya it’s like watching your best friend get cancer. I had very little support at the state level as far as getting a positive identification. I’ve been told there is nothing that can be done about this because it’s in a river system and, you know, if once the marinas along the river that are making a profit...
from this wonderful resource start calling the state to say, we can’t get our boats in and out of our marina, we can’t do anything about it because it’s in a river system is not an acceptable answer.

So one of the things that hasn’t been mentioned is the variety of Hydrilla that has been found in the Connecticut River has not been found in North America yet. It is similar to other varieties found in Japan and North Korea. I am not sure that we even know how to handle this yet. Resources need to go into figuring this out, how are we going to manage it, what is it and we can’t do that without more resources coming in to the DEEP because right now the reason why people have been throwing their hands up and saying, I’m sorry we can’t do anything about it is because Connecticut does not have a centralized coordinate invasive species program.

There are resources dedicated to lakes and ponds, people whose resources are dedicated to lakes and ponds have been trying to find some resources to put into this, they don’t have the dedicated resources either. So something has to change. So thank you very much for brining this Bill forward. Thank you for giving it a Public Hearing. This is extremely important right now. We are coming into a crisis on the Connecticut River.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Could you summarize a little bit about what you would suggest in terms of, I hear you, in terms of our programming addressing lake and some ponds. Would you propose something similar in terms of funding for rivers and what other types of combative agents, if you will would use in order to address hydrilla for example in rivers?
ALICEA CHARAMUT: It seems silly that we should only be focusing on aquatic invasive in lakes and ponds. You have similar aquatic invasives, they behave differently in rivers than they do in lakes and ponds but in many cases it is the same plant. Why aren’t we managing our inland waters consistently for aquatic invasives? Because if you have them in rivers they are goin to make their way into lakes and ponds through vessels even sometimes through wildlife as we found European water chestnut traveled. So we have to consistently manage our inland waters and put the resources into doing that.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Any other questions from the Committee? No, thanks so much for your testimony. Jim McAlister. Welcome, thank you for being so patient. Good to see you.

JIM MCALISTER: Good evening. I am Jim McAlister a 27-year resident of Fairfield. I have a cabin atop Candlewood Isle. I’ve not met Alicea before but I agree with everything she says I’ve been knee deep in the invasives for at least ten years. It’s no fun. It’s very frustrating. There is very little support and no money and it really does have to change. Let me just, I’ve submitted written testimony, I’ll touch on some of that but I think I want to reduce it to a practical level because Larry and others have already covered some of the basics but I am here to speak as a proponent for 6637.

Candlewood has been designated as a Connecticut Crown Jewel and indeed it is. Without question it is absolutely magnificent but this designation is at high risk. It won’t take much for the invasives to turn that on its ear and then we’ll have to dispense with this Crown Jewel stuff. We’ve got to get ahead
of it, we’ve got to do it soon, we’ve got to be realistic about it. It’s not a $600,000 dollar problem by any stretch of the imagination but we’ve got to start somewhere and this is a good a start as I’ve seen on a statewide level in a long time.

Connecticut has historically been know for it’s natural resources and it’s a major calling card be it woodlands, wildlife, waters they’ve been viewed with this fantastic magic in Connecticut. This is all going to go down the tube very rapidly if we don’t get our hands around this problem. I am concerned that all the irreplaceable strengths that are represented in Connecticut’s assets are going to be fleeting if we don’t come to grips with it due to other priorities, due to budgetary stresses and due to invasives both terrestrial and aquatic, we can’t allow it. We’ve got to get ahead of it and there is very little, the easy way is to nitpick and refine the proposal, what the Connecticut Federation Lakes has done in the terms of the substitute language is a major step forward. It needs to be further tweaked. Some of the commentary here today reflects how that might take place.

So, this is going to be a tragedy in the making. If we don’t step up and get serious about it, we are going to be in deep trouble. So just two areas I would like to touch on. So what’s the big deal, what’s at stake here, the practical level if we don’t come to grips with it.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Sir, if this in summary this is terrific but time is up so.

JIM McALISTER: You’ve got in your testimony but it’s a lot, down at the action level it’s a lot
worse than you may have been lead to believe here. So we need to get on it and do it right.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I appreciate that. Yes, Representative Demicco.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you for coming to testify. Thank you for waiting so long. So, I’m just curious. I am going to ask you this. I could have asked it of anyone, but I am going to ask you. Other than money what can and should the state be doing about this problem. I know money is one thing but beyond that?

JIM MCALISTER: Right now there is very little coordination at a statewide level. I think the comment that if we’re ignoring rivers and focusing on lakes and ponds that doesn’t make sense because invasives clearly are transported between them. But we need increased support that the DEEP level to get the strategies and the plans coordinated and in place. We really haven’t had that benefit and they are understaffed, it gets back to money. But I think there is much better resourcing and support at a senior level statewide could really help.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, I appreciate. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): I would be remiss if I didn’t welcome a friend from New Fairfield coming up and making the drive and staying here all day for your testimony. I know you’ve been a big advocate in New Fairfield with the help of Candlewood Lake and in fact you’ve been one of the almost science based
individuals that really sees the importance of this subject. Going forward it this Bill goes through how do you envision it’s best use?

JIM MCALISTER: As it is structured now, the ability to seek grants at the local level to address individual lake water’s problems and I think that’s the answer. I think the problems are massive, they are statewide and it will all depend on the local entities being able to justify funding to either prevent, control, remediate the problem.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Again, thank you very much and sadly if you leave now you can sit in Waterbury for about two hours to get back to New Fairfield but thank you for coming.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Okay David Forrest. Welcome and thank you for being so patient.

DAVID FORREST: I think the Committee has been as patient as I have been for sticking around so long. My name is David Forrest. I represent an organization called the Friends of Bolton Lakes. We are a non-for profit organization in the Towns of Vernon and Bolton mainly but we incorporate information in our watershed from Tolland and from Coventry.

First off and foremost the FDLS, we’re called, we are very much in favor of HB 6637 as a means of collecting a nominal boat fee that would be targeted to prevent aquatic invasive species from infecting the water quality of Connecticut waters and I include the riverways as well as the lakes and ponds. The stamp that you’re proposing would have two effects on the fight against invasive species in the State. First the monies would help fight
infestations and educate the public. In addition, the stamp would make voters aware of the problem with invasive species because I am assuming they are going to recognize what that additional fee is going to be for. And thirdly it would prevent, which could potentially be a public health risk and toxic algae out blooms within the lakes and ponds. FDL has worked quite closely with DEEP’s Susan Whalen and her staff in a collaborative effort the last eight or nine years. We have been in programs with them, with UConn, with Wesleyan University in areas such as the Hatchel Dam projects which we were able to get funding for last year through the budget office. They had $86,000 dollars which was put forth to design improvement in the Hatchel Dam and let me just give you some perspective there as it relates to aquatic species.

The Bolton Lakes region and its watershed incorporates three ponds which is probably the most unusual set up in the state. You can correct me if I’m wrong but I don’t think there is a pond setup in the state where there are three ponds that run concurrently into the second and then into the third. So we have a unique situation there where any of the aquatic invasive plant which starts at the upper lake would then infect the middle lake and through spillways and through portaging go to the lower lakes and then vice versa could come from lower to the middle to the upper. So we have had these conditions happen. Back in 2012 you probably heard it on the news where you had a pea soup lower Bolton Lake where it was uninhabitable by, I shouldn’t say uninhabitable, unusable for boating. The health department declared that it could not be used for swimming or animals being brought forth so
that is the kind of thing we have been a proponent for and been fighting for with our Friends of Bolton Lake Organization over the past years. And we’ve been somewhat successful. Just understand we continue to work with the towns and in attempting to control, we have a science Committee, we have an education Committee and together they work with the DEEP and others to do water monitoring. WE have data that we have sent to NEAR which is the Northeast Aquatic Research Company and together that data has developed a tremendous data base where any kind of these lake conditions when they occur, when they would foster conditions for fanwort, hydrilla, curly leaf palm weed, milfoil and such would then be able to react to those and be proactive actually and right now we are being reactive. So there is a number of things that Friends of Bolton Lakes have done.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): So Mr. Forrest, your time did go off. Thank you. That bell, that annoying bell. Do any members of the Committee have any questions for Mr. Forrest? No, thank you so much for our time. Okay we are moving on to our next Agenda item which is Senate Bill 598 which is AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRODUCTION OF HEMP IN CONNECTICUT and we have Kevin Skulczyck. Thank you Representative, former Representative Skulczyck.

KEVIN SKULCZYCK: I am a recovering politician, that’s right. Thank you and good evening. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the Committee and before we go on I just want to let you know that you’re all eating CBD oil based cookies. So I hope you’re enjoying them today. [Laughter] I’m kidding,
just joking. Rep. Kennedy she didn’t know I was going to set you up, did ya?

Honorable Senator Cohen, Representative Demicco the rest of the Committee here I won’t waste your time, I’ve put in some testimony this evening. I know we’ve been here a long day and I know you guys want to get out of here by about 11:30 or 12:00 so we will keep moving along.

My testimony is pretty simple. I was formally a State Representative and also a First Selectman in the town of Griswold. In that small town we have a great farming community there. We also have old mills and some things that are designed around what I think would be really awesome for the opportunity of industrial hemp in Connecticut. Again, I have provided my testimony. But I want to talk upon why I am actually involved in this process. I have a very good friend of mine, Michael Lejoy who is a former deputy commissioner in the Department of Corrections. He retired about six years ago and found himself if a business that he never thought he would which was in the distribution of legalized hemp products as well as marijuana in California and working for Point Bay Distribution in California.

Michael testified here about two years ago on behalf of CBD oils and before you, when he testified, some of you might remember he had been representing a small child from the Tribal Nation of Mohican Indians. The child was dealing with many issues that CBD oil directly could affect her life and benefit her. That child was going up to Maine and locations throughout New England to get the medicine she needed for her therapy. It was apparent then that needed to pass and it had. I bring that up
because it is important when we talk about hemp because this directly connects to the Indian nations that we even have in this state. Hemp product originated not from, as we heard earlier Tracy Hansen who did a fabulous job, by the way in our campaign when Tracy and I ran, when she brought up hemp I laughed at her and I have to apologize to her publicly today because she was 100 percent right. Hemp is a huge opportunity. I told Tracy that I would do that. So we know that the Indians started with this. It started from using it for anything from sewing things together to medicines and such.

I’ve been having the pleasure of meeting with people throughout the country, if you’ve ever heard of Jordan Rubin, Founder of Ancient Nutrition. I will wrap up, Senator, Jordan is the leading person in the industry for natural healing solutions. Also dealing with Sean Sweet who is also with the Point Bay and they are operating these businesses in California, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, South Carolina and working in Texas and are going to be coming here to Connecticut. Hopefully, we’ll have a couple questions cause I’d like to talk about the impact of the industry and what it could do for job numbers and creation in Connecticut.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Well with that, what can we do for job numbers [Laughter] here in Connecticut.

KEVIN SKULCZYCK: So what we could do is we can pass this through and by the way I do want to say in supporting all the Bill that are on the table, I think the Governor’s Bill 872 is probably the primary Bill you need to look at and I say that based on what California’s done. California was able to take a prohibition model and this is what
the Federal Government is going to do, they are going to utilize a prohibition model for, not just hemp, but the other conversation that we’re not talking about today because it’s not on the Agenda but is the legalization of marijuana eventually.

I would challenge you as folks who are going to be in the deciding seats, decide how to set up the hemp process first and mimic that so when you actually have that next question about legalized marijuana that’s what California did, that’s what many states are doing and it’s working fabulously.

Job creation, let me tell you this. Do any of the panel here drive an X5 BMW? Well if you do your interior, your inserts and your plastic if it is made in the South Carolina factor that is all hemp plastic. If you use the stitching in the X5 that is also. There is many, many 5,000 products that hemp can create. Not just CBD oils which we know is going to be the best but it is the manufacturing piece. I envision jobs, that was the question, Senator, jobs in Connecticut taking back old mills and factories such as the old Fusion Site up in Sprague, Connecticut. It is a huge site with 390 something acres or 348 acres. It’s got enough facility to set up a campus, maybe we could pair up with UConn, bring the students in, separate the factories where we actually make plastics that we can send over to EB, manufacture ‘em as a supply chain for the electric boat projects that will be going on for the next 40 years. We can send the CBD oils out of Connecticut as railway. These are the things I think you folks and the leadership in the State should be looking at. I want to commend the
Governor, Joe Courtney and I want to commend you folks for challenging this.

But I want to say this, don’t wait because right now in New England we are the richest state when it comes to being in the opportunity and position ourselves to make this industry become the next great thing. And working for revenue stream I sat with you guys through budget things for the last two years and many wee hours of trying to decide how we spend our pennies, we need revenue streams in Connecticut don’t squander this moment, don’t wait. I know the Federal Government, I know the Farm Act of 14, you have a lot on the plate. I think Joe Courtney is going to get answers. I think we are going to have a huge opportunity and I’d like to see us growing here by the end of the fall. I think it is a big opportunity. You can see somewhere between, we estimate in minimal a half a billion dollars based on the analysis as I quoted Jordan Rubin and Sam Sweet have provided for me. It’s a huge opportunity in Connecticut. Don’t waste your opportunity. I didn’t drink a Red Bull either, Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks for comin in and talking about this. Everybody across the country seems to be talking about this right now. I just pulled up an article about what is going on in Kentucky and everybody has sort of the same excitement but also the same fear that when all of these states go online at the same time the market is going to crash. What can we do
as a legislature and what can the private sector do to make sure that that doesn’t happen here?

KEVIN SKULCZYCK: Great question, Representative and I will say that first of all, what I did not mention is the farmers. First of all we need to make sure all our farmers go back to work, they are able to sustain in a new industry and bring them back to the world of prosperity again as farmers rather than selling their property for development. Secondly I would say to you today that question, supply and demand right. As you said, across the country this is the latest, greatest, hottest thing and people are getting all over it because of the Farm Bill Act. I would say we position our self, not only to be a manufacturing or grower but manufacture and then distribute. But not only do the distributing piece what we want to do is make sure maybe we’re in the seed industry, of creating seed. That’s a possibility that hasn’t been talked about cause there is going to be a huge supply need for seed right and you brought that up earlier in some testimony. So I think we need to position ourselves and I hope that the players in the room and the people that are watching this and not just my testimony but the smart folks that are testifying here, there is a lot of money at stake here and I think Connecticut, the challenges put yourself in a position where we take control in New England. Why wait for Massachusetts, why wait for Rhode Island or Maine or, you know, New York, Representative I think we have to be positioned today to be there now.

The supply and demand we can be the supplier for all of New England if we’re smart and we get goin’ today.
REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): You work with processors, right?

KEVIN SKULCZYCK: I’m actually, I don’t even know what CBD, like I told ya, I didn’t know what it was 90 days ago. But I will tell you what I do work with is the numbers. I’m looking here from a business perspective and they do have in Missouri, we have a processing plant that I’ve been able to get involved in viewing and reading about, yet.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay cause I know one of the issues is, you know, any farmer can grow this stuff. Apparently it grows like a week. One of the biggest problems is turning it into saleable products and you know, I don’t know if anybody here remembers but I am sure a lot of the farmers around the country will remember the big ostrich craze when everybody was starting up ostrich farms and spending all kinds of money on ostrich farms until everybody realized that it was nearly impossible to process ostriches into saleable products and the market crashed and all the farms went out of business. So is there an industry of the processing into the products that is going to follow or that is going to lead?

KEVIN SKULCZYCK: So great question. Again as I referred to electric boat as a need for plastics or heavy grade ropes. There is 5,000 things that we can process and manufacture with this product, right. The CBD oil business I would refer back to the Jordon Rubin Ancient Nutrition, his one product in GNC does $250 million dollars a year for this milk stuff that is CBD oils are in. Those are things so if you separate the opportunity you’d have the CBD oil business in one section, you’d have maybe rope in that section, you have the plastics in
another section, you’d have the products that were designed here with Heather Somers, Senator Somers, the gentleman had the book I mean it’s limitless, Representative.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): I understand but what I’m saying is that everybody seems to be ready to start putting the stuff on the ground all there also people ready to process it when it is time to harvest?

KEVIN SKULCZYCK: I can tell you that the people I’m speaking to want to apply for the license and they want to open their business in Connecticut tomorrow. So there are plenty of people across this country that want to come here and pay taxes to the State of Connecticut and by the way I think you need to look again at the prohibition model when you do this. You want to be able to make sure you’re getting the farmers back to work, you’re gonna have get brought over to the factory, have it, you know, whatever section it is going to go to, the manufacturing piece and then you’re gonna have the distributing piece right and you’re gonna have the sales piece so there is all this creating a really big industry and you’re gonna want to have oversight. You’re gonna wanna look at the model in California where there is actually auditing that is involved, even in the hemp industry you have to look at that. So these are the things that are going to take place. But I would answer your question, tomorrow you would have applications filed if you posted that on the website.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Thank you so much. Next on the list is Bryan Hurlburt of the Connecticut Farm Bureau.

BRYAN HURLBURT: Good evening Members of the Environment Committee. For the record I’m Bryan Hurlburt. I am the Executive Director for the Connecticut Farm Bureau. We have submitted testimony and I hope everybody had a change to look at it earlier today, but I’ll hit some of the highlights and I’ll offer to answer any questions.

But before I begin I just want to remind everybody that the Connecticut Farm Bureau is a private, non-profit, membership organization representing nearly 3,000 Connecticut families dedicated to elevating the status of agriculture in our state through education, market promotion, and legislative advocacy. Connecticut, in our state is made up of over 6,000 small business men and women, contributes $4 billion dollars to State’s economy, employs 21,000 people, and works 436,000 acres of land. So we are very pleased that the Environment Committee has taken up these three proposals on industrial hemp and legalizing this opportunity for Connecticut farmers. You’ve heard a lot of testimony already today on this. I just want to hit on a couple of high points to reflect on some of that and then I’d be happy to answer questions.

The 2014 Farm Bill our understanding is with conversations with Congressman Courtney’s office would allow for the State of Connecticut to apply for a pilot program, there was some discussion on this earlier today, to apply for a pilot program in 2019. The need to do that this year would be
because USDA is not likely to have a waiver program ready for this growing season. So if we were to hit this growing season which Senator Arnone you’ve expressed significant interest in doing, the pilot program should be included in the final Bill that you can consider that we can hit that opportunity as the USDA develops and promulgates their regulations for the full blown legalization. At that point I think the Bill should include language that directs the Department of Agriculture to pursue that waiver for full legalization. The pilot program, although a pilot program that the other states are using and have been approved is not in the traditional sense of a pilot program where it is very restricted to a certain number of growers, or a certain number of acres in production, or certain types of retail or sales. The pilot program that other states have used is full blown commercialization and marketing. And so we feel that modeling that in Connecticut would still allow Connecticut farmers that same opportunity as USDA moves forward with their full legalization program. That’s our goal for this year is to be able to work with the Legislature and the Administration where we’ve been working in parallel paths over the course of this legislative session and from over the past year. It is our goal that we can start working in concert that we have this Bill to the Governor’s desk for his signature in April in order to hit a June 1 planting date.

As you all know that not only do you have to get the Bill passed through both Chambers and signed by the Governor but then there is some regulations that need to be developed, farmers from their perspective have to prepare their fields, have to get financing, have to purchase seeds which are not available
technically on the open market and then start the process of planting them. So the quicker we move on this creates more opportunity for farmers to take advantage of that and we’re very hopeful that the will and Legislature is here. Clearly the Governor has made the investment in his budget and we appreciate that to work together to make that a reality. The buzz didn’t go off but I don’t know that it was ever turned on, so I’ll just turn it over. [Laughter] I should have never second guess you guys. But members of the Committee happy to answer questions.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Mr. Hurlburt. Any Members of the Committee, yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks for comin in Bryan. One of the things that I want to make sure is that when, should Connecticut legalize the production of hemp, that the benefit gets to the small farmers and that we don’t get some huge Agra business from California comin in and essentially buying up all the rights. How do we ensure that that happens?

BRYAN HURLBURT: That is a great point, Representative and I’m glad that you bring it up. The conversations that we’ve had are very deliberate that the registrational licensing process should be easy, it should be simple and it should be affordable. When the medical marijuana program opened up it had a very high level of entry and rightly so. But this is a different crop, this is a different opportunity and we do feel that this could be a major cash infusion to Connecticut’s farmers. In order to do that you need to make the threshold
low enough, a one or two page application like other states have done, a $25 dollar of $50 dollar filing feel like other states have done and easy to understand inspection process. There has to be controls on this because there is a lot of confusion between industrial hemp and marijuana and so we would expect that there is tight regulation with the Department of Agriculture in conjunction with the University of Connecticut, Connecticut Agricultural Experimental Station but all of those barriers need to be low enough that the Connecticut farmer who wants to plant five or ten acres on their farm has that opportunity. I’ve had conversations with Farm Credit East on this. We don’t really see this as people coming in and then growing 1,000 acres of hemp or transitioning their entire operation from whatever it was to a hemp growing operation. Really what we’re envisioning or we see the opportunity here is that just like in Connecticut 100 years ago many farmers had a small plot of land for broadleaf tobacco, five or ten acres of broadleaf. That was a cash crop. That stabilized cash flow on the farm, stabilized revenues for them, it gave them something of high value to get to the market. I think that is the opportunity that we’re looking here. This will be an additional line of revenue for Connecticut farmers to take advantage of if they want to. But in order to do that we have to make sure that threshold is low enough that Connecticut farmers are able to do it. We know that there is about 200 farmers that are interested in doing that and there are some people who will be testifying after me this evening that can speak better to that. But we want to make sure that we preserve the opportunity for them and do what I think is the desired goal is and
help Connecticut’s agricultural economy by introducing this new crop to the market.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, I appreciate that and hopefully in regulations that are promulgated that would be the case. Now you say that you expect this to be sort of an almost secondary cash crop for dairy farmers in particular. Because of the potential income do you see a problem where dairy farmers basically kick the cows out and just plant wall-to-wall with hemp?

BRYAN HURLBURT: You know, our goal is to legalize this crop for this year and then allow Connecticut farmers to do what they would like to do on their farm. You know, this is an opportunity for farmers to have access to a market they don’t currently have, that could attract new farmers into the industry that could push more land into production that could allow for the value added processing to take place here in the State and of course generate sales revenues and sales tax. You know, I’m not in the position to say nor would I feel comfortable saying that any individual farmer would stop what they’re doing today to go 100 percent hemp. I would hope that the small men and women own businesses in the State are deciding what they want to do and what the best opportunity is for their future and Connecticut Farm Bureau’s position is that we are here to advocate for market opportunity and that is what we are doing here today. So I’m not sure I fully answered your question but I did it in the best way I could.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Well, I appreciate it. Now you say you’re hoping to have this process move forward quickly enough so farmers can get seed in
the ground in June. That brings up two questions. How are they gonna get seed for June and the second question is presumably somewhere in October-November there is gonna be a harvest, is there a market today, will there be in November when they harvest is there a place to send this stuff to process?

BRYAN HURLBURT: Yep, so the program needs to include seed, sellers, resellers licenses and there is a lot of interest in the genetics to be located here in the development of the genetics so that should be in the program. There is and one of the people who will follow me can probably speak better to this but the General Assembly passed a bill regarding homemakers' companions a few years ago that allowed the Department to promulgate and adopt regulations concurrently with a program rollout. So that language which were included in the final Bill here, that would allow that process to be expedited. It is my understanding in conversations with the Department of Agriculture that they are nearly done with their proposed regulations so we could hit that part of the process fairly quickly, you know, the Legislative track is moving forward as you see, the regulatory process could be moving concurrently, the Attorney General's office has offered to review these in advance to make sure they are in full compliance and same with the University of Connecticut. Our congressional delegation is working with USDA to help push them to adopt a waiver program so I think we have the regulatory process and framework lined up to hit that June 1st planting date in order to meet, you know, have a valuable crop at the end of the season. There has been interest and there are a couple of people who will be following me that will talk about their
desire to have access to hemp to process it and what they have been doing in other states and what some of them think they could do in our state to take advantage of that crop purchased from Connecticut farmers and process it and sell it here in Connecticut.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Obviously the concern is that everybody rushes in, gets it in the ground, come November they’ve got these bales and there isn’t a company ready to accept it and start processing it. Now with regard to the seed, do you know if there are suppliers with bags of seed ready to go?

BRYAN HURLBURT: My understanding is that there are suppliers that have been supplying the other programs in other states and so we would have to, you know, allow for interstate commerce that we could take advantage of those. And the other piece is that we are being very cautious and have heard generally from the agricultural community the message is don’t plant until you have a contract. So don’t plant and invest in a crop that you don’t know how you are going to market. And so again, moving quickly through the regulatory process and the statutory process would give that certainly and clarity for both the growers and the processors to come to the state and line those contracts up.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Well, thank you very much, appreciate your coming in. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions from the Committee? Okay thank you Mr. Hurlburt. I am going to ask for courtesy actually, oh I see Senator Osten is here as well so
I am going to ask for two courtesies. We have somebody here that needs to catch a flight back to Washington so I am just asking for everybody’s patience. We are just going to switch up the order a little bit so we will have Amy Jesse if you could come forward and testify and then Senator Osten you will be next. Thank you and then we will get back to SB 598 so we will have Don Teller up after that.

AMY JESSE: Thank you so much for having me. I need to catch a flight back to D.C. Thank you for having me. I am here to talk about House Bill 5386. This is a strong consumer protection and animal welfare measure that will drive the pet market in Connecticut towards more humane sources such as shelters, rescues and responsible breeders.

I didn’t introduce myself. My name is Amy Jesse and I am the Public Policy Director at the Humane Society of the United States and was asked to come here as an expert on this issue. Okay, so moving on.

This will drive the pet market in Connecticut to more humane sources such as shelters, rescues and responsible breeders who never sell to pet stores but rather sell directly to the public. Stopping the sales of commercially raised puppies in pet stores will protect consumers from ending up with sick puppies and also behaviorally challenged puppies which is extremely common because these puppies know absolutely but life in a cage and then they are expected to flawlessly fit into family life and it just doesn’t work like that. You also heard about consumers getting sick themselves. This is real. Two Connecticut residents and over 100 people across the nation have recently contracted an
antibiotic resistant strain of campylobacter that they got from pet store puppies. This Centers for Disease Control stepped in and warned consumers about this campylobacter outbreak with several advisories and they concluded that it was the result of reckless antibiotic use on behalf of pet stores and their supplies. Healthy puppies don’t need to be pumped with antibiotics to this extent.

Here is a quote from a CDC official: “The puppy story is not over. It is difficult to control with a whole system that lacks hygiene at many points and seems to use antibiotics instead.”

Now Petland is a large chain of puppy selling pet stores that is at the center of this outbreak and they actually have a store in Connecticut that is called Safari Stan’s. Now no other adoption outlet or sales outlet has ever been at the center of an investigation like this so there has been a lot of talk about rescues, bringing in puppies, nothing like this has ever happened from any other sales outlet except pet stores.

As I mentioned earlier there was recently an article in the Washington Post talking about how horrible a job the USDA is doing regulating this industry right now. When Connecticut passed the current pet store law there was reason to believe that things were looking up at the USDA, sadly it has gone in the complete opposite direction. They are citing far fewer facilities. There is less enforcement actions such as hearing and penalties. The standards of care remaining shockingly low.

The USDA recently change the veterinary rule where they no longer have to have a veterinarian come in
when an animal is sick, they can just call the veterinarian and ask for advice over the phone on what to do without a veterinarian ever even looking at an animal. And as you’ve heard inspection reports have now been pulled from the public domain. Those are also not available to Connecticut enforcement agents trying to enforce the current law.

I heard the buzzer, I’ll just close up with a quick business point, there is no reason to believe that pet stores in Connecticut or any where else need to sell puppies to remain profitable. The huge majority in the State do not do so and are thriving. You have a pet store here called Barkery Boo-tique that is supporting this Bill because the owner believes that pet stores should be required to act responsibly which means not selling commercially raised puppies. I urge you to support this and make Connecticut the third state in the nation to enact this policy and I’m here to answer any questions that you might have.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Ms. Jesse. Could I just ask you so you are in favor of the Bill that states that pet stores would then sell only animals from the welfare or dogs and cats and rabbits from these welfare organizations?

AMY JESSE: So, yes I am in favor of this Bill. An important point is that this Bill certainly doesn’t force them to do that. A better model for a lot of pet stores is going to be just focus on products and services and maybe partner with shelters and rescues to hold adoption events which is what PetSmart and Petco and tons of other stores do. That is really there as just an option for them. Some of them will
want to still have dogs in their stores all the time and this is an option for them but by no means does it require them to do that. Some state laws, the Maryland State law does not even allow them to do that. So this is giving them the option if they want to, now we are trying to keep that really narrow. We’ve asked for an amendment that really narrows what rescues they can work with to make sure there is no sham rescues involved in the system. I mean I think that will really do a lot to sort of reel in sort of what we’ve seen in other places where a Bill like this might cause a pet store to sort of create a sham rescue as a middleman and keep sourcing from the same places they were before and so this amendment will help alleviate that sort of problem that might come up.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you for that. And also you mentioned that you cited behavioral challenges with pet store puppies because they have only know a life of being in cage. Would that also be the case with a lot of these adopted animals, are they not in cages themselves and would they not be, should the pet store decide to sell or work on adoptive procedures for these animals?

AMY JESSE: It depends. I mean a lot of rescues have a foster system which is really great because then those dogs are going from a foster home to another home so that helps a lot. I think that is why the popularity of rescues right now that can pull from shelters and give those dogs sort of that middle place. Also it is important to note that at least the rescue dogs that I know, in shelters, they are not making all these claims about behavior as these pet stores are. They claim these dogs are
well-socialized but they’re not. I think people kind of know more what they are signing up for if they are getting a dog from a rescue and especially if you are talking to a foster parent, you can ask all those questions. Same is true with a responsible breeder that is what’s so wonderful about going directly to a breeder, you can ask all those questions and a big part of why responsible breeders don’t sell to pet stores is they want home-to-home environment. They don’t want a middle, two middlemen really which is the transport vehicle and then the pet store. They don’t like that system, that’s not really good for the consumer, it’s not good for the animal.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): And could I also ask is it not the case that perhaps you wouldn’t know and in full disclosure I have an adoptive dog and, you know, I have as much history as was possible to give me for my dog, but is it not true that perhaps somebody surrendered their dog for aggressive behavior but you wouldn’t necessarily know that in adopting the dog?

AMY JESSE: That could be true but that can be true with any dog. I mean there was a study published in the Journal of Veterinary Medicine saying that pet store puppies tend to be more aggressive so that can happen and that can happen under any circumstance. Again it is extremely rare and if a rescue or shelter is lying about behavior that is certainly not okay and that is something we would ever condone. With a pet store they do make all these guarantees, they are also selling these dogs sometimes for thousands of dollars, right. When you go to a rescue or shelter you’ll pay an adoption fee
but that is very different than going to pet stores because you’ve been made to believe that it is regulated and then it comes with all these warranties and people think they can believe that so they are willing to pay a higher price and often financing comes into play and then they pay a really high price. So that is a real difference I think in what people are signing up for.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): In these other models that when states that have gone to this model rather are pet stores reaping a profit off the welfare organization animals that they are selling them, correct? So they would probably be making some money off of these animals.

AMY JESSE: So it depends, not many as I said earlier, it just gives them that option and so not all that many go that route but ones that do sometimes they do make a small profit off of it. They are not selling these dogs for the same amount of money anymore of the stores that are doing it right might have a dog in the store, and they might make a small profit from it. We actually encourage those stores to have sort of a separate entity that is an adoption center in their stores and so they can operate differently and that can be a non-profit and that can operate more just like a straight up shelter or rescue rather than a pet store selling these dogs and so then and in that sense they are an adoption center. They are no different than if really then going into, you know, a rescue that has a storefront.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Do rescue organizations now make any money off the adoptions or do they or when you’re adopting the dog and say you have to pay the
$400 dollar fee because your dog has been spayed or neutered or whatever, are they making money off of that or is that?

AMY JESSE: Generally just the adoption fees. So generally the transfer can occur the same as, so say there is, the way that this has worked there is a chain of pet stores that converted from this model, not because of the law, they chose to convert from selling commercially raised puppies to having rescue animals in their store and they partner with some local shelters and rescues. They also will pull sometimes from high kill shelters in the south to help relieve those shelters and so they will basically pay the adoption fee and sometimes they will give them a little extra because some of these shelters have almost no funding down south and are really struggling and, you know, they are helping take some dogs off of their hands, they will pay the adoption fees, sometimes a little bit more but it is not, the system is certainly not profit motivate at all. And then the transport is, you know, sometimes a rescue to does the transport and they are not making money either. They might be given some money to cover gas and things like that but the system when it’s done right is not profit motivated at all.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, thank you. Any other members have questions? Senator Miner and then Representative Demicco.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. So I don’t know how long you’ve been here today, has it been for the day? Okay, so then you probably heard I held this document up.

AMY JESSE: I did.
SENATOR MINER (30TH): So my question is if buying a dog from a business in Connecticut that we require to limit where they buy them from and offer a return policy and offer a warranty is such a bad thing? Should we not then impose the same requirements on those that have imported 23,000 dogs last year and cats so that our constituents can rest assured that when they do what Senator Cohen did, which was adopt a dog, or what I did which was adopt a cat, we have the same protection?

AMY JESSE: I think that regulation of that is a smart thing to do.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Through you Madam Chairman, so does that include imposition of a warranty, imposition of a sales tax, imposition of inspections does it include all that in the mind of HHUS?

AMY JESSE: I mean it could. Rescue regulation is a huge hot button issue right now all across the country and we are seeing some states regulate a lot of these entities in the same way and that is something that we support, I mean obviously each Bill is different but that is a concept that we certainly support.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And, thank you and through you Madam Chairman. Look, I don’t know who all these companies are. I ask for a document and once again I got it. But I see Pets, LLC out of I think they may be out of Tennessee and they have imported 400 dogs, 300 dogs from various different states. Am I to believe that by their location of shipment that is the state where they came from or is it conceivable that they were moved into that state, documented and then moved out, do you know?
AMY JESSE: I think that would be a case by case basis.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Through you, Madam Chairman, but it is possible.

AMY JESSE: Sure, sure.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Because some of the, through you Madam Chairman, because some of the company names that I looked up actually acknowledge that part of their like underlying responsibility is to take dogs from puppy mills and so we went a long way five years ago, I guess, to eliminate the potential that these folks were able to get dogs from a puppy mill. We even went so far as to say, if I was a breeder and I had two dogs, two puppies left over they couldn’t even buy my dog in Connecticut because I wasn’t a USDA approved facility. So I’m trying to find the balance here. Even when I try to find the balance with regards to the economics. These folks are in the business of making money. I found one company, just one, and looked at their financials, the made $1,048,000 dollars last year. So I’m not saying they shouldn’t have that kind of income, I don’t know if that income then in some degree gets siphoned off to another non-profit, I don’t know if this is a profit center for HSUS, I’m not saying that it is, what I am saying is this is a very intricate web across this country and the world on the guise of trying to do the best we can for pets and so it’s not as easy as it was for me back when we put the law in place that gave certain protections to our constituents because I never anticipate finding a document that said 23,000 cats and dogs came into Connecticut through another means. I thought that the majority of the cats and
dogs that came into Connecticut found their way through pet stores and that there were other entities that kind of moved cats and dogs around Connecticut that may have some from the Litchfield Animal Shelter or something else but it seems like the vast majority of these animals come in from other sources. So if I understand you correctly, I understand you to be saying we should be looking at things equally in terms of warranties and places that they come from and we should be doing inspections even for rescues and fosters. We should be doing perhaps some similar tax structure or some fee structure so that they're on equal footing because we have the same obligation to the animal and to those that acquire it as we do from the people here with the pet shops. Am I correct?

AMY JESSE: I think that the HSUS takes the stance that rescue regulation is important and more states should have it. Saying that they should be regulated the exact same way as a pet store selling commercially raised puppies, I don’t think I can agree with that. The profit is very different. Also the motive is very different, I mean Connecticut is lucky and a lot of New England is lucky in that there is not a huge overpopulation issue here and so what a lot of these rescues do is they pull from areas where it is a huge problem still and they pull dogs up to where people want to adopt dogs and that is trying to solve the problem of pet overpopulation in this country. That is very different than breeding on a large scale, dogs for profit, transporting them into the state and then selling them at a marked up price with warranties that honestly don’t do much. They barely cover, if a puppy is sick they barely cover that. They limit
often times they just cover the price of the dog or the vet fees or you have to unfortunately a common practice in the pet store industry is you have to sign a gag order to get money from a pet store and so if you have to sign something that says you won’t talk about it on Facebook, you won’t report it to the Attorney General or the Better Business Bureau so a lot of those wind up coming to our organization to report this and we get every single day hear from people with pet store complaints and some of these send us these gag orders and say they’re scared but they want to get this money back from these warranties so the warranties aren’t as great as they sound so they could use work certainly.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Well I do appreciate you staying here all day and I do value your input and, you know, as an individual that has had cats and dogs for as long as I can remember and spent far more than people would ever imagine in their care, I kinda get what you’re concerned about. I’m just not sure in my mind that this should be the target and I guess I’ll leave it there. But I do appreciate you staying.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Senator. I lost track. Oh Representative Demicco, oh sorry.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): I know that you have to leave but I’m just, this might be a softball question for ya but I need to ask it, to eliminate some confusion on my part so I am looking at testimony from someone on the opposite side of this question, on this Bill. And this person says that the fact is that, “Connecticut’s pet store regulations are among the strictest in the country. Stores that sell puppies are required to only sell puppies acquitted from
USDA licensed breeders, give them regular
veterinarian care, make sourcing, birth and medical
records easily available and provide warranties for
health and genetic defects.” Would you care to
comment on that?

AMY JESSE: Sure, I mean as I said earlier the USDA
is just doing such a horrible job at regulating this
industry, a USDA license truly means nothing right
now. The standards of care allow for breeding dog to
spend her entire life in a cage that is wire and
only six inches larger than her body. Her entire
life. I also mention they recently pulled back on
their veterinary requirement. We found an
inspection report recently where a USDA inspector
went in and a dog who was nursing puppies was so
emaciated that you could see all of her ribs, you
could see her hip bones, you could see everything.
The USDA inspector said you need to call your vet.
They called the vet and said this dog is emaciated,
what should I do and the vet said try changing the
diet, okay, done, over. That was it, end of story.
There are so many reasons why a dog might be
emaciated that have nothing to do with changing
their diet. She was nursing her young and that was
it, that was enough for the USDA. In the Washington
Post article that came out this week talking about
how just horrible enforcement has been and how
citations have been, someone from the USDA actually
said we’re starting to work more with them. That is
code for we’re protecting them. We are not
regulating them, we’re protecting them. They have a
Doctrine called Teachable Moments that they
published which means they are going to try teaching
breeders to come into compliance rather than citing
them for violating the law. It is really bad. It’s
gone down hill really quickly and that is just overall what we’re seeing and it’s not just me, like I said, it is the Washington Post, this has gotten widespread news coverage and the USDA really isn’t even hiding it. They aren’t really even pretending that they are doing what most people would think is their job at this point.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other, yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you Madam Chair. Where do you work?

AMY JESSE: I am based in Washington, D.C.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): How often do you get to Connecticut?

AMY JESSE: This is my first time here for work.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, you articulated a couple of anecdotes about various animals and how they were treated and various activities at dog stores, I guess, pet shops engaged in, were any of those Connecticut?

AMY JESSE: I don’t think, I talked mainly about USDA licensed breeders is where the stores are sourcing from, I don’t think I’ve given any anecdotes about pet stores themselves.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So you have no knowledge of about what actually goes on in Connecticut pet stores?
AMY JESSE: We know where they’re sourcing from which is why I’m talking so much about USDA licensed breeders.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, but are you aware of any of the bad acts that you are alluding to having taken place in Connecticut?

AMY JESSE: We know that two people in Connecticut have campylobacter from their pet store puppies which is part of this huge case of issue within the pet store industry.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Is it your understanding that no dog from a shelter or from a rescue has ever given a person that bacteria?

AMY JESSE: There has never been an outbreak anything like this and generally when they come from a shelter the reason this was so serious is because this strain of campylobacter was antibiotic resistant and normally it’s not and what the CDC found was that this was antibiotic resistant because there’s such a reckless use of antibiotics in the pet store industry. So that is unprecedented with any other sales outlet.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): When you say outbreak, two cases?

AMY JESSE: No, 118 people were sickened with this and over 20 had to go to the hospital

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): In Connecticut?

AMY JESSE: Two people in Connecticut were part of this national outbreak.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay. All right, thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Anyone else? Thank you so much, have a safe flight. Senator Osten. Welcome, thanks for your patience.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much I appreciate you allowing me to take the time to come here today. I’ve provide testimony, written testimony on three pieces of Legislation today. I think you have a fascinating agenda so I could talk about a lot of the other things, but mostly I would like to talk about two of them immediately. That is Senate Bill 590 AN ACT CONCERNING THE SELECTION OF CATERERS FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO RENT STATE-OWNED VENUES.

I have a caterer in the City of Norwich who had for years been a caterer at Rocky Neck State Park and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection started an interview process with caterers and kicked him off the list after he had been 30 years, just celebrated his 30th Anniversary as a caterer and owns a restaurant in the City of Norwich, Olde Tymes Restaurant, Representative Demicco may know the gentleman. He does a lot of work and now has clients that cannot rent the venue from our State Parks and serve food there. I have worked with the Department of Energy and Environment Protection to find out why. They said they have started an interview process and he just doesn’t meet their standards. I am not asking the Department of Energy and Environment Protection standards at all what I think is the person who is renting the venue should be able to hire whatever the caterer is that, whomever the caterer is that they would like to use. The person who rents the venue should be responsible for the cleanup and all
of that not the caterer themselves. So I think that this is something that we don’t need our Department involved in and I would like to see this reversed and I did try it the old fashioned way, starting from the ground up and I would appreciate your consideration on that particular piece of legislation.

The other piece of legislation that I want to talk a little bit about is finally moving forward with use of industrial hemp. And simply put allowing the use of industrial hemp was passed in the 2014 Farm Bill on a pilot program and from 2014 to 2018, 41 states have started the process. We have not yet started the process. We’ve passed a couple of Bills that have not completed any of that work. The reason why I think we should do this, it’s a billion dollar business in the United States right now and it is used in 50,000 products today and some people confuse industrial hemp with marijuana, they are distant cousins in the plant world but they are not the same.

And why do we need regulations, because we need to make sure because the plants look similar we need to make sure that someone is not growing recreational marijuana or medical marijuana in spots where they could grow industrial hemp. This is a cash crop, by that I mean a farmer could make between $40,000 dollars and $100,000 dollars per acre. It is much needed revenue for our farmers and will stabilize some of our farm scenarios that we really need. I don’t think I need to read the whole testimony, I went into depth on other states and what they have done and I’ve provided some backup documents behind that, I think you have all of that. I’d be happy to
answer any question, but it does not make sense to me that we have not moved off the dime and finally pass legislation that is true economic development. It is an ability for our farmers to stabilize their farms and it just makes good common sense for us to move this forward and I’d like to see it pass this year so that we could start growing hemp this next growing cycle so if you could fast-track this one, Madam Chair I would really love it. Maybe like, before April or May when we could start growing. And I’m not growing it myself just to be really clear. I don’t have a green thumb.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Senator and I did in fact ask UConn what sort of urgency there would be in order to ensure that we took advantage of this growing season and my understanding is it would be great to plant in April or May but June is a possibility as well as an absolute stop date.

I do have a question for you on SB 590. We had a representative earlier from the Friends of Connecticut State Parks and I had asked that woman how many caterers, my understanding is there are two State Parks which have this catering restriction and each has between eight and eleven caterers on their list. I asked what the process was in order to get certified as a caterer to be a caterer at these parks and I was told that there is an interview process that happens once every couple of years. But that if you passed all of their qualifications there would be no reason why you could not be on that list. So I ask you as somebody who probably knows this caterer of which you speak, 30 years at these parks, what is the qualification that they are missing according to DEEP or the State Park?
SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): So there is a written portion before the interview and according to the folks that we talked to at DEEP and him, they didn’t like his answers, not that he doesn’t do good work, not that he doesn’t do good catering and then when I asked them to re-interview him, they said they do this once every three to four years. But he had been acting as a caterer at Rocky Neck for 30 years, not once or twice and to just say hey listen and they really gave him no real reason. This has been going on for at least the last three years, we’ve been trying to get this resolved so that he could get on a list and they said once they get the list they don’t change it. They will not allow it to be changed and so it has been a continued process with this, so I don’t necessarily know why we’re even interviewing caterers when really all we need to do from my perspective is let the person who is renting the venue bring whatever caterer they want to bring in and make them responsible for whatever clean up needs to be done. It is only done with caterers it is not done with those who sell liquor or who decorate the place, they can hire anybody to do any of that but just the food and not even checking to see if they have the correct licensure to create and make food. So they all have that, that should be the only, from my perspective should be the only criteria here and if we’re having our, we don’t have enough staff to do what they need to do right now, if this is what they are going to spend most of their time on, or any of their time on, I find it to be somewhat not, I’m trying to be polite, been talking to too many people today. So I just think it is unnecessary quite frankly. I think we’re
delving into something that we don’t need to delve into and I don’t see the necessity for it.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): So, just to clarify, you were told that once, so you’re saying every three or four years then at Rocky Neck they will go back out and interview caterers and at that point more caterers could come on and possibly come off the list is that correct?

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): That is my understanding.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): What would you think, I mean I understand your standpoint and the Bill but would you say that if the subjectivity were eliminated from the process and the criteria were more objective, you know, do you have a catering permit or can you hold a catering permit, have you had a fully inspected kitchen, what have you scored on your health report, you know, that sort of thing, would you think that would be amenable?

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): I don’t know why we need a list of caterers. I think that if we’re going to rent out venues that we should allow people to rent them out and then let them, if you want to write in a rental agreement for the person who is renting the venue that whomever they hire has to have the correct permits then fine, but put the onus on the person who is renting the venue and not have us get involved in interviewing caterers for weddings and other events that can be more properly assessed by the person who is having the event. So I just think that we’re delving into something that we don’t need to be involved in. I just don’t see the necessity of it.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, Thank you, Senator. Any other questions from the Committee? Representative Demicco and then Representative Gresko.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Senator, welcome. Nice to see you as always.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): You know that restaurant.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Indeed but I’m not going to talk about that restaurant because that’s not my job [Laughter]. But I’m looking at testimony from Commissioner Dykes, the new DEEP Commissioner and she talks about this catering issue. She is talking about the two specific locations. Out of all the State Parks there are only two where this special rule comes into effect and she says this historic buildings are very different from typical catering venues and may require specialized knowledge, equipment, preparation, planning and so forth. These historic buildings require special consideration and care beyond what a typical catering experience would involve. Does she have a point?

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): No. All due respect [Laughter], no. Now my parents were in the restaurant business for 40 years, absolutely not. NO.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): The other thing that I would point out in her testimony the Commissioner talks about the RFP process and, “the process to establish a new list of approved caterers for these historic buildings will be initiated later this year.” So it sounds like the problem may be solved because later this year a new list may be initiated. Would that satisfy the situation?
SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): No, I just think it is unnecessary. I think that the person who rents the venue should be choosing their own caterers and we don’t need to be involved in this.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Gresko.

REP. GRESKO (121ST): Thank you, Madam Chair. You did ask the question that I was going to ask as far as the reason they gave for the rejection because I had something similar happen with a caterer in my district albeit not at the two locations but they were told because they didn’t make the interview because of a family health emergency, that was it. Even though they had been a caterer for six years, you missed the interview, and that was it, you’re off the list. So you have my sympathy. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions from the Committee.

SENATOR OSTEN (19TH): Industrial hemp next week? [Laughter].

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): We’re working on it. Thank you, Senator. Okay, Don Tuller. Thank you so much for your patience. Welcome.

DON TULLER: My name is Don Tuller from Tuller Meadow Farms in West Simsbury and we are in our 251st year of continuous family operation of family farming and I am also President Connecticut Farm Bureau. I appreciate the opportunity to appear today to talk about the hemp Bills. I also want to talk a little about the bear and trapping Bills.

We’ve covered this pretty well but one issue that is critical, farmers are, you know, very anxiously
waiting the actions of this Committee to enable them to legally grow hemp in his growing season. Just, I mean, you’ve really got to move, back up from the first of June to be able to allow and this Committee I hope can act this month. One critical component is to remove the designation of the cannabinol, cannabidiol and similar compounds as controlled substances from PA-15.202 because that is necessary for farmers to be able to grow it legally. Connecticut has a statute that calls these CBD and derivatives controlled substances still and it was part of legislation that allowed for the growing of hemp. That needs to be taken back out. That needs to be part of your actions or else there will still be Connecticut Law Enforcement, you know, farmers will not be safe from prosecution for growing industrial hemp. The idea of getting, you know, your actions to allow a pilot program to get stood up, anyway you can write this Legislation to expedite is whether it is the idea of contiguously developing the regulations would be greatly appreciate and extremely, you know? I hear from farmers across the State, people that I know, people I’ve never heard of before across the state are calling, talking to me at meetings about how much interest there is and people aren’t gonna, you know, throw out all the stuff they’re doing. They want to learn how to grow this stuff so they’re gonna plant a pilot plot and then figure it out. I mean there seems to be quite a lot of interest in processing capacity so I don’t think.

 Farmers aren’t going to invest the amount they have to invest. I do believe that there will be, there is a shortage of CBD oil right now, everybody across the country. The supply is gonna change but I also
think the demand is gonna ramp up substantially and so this little window here, framers who make capital investments to grow hemp and get their investment back before the price crashes hopefully.

In regard to, I live in Simsbury and that is kinda bear central. Oh, that’s my three minutes. Just to say in encourage hunting. I’ve had substantial damage in my sweetcorn. The nonlethal approaches really aren’t working although I would encourage them to relocate any bears they collect to east of the Connecticut River and the shoreline [Laughter] because then you will start to appreciate the problems that we have. I was at a meeting in Simsbury which Office Rudewicz and John Hampton were at people were in tears, they feel like they are prisoners in their houses. I mean nobody likes the idea of killing bears but they cost me thousands of dollars in sweetcorn. DEEP brought out a trap after the damage started but you know, they put doughnuts in there with anise oil and I’ve got an acre of beautiful sweetcorn and we knew we weren’t going to catch any bears but we thought we might catch a cop, we didn’t [Laughter and applause]. Anyway it is a serious problem and I think I would encourage you, if the Bill is passed to do hunting in Litchfield County I would encourage it to be expanded to at least Hartford County cause all the places where high bear encounters are in Hartford County. Thank you very much

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you Mr. Tuller. Any questions from members? Yes Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thanks for coming in Don. You said you had some comments about trapping?
DON TULLER: Farmers aren’t always hunters. Coyotes, I have two flocks of coyotes one on one side of the road and one on the other. They do, coyotes are unique when they take sweetcorn they pick it and they bring it out to the end of the row and they eat it out there and they make piles. I think it’s so they can see if somethings coming or not. But we have substantial damage, some of these animals are nocturnal so you can’t hunt them but also just in general, farmers need tools. I hear from farmers how have their sheep and their goats are being torn to pieces by predators and so I’m just saying don’t take away the tools, some of the tools they need in their toolbox to keep their animals alive. I mean bears have figured out how to, you used to be able to protect honey hives with electronic fences, they figured out now that if they back into the fence, their fur insulates them and they can take down the fence and hence destroy the hives. So I mean they are quite adaptive and so, you know, just this issue of we just urge that you not take tools out of the hands of farmers, they need this control for these animals that are killing their chickens and their smaller livestock.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Now we had Brian up here earlier and I asked him about the availability of seed and processing and things like that. Do you have any insight in addition to what he said?

DON TULLER: I’m confident there is seed available. I’ve been kinda looking on the internet and again, there are people coming who are kind of in the industry a little bit. I’m confident that farmers will be able to find the inputs that they need in order to grow a crop but they are gonna have to
learn, you know, how to grow it, how to take care of it, you know, it’s not, if you’re managing it for CBD it’s a different process than if you’re managing it for seed or if you are managing it for fiber. So but that where the value is right now is the CBDs. Farmers are pretty resourceful. They are going to figure it out, they’re gonna figure out how to cure the stuff, it has to be dried and there is a lot of different strategies that people are developing now. There’s going to be some catastrophic failures. I mean this isn’t going to be a pot of gold at the end of the thing, this is a challenging crop but the important thing is that farmers do at least have some hope that there is some profit at the end of this. There is going to be, you know, the $100,000 dollars, that’s gross income, maybe. That’s not net. You’ve got all the labor, the expense of processing and, you know, but it seems to me that from all the conversations we’ve had, there are people who are ready and willing to process. There is processing in other states as well but I think this industry is ready to come into Connecticut. My family has been in this business a longtime and I’m even somewhat excited about this and we’re looking at possibly growing maybe a half an acre or something to learn about it.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Do you know if there is any special processing equipment like different heads for?

DON TULLER: There is specialized equipment for it. I mean it’s being as to some of the stuff I’ve read on smaller plots they are actually using hand labor to harvest it temporarily but yeah, but it does take
specialized equipment. You can’t just convert a combine that harvest’s wheat to a.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Do you know if any of that equipment is available anywhere?

DON TULLER: I believe that it is.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): One last question, I don’t know if you can answer it but I know with regard to some crops, you literally are not allowed to save any seeds for next year. Do you know with regard to hemp what the process is going to be?

DON TULLER: Well when you are harvesting CBD you have to eliminate all the male plants because the plant develops the CBD oil is part of kind of attracting pollination and you are trying to deny it pollination and that is why you get the high CBD levels. So there wouldn’t be any seed from that because ideally or so I mean they’re looking, taking feminized seed, there is a lot of genetic work that is being done to develop seed that would be, so you wouldn’t have to worry about pulling all the male plants or whatever.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): You don’t anticipate Connecticut growers to be harvesting seed or do you anticipate them all buying?

DON TULLER: I have no idea. We are a resourceful group, so I wouldn’t discount anything at this point. But I just don’t know about. I’m reading more about it every day but I can’t answer that question factually and I won’t make up an answer.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Don. Thank you, Madam Chair.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for testifying today. Just a blunt question, are you a hunter? Do you hunt?

DON TULLER: I do not and that is part of why I like the idea of having my people to hunt for me. We have serious deer problems, the one thing about the coyotes they damage my sweetcorn but they push the deer out of my pumpkins so I don’t have as big a problem with damage to my pumpkins because of the coyote population but they do hit my sweetcorn hard and then when the bears are rolling around in it, it’s kind of a mess sometimes.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Right but killing has been proved scientifically that it doesn’t work so that is why I am curious about your position about the killing or hunting of animals that would disturb your plantations.

DON TULLER: When you know, when you see that there is one bear there that kind of comes back every time and, hunting does work, it’s not ideal and it’s not also.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): If your land offers resources for an animal to be there, that animal if you kill it, there will be another replacing it. It is pretty basic.

DON TULLER: I know and that is why I want to build a trap too. I consider it an ongoing, this is an ongoing cycle. I’m very patient and obviously we’re very determined. We’ve been there a long time.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Anybody else? No, thank you so much. Thank you for the reminder. I actually have to jump around again because I inadvertently missed somebody on HB 6637 who is Dean Rustic and then after Dean will be Chelsea Gazillo and then Troy Sprang. Sorry about that Mr. Rustic thank you for your patience.

DEAN RUSTIC: Thank you for having me. I am speaking on House Bill 6637, Dean Rustic. I live in Burlington, Connecticut but I represent the Connecticut Bass Nation as well as I am the Vice-Chair of the Connecticut Conservation Advisory Counsel, as well as Vice-Chair for the Fishing Advisory Counsel.

I come here today to speak to you from the Connecticut Sportsmen and Sportswomen who support the concept of a funding sources to aid in the inland waters, inland waters again, ponds and streams and rivers. We are extremely cautious with the Legislation because we’ve seen in the past something poorly written can have dire consequences to the Connecticut tax payers having access to these water bodies. This is what were most concerned about is having access to the water bodies.

The Connecticut Sportsmen and Sportswomen already pay an exorbitant amount of taxes on the purchasing of boating, hunting and fishing gear. Those funds come into Connecticut via the Wallop-Breaux tax. Last year Connecticut received over $3.5 million dollars in this tax. This year you are slated to receive $3.6 million dollars. Those funds go to boating safety programs, they go to boating infrastructure grants, they go to clean vessel act, they go to coastal wetlands restoration, they go to
support fish restoration and they also handle recreational boating and fishing foundation and boating access programs.

My point here it to show that the Connecticut sportsmen and sportswomen are already stalwarts of the community and the environment and as many have already adopted in our ways of boating a thing called clean drain dry, we’ve been doing this with the Connecticut Bass Nation for awhile to make sure that there is no spread of aquatic invasive species and we do all that we can to promote that.

Our concerns on this Bill are as such: That the towns, lake authorities and other could use this to limit our access to the water. We are concerned that the narrow scope of motorboat versus all watercraft in Connecticut, all watercraft, anything that can hold water because then it can transport. So rowboats, sailboats, kayaks, canoes, so you’re just taking again the people that are most prevalent and the ones easiest to identify but not yet educating the whole vast majority of people that need to be educated. One again it is going to the people that are already educated on this.

The idea of using the DMV versus using the Connecticut DEEP online system to capture the funds I am in favor of not going through DMV and then there is no wording to guarantee access for boating, fishing and hunting on these waters after they take our funds. So I am in favor of it but we really need to work on the wording because if you look up hydrilla it came in through the aquarium trade and it got into the waterways and if you read the supporting documentation it came in from that and if you think about the other invasive species like
zebra mussels it came in other ways it wasn’t necessarily from boating and it is in the Five Lakes the Five Lakes which is syntonic which is all one water system. Thank you for your time and I know I’ve over my time limit.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Any questions? Yes, Representative Piscopo.

REP. PISCOPO (76TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for your testimony. I appreciate it. Did you submit it in writing, do we have a copy of your testimony?

DEAN RUSTIC: No, I didn’t know that I had to do both. I waited here to make sure.

REP. PISCOPO (76TH): Or electronically?

DEAN RUSTIC: I can do that.

REP. PISCOPO (76TH): Okay, yeah electronically would be fine. Cause you come up with a lot of different solutions and different changes in the Bill so I would be interested in reading it. Thank you very much for coming up. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. Representative Piscopo you are so delightful this evening [Laughter]. I’m not used to that. So, thank you for being here and staying to testify. When I go to Maine and I bring my 14 foot aluminum boat, I am required to but, I call it a milfoil sticker, so it’s not foreign to me. When we had an early on conversation about how widespread we would like to
cast this net, one of the concerns that I had about kayaks and paddleboards and all the other I would call them single person watercraft was that we’d really have no way of determining whether they had a sticker or they didn’t have a sticker and I don’t know about you, but if I’m in my canoe or kayak, not likely I have my cellphone and less likely I have my wallet so there would be no way to kind of prove it and I think there is a beauty to something that’s got a number on it, that kind of seemed to be the connection. Is it a deal breaker do you think for fishermen to keep it confined to vessels that are registered?

DEAN RUSTIC: So the reason we want to expand it is, let me give you a little side bump. More people have died in canoes and kayaks in Connecticut than they do in boats. Why? Because they are easy to get, people don’t know what they are doing and they do things dangerously. Same thing is gonna happen here is that there’s other ways to spread aquatic invasive species but the people that care about it most are the ones least, that have learned about it and are paying the price while others are not paying attention and doing what they should. So as much as you look at it as a tax and having it, it is part of an educational process. So think about it as if they go onto the DEEP on-line purchase and they have to signup and do something then they can learn a little bit about it along the way. So I mean there are other things that need to be done. I mean if you go into the stream there is thing called rock snot didymo that gets passed along by you walking on it. So there are other ways that aquatic invasive species can get passed around than a motorboat. And if you just taxed the people with the motorboats and
what’s gonna happen is the next thing you already hear is we want to have a cleaning station. I already have that. I take care of that at home for myself, most of the bass fishermen do. What you have to worry about are these wakeboarders who use these big tanks inside their boats to make these big wakes but they are pulling it in and where do they like to go, they like to go to Lake Lillinoah, they like to go on Lake Zoar all the ones that zebra mussels and then the next day they will go up to Candlewood that is more apt where you are going to get it then you are gonna get it from bass fishermen who knows that we have to clean out our stuff before we get off the lake.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Through you Madam Chairman, so this is our one and only opportunity to have these conversations and I don’t want it to drag on too long but one of the concerns I have about expanding it, is that as you point out some of these other watercraft are readily available and we don’t have the same requirements with regard to education and so I am aware that you can go on almost any body of water and find people that have almost anything that will float at any given time and that is my concern is that we’re gonna try and institute a fee on something that we have no way of managing. So again I just, as imperfect as you might think it is, and I don’t disagree with you that there are a lot of ways to move this stuff around, its likelihood of passage is if we can somehow come together on what may not be my best idea or your best idea but if we don’t have that, I’m afraid that as we start to cast that wider we develop a constituency group that is gonna be much less interested in paying a fee and that is my concern. So again we just ask you to
think about that. I get your position, I don’t necessarily disagree with it wholeheartedly but we’re gonna have to try and move a Bill out of this Committee and then get it through two Chambers and get the Governor’s signature and then we still have the issue of what fund does it go in. So there is a lot to do on this one little bill and I would like to see us be able to do something. Thank you, Madam Chair.

DEAN RUSTIC: I understand, what I want to bring up is to let you know there is still other ways to do it but because too often scapegoats are looked for as to who put what, where, how did this get here, and boating is what they’re looking at in this Bill. So even if we did everything properly and it could come in a different way. My other major concern I want to reiterate regardless of how it goes forward which we’re for coming up with a funding source but we don’t want to have happen is that the funding source creates the ability to limit access.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Senator. Representative Demicco.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you Mr. Rustic for your testimony. I was a little distracted at the very beginning of your testimony, you mentioned a tax or two that is already being paid and did you mention a dollar amount that goes into the State coffers or did I misunderstand?

DEAN RUSTIC: Correct, the Wallop-Breaux Act that is sportsmen pay when we purchase fuel, fishing line, fishing lures, hunting equipment it will go into this sportsmen fund. That sportsmen fund is collected nationally and then it is brought back
into Connecticut based on the license sales of fishing licenses and last year I pulled the stats, $3.5 over $3.5 million was put back into Connecticut that went into for the DEEP and this year it will be $3.6 million. What I’m using that for is to say that we are already being taxed but, you know, if it’s another $5.00 dollars I know most people would say that’s fine what we’re most concerned about is the access and being the people that are the scapegoat.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Fair enough, thank you. I appreciate the clarification.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions from the Committee? Okay, thank you so much for your time. Okay, next is Chelsea Gazillo followed by Troy Sprang and then Jennie Bass.

CHELSEA GAZILLO: Dear Co-Chairs Cohen, Demicco, Vice-Chairs Gresko and Kushner and Members of the Environment Committee. My name is Chelsea Gazillo I am the Director of Working Lands Alliance and I am here to support SB 598, SB 893 and HB 5481, the hemp Bills that are in front of you today.

Working Lands Alliance is a broad-based, statewide coalition dedicated to preserving Connecticut’s farmland from development and keeping farmers on the land. As you can imagine this Bill is something that we support because we recognize that we can protect all the farm land we want but if we can’t come up with ways to keep farmers on the land then we are not doing our jobs. Our alliance is committed to supporting efforts that will increase the profitability and viability of farms, generating
new revenues for individual farms, creates new market opportunities, increases the total acres of land that are in production, generates additional investments in equipment and labor, increases the agricultural services needed to maintain that land.

As you’ve heard from many people today, the production of hemp has many environmental and economic benefits. As the state transitions towards a climate resilient future, hemp is a crop that will help lead the way. Hemp can be used as an alternative to many products that are detrimental to our environment such as non-organic cotton and many plastic products. Among the most salient environmental benefits of hemp is it grows in variety of climates and soil types which means this crop will do well on farms across Connecticut. Additionally, it is naturally resistant to most pests, and grows in tight spaces allowing it to out compete most weeds. It can also be used as a natural substitute for cotton and wood fiber.

If passed, these important bills will allow Connecticut to compete in what I heard earlier is an $820 million dollar industry and make Connecticut the 42nd state to allow for hemp production in the country. Some U.S. farms are already reporting revenues. Any questions.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Committee have any questions. Thank you so much for your testimony. Next we have Troy Sprang followed by Jenny Bass, sorry you’ll correct me where you’re up here and Marlene Wilhelm or Wilhelen.

TROY SPRANG: Good evening, Senator Cohen, Representative Demicco and Members of the
Environment Committee. My name is Troy Sprang and I am the Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing for NuFilm LLC which is a subsidiary of J.E. Shepard Company. I am here to speak about my support for the three hemp Bills in front of you.

The J.E. Shepard Companies have been operating in Connecticut for more than 126 years. They started out as a small farming operation, has now expanded into multi-faceted industries and it is being managed and run by the third and fourth generation members of the Shepard family.

Most of the points I wanted to make have already been covered by other testimonies, the advantage of being late. But let me reinforce some of the important aspects. One, timing is critical. I’ve heard at least three times today that there is 41 states ahead of Connecticut in chronological order. We can still move up on that list if timing is enacted quickly. There is also the aspect of people thinking the industrial hemp part is farming and CBD oils. There is an entire industry outside of that is what I am really here to speak about.

Byproducts from hemp processing can be used in making auto parts as we heard today, paper products, notebook covers, clothing. That industry is large and is growing. You had asked earlier about what happens if this is a fluke, my words, and the industry crashes? I am here to tell you that I’m ready for it now. I’m getting two to three phone calls a week wanting the product and I have to keep telling people, no. They are going other places, most recently New York. They are getting the product from competing regions. This will bring
jobs and economic development opportunities to the area. It will happen. Without it those jobs are going to be lost to competing regions.

Other questions that were previously asked is equipment available to harvest the crop? Yes, it is. It is being done today. They are different heads but the equipment does exist. There is nothing new or special or hi-tech. All we need it timing and quick timing. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): thank you for your testimony. Anybody else? Yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Now you say that people want the product. Are you talking about the raw plant or are you talking about some processed product?

TROY SPRANG: I am going to say processed product but I want to clarify processed. That does not necessarily mean they want extracted oils. There are other elements. You can take the plant extract CBD and you’re left with fiber. That fiber has uses and people are craving it.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So that’s what they’re asking you for?

TROY SPRANG: Correct.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): And are you in the business of processing it?

TROY SPRANG: No.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Now you’re from a film company, what kind of film?
TROY SPRANG: It’s a papered like structure that casts onto a moving belt instead of a forged wire on a paper machine.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Is that something that you, in that business, would be able to use hemp in some way?

TROY SPRANG: Most certainly.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): How would you use it?

TROY SPRANG: I would use hemp as the fibrous raw material source.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, appreciate it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Thank you for coming in today. So is it my understanding that actually hemp being used in paper products would be stronger, last longer, be more durable than the traditional papers we’re using today?

TROY SPRANG: I am going to say, yes. What kind of application? Stronger than newsprint, yes.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Toilet paper is pretty much stronger than newsprint at this point [Laughter]. Probably the same kind of coverage too.

TROY SPRANG: But yes, it’s a very long fiber, very strong fiber correct.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): So if we were to get rid of the restrictions I could see that we would maybe have some of our printed materials such as books and other things if anybody still reads books and goes...
to libraries would be better served as far as using hemp as a material as opposed to paper pulp products at this point?

TROY SPRANG: Yes.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Thank you. Thank you for coming up.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for testifying today. Just curious, we can use it for paper, not sure about your knowledge about the other but I know fiber. Wasn’t hemp used to make the first Levi jeans in the U.S.?

TROY SPRANG: I don’t know that but it would not surprise me.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I think it is know for its durability, right, the fiber?

TROY SPRANG: Right.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I think it is also, could it be used for insulation?

TROY SPRANG: Yes.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Okay, thank you, that’s it.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other members of the Committee have questions? No. Thank you so much for your testimony. I see Senator Berthel walk in if you would like to come testify.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): Good evening and thank you Chairwoman Cohen, Chairman Demicco, Ranking Member
Miner, Ranking Member Harding and Distinguished Members of the Environmental Committee. I am State Senator Eric Berthel. I am here to testify in support of SB 586 AN ACT AUTHORIZING BLACK BEAR HUNTING IN LITCHFIELD COUNTY.

Anyone who reads a newspaper knows that the black bear population in Connecticut has become unmanageable, that is, unmanageable with the current conservation tools available to DEEP. To give a sense of the scope of the problem, wildlife biologists estimate that the population in Litchfield Country alone is growing at 10% a year.

This situation is unsustainable and is leading to increased bear-human conflict. These conflicts are not just occurring in the more remote parts of Litchfield County but during the months when bears are out of hibernation, there seems to be a newsworthy conflict or photo on social medial just about every week. The bears are going into suburban and urban neighborhoods in the county even into people’s homes. They are killing livestock and pets, destroying gardens and beehives.

Black bears are large predatory animals, and although attacks on humans are rare, they do occur. There was an incident in New Jersey a few years ago where a predatory black bear stalked and killed a college student out for a hike. This didn’t happen in Alaska or Montana, this happened in New Jersey.

The biologists at DEEP have for years requested authorization from the legislature to allow a limited, highly-regulated black bear hunt. They say it is the only effective tool to bring the population to manageable proportions. This bill
gives them the ability to conduct one, only in Litchfield County, during the regular deer hunting season.

It is my hope that this bill would begin to address the problem immediately. Scientists often say bears become more aggressive when they have no fear of man. A hunting season gives them that necessary fear and respect.

This bill has failed in past years on the strength of the vocal opposition of animal lovers and animal rights activists. I can certainly sympathize with their point of view. I too am an animal lover, but the truth is in a world with billions of people and growing, the only way to have healthy wildlife is to manage populations scientifically.

In Connecticut we already have a deer season, a coyote season, a turkey season, a fox season, a rabbit season, but no bear season. You can see how this would quickly create an imbalance. The analogy I’ve come to prefer is a four way intersection where one light is always green. Bears are predators, and if they aren’t managed, they will have a negative effect on the other species.

Thank you for listening and I urge your passage of the Bill. Thank you.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Senator. I’ll ask the Committee members if they have any questions of you. No, we’ve had a lengthy discussion about bears with the Commissioner, the DEEP Commissioner. I guess I will ask one question though and again I apologize for coming in late for your testimony.
SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): No, I’m sorry I was late too I was over in the Education Committee Meeting all day.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): So the nonlethal means are of no, are of limited satisfaction to you I take it?

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): Well, I don’t know if it is a matter of, Mr. Chair, my satisfaction. I think what we’ve seen from reports out of DEEP and other places where nonlethal methods have worked and one of the things we do I Connecticut is well tranquilize a bear and move it to another location that is more, you know, less local if you will. They’ll take them and put them way out in the woods. Bears are smart animals. They will come back. They also, very much like a dog will do, they will mark territory the males are very territorial. So as the population grows we actually, I guess, there’s two issues. We run out of space in which to move these bears to because the male bear says this is my turf and will fight another bear another male bear to the death as I understand it and we don’t have the ability to keep moving bears and it doesn’t work because they come back. So we are not really doing anything to reduce population or to control what has become, in Litchfield County and Senator Miner lives in the county as well, we hear this from our constituents on not quite a daily basis but on a regular basis about bears going coming into houses now, breaking in. So I think that unfortunately a reduction of the population scientifically and administered by DEEP is really a workable solution and this is just for the county. You know lets test it and see if it works I think is the part of the legislative intent of this proposal.
REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, sir. I believe Representative Michel has a question.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Senator for coming to testify. A piece of land offers certain things that an animal will prefer over another area. I’m sorry if I’m not too clear but I think you understand. If you kill an animal you’re leaving room for another one to replace it, that has been proved. Killing doesn’t work when there is too many deer it has been pretty much used as an activity for game, for sports often. But in this case killing a bear I don’t think removes the, if there is a threat, I don’t think the threat is removed by killing the bear because then another bear will come to the same area because this area, it will be repopulated. It has been seen with many species so I think you said we should test it. I think it has been tested in other places and maybe we should look into that and see what the numbers say.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): Thank you, Representative. I think was has been scientifically proven is that by reducing the population of a particular species that you reduce the size of the population. So if you take out ten percent, you take out a certain number. Let’s say the hunting season allows for 85 tags to be issued by DEEP. You are reducing the population of the bears. You are also reducing their ability to repopulate because you have reduced the population.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I’ve seen other scientific data that doesn’t confirm what you’re saying. Where population is replaced, if you remove population that is why we’re suggesting the nonlethal would be
teaching the bears not to come to a certain area to be basically out of fear. That has proved to work. The killing has not been proved to work. I don’t think so but maybe you have some data you want to share.

SENATOR BERTHEL (32ND): Sure, we can agree to disagree on that. I think DEEP has shown that relocating bears on a nonlethal basis they will return back to the area that they were removed from. So there is evidence from DEEP that supports that. We have scientific proof that hunting in Connecticut of other species does reduce their population so DEEP can provide that information. But I am happy to send that to you.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I’m happy to read from the DEEP although sometimes its lacking scientific evidence, I will say that.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Representative. Anybody else, anyone else? No. Okay, Senator thank you very much. Always happy to see you, morning, noon or night. So we are still on Senate Bill 598. Next person on the list is Jenny Bass to be followed my Marlene Wilhelm and Pam Patalano. Welcome.

JENNY BASS: Thank you. I am sorry that Representative Cohen is not here because she seemed to really understand the urgency of farmers being able to start to farm hemp now in Connecticut. If I want to cut my crop in September I need to buy my seed right now. And as a Connecticut citizen that is illegal for me to do. I want to operate legally and I want to grow hemp.

So Connecticut lawmakers have a moment, right now to support Connecticut farmers to really have our backs
and legalized, greenlight, fast track something and work the legalities out later. Connecticut farmers must be permitted to grow hemp for seed, oil, fiber, paper. Please don’t fetter us economically. We need this crop to pay taxes, build infrastructure, repair our buildings. I think you should pass something immediately so that I can buy my seed in the next two weeks because the seed growers who I’m talking to are selling out. There are farms in Florida who are just buying up reams and reams of seed. We literally are being left behind.

I’ll just briefly say I live in Northeastern Connecticut on as 12-generation family farm. Our farm has been farming since 1710. We were a dairy farm for over 100 years. My family sold our cows in 2009 during the last milk crash for one reason because it costs more to make milk than to sell it. So it has been 10 years from that day when over 500 cows all left our farm, standing in trailer trucks that took them to Florida. It was a surreal experience, the loss of that day, seeing the cows leave and not knowing how our farm was going to survive. Forgive me but it was a lot like the feeling of loss I had on 9/11 when I walked down 22nd Street in New York City to 6th Avenue and watched a building fall down. Ten years later I still consider our family farm in transition. We pay our taxes but it is getting pretty tough. We grow corn for other dairy farmers it is very tough for them. It would be so nice if we had a cash crop, we could fix our barns, we could buy equipment, we could make infrastructure investment but the time is now. Other states already are greenlighting their farmers.
So you have a moment right now to do something for us. I am with Cathy Austin all the way. Greenlight this, say yes. Okay, you can do it. We will work the regulations out as your crop grows. By harvest time we will prove are compliance. So I am really asking you. Thank you.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Ms. Bass I really appreciate it. Thank you for your patience today. Do members have questions for Ms. Bass? Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): So, I’ll bite. So the reality is that even if we pass the Bill next week there are number of steps that it has to go through before it gets to the Governor’s desk. And then when the Bill gets to the Governor’s desk that makes everybody in the Department of Agriculture work in earnest to get a regulation package together. I doubt there is a chance that someone is going to say to you, yeah go ahead we’ll get the regulations when we get to them. It just probably isn’t going to work that way. But I don’t think at least speaking for myself I am keenly interested in this topic because it is potentially an opportunity for many Connecticut farmers that may want to add another crop to what they already do or supplant a generation of farming or two, or three or five generations of farming under a model that just doesn’t, unfortunately doesn’t work here any more in Connecticut. So I think we have heard all the testimony so far and we will continue to listen. But the fact of the matter is if someone is telling you you should be buying seed and putting them in the ground without regulation I’d be careful because that is the problem
JENNY BASS: No they have a regulation, they are allowed to buy the seed. I can’t in Connecticut.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): I’m saying in Connecticut. That would be bad advise for someone to tell you don’t worry about it, we’ll get it, you know, later down the load cause your example go ahead and plant it and then we’ll get this done in the meantime is somewhat problematic.

JENNY BASS: [Lengthy sigh] Yeah.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): I think we’re gonna move along pretty quickly.

JENNY BASS: But you understand we work with the season and I want money this fall.


REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Senator. Thank you Ms. Bass. Are we all set? So we move on Marlene Wilhelm, is Marlene here? Okay, if she shows up we will let her testify. Pam Patalano. Is Pam here? No, okay. Jeff Wentzel, okay very good. To be followed by Cody Roberts.

JEFF WENTZEL: Chairman Demicco and the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of Bill 598 and the other hemp Bills. My name is Jeff Wentzel. I am here representing the Connecticut Hemp Industry Association.

We are a non-profit member organization with a goal of supporting farmers in our state, restoring dormant farmland and reviving rural economies in
Connecticut. We are working collaboratively with industry, government officials and the scientific community to help create and implement industrial hemp standards, certifications and common sense regulations.

So I’ve been lucky to work in the hemp industry for the past four years. Thank you to the 2014 Farm Bill I’ve been working in some other states and we’ve seen huge success. It has been extremely successful in the states that I have been working in and I think the one thing people don’t realize is that as much as legalization will support farmers and farms in our state, it will also support business and job creation throughout the state. Soil and compost companies, seed and genetics companies, fencing companies, greenhouse companies and all the related lighting and gear companies, HVAC companies, commercial real estate companies, processors, handlers, brokers, extractors, manufacturers, formulators, pet supply companies, retailers of every kind, distributors, wholesalers, marketing companies, graphic designer, natural food manufactures, beverage companies, textile and clothing companies, analytical testing labs, attorneys, accountants, hemp grafting companies. These are just a few but beyond all the related businesses will benefit from hemp legalization the biggest winner may be the consumer who will have increased access to the high quality products made from locally grown hemp.

So after the success of the 2014 Farm Bill the newly passed 2018 Farm Bill is completely and permanently removed hemp and its derivatives from the Controlled Substances Act so, hemp has been legalized
nationally. There has been some concern about the speed of the USDAs ability to implement regulations but the legislative intent has been very clear and that is what is current law. It is time for hemp. I’m gonna make this quick, but it can be a huge boom for our State, for agriculture, for businesses, for job creation, for the economy and for the environment. Thank you for the ability to provide testimony today.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Mr. Wentzel. Any questions? Yes, Representative Wilson.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for coming. I am trying, I didn’t write it down so the name of your Association is Connecticut?


REP. WILSON (53RD): And how long has that association existed?

JEFF WENTZEL: Well we’ve been a loosely affiliated group for about two, two and a half years but we did have an official launch just last week. But we’ve been operating, you know, as I said loosely, it’s basically been a Facebook page for the first couple of years but we received inquiries from hundreds of, I think my last count was about 143 farmers who’ve expressed interest and also several extractors and processors and a lot of people wanting ancillary services.

REP. WILSON (53RD): So as a newly formed official association how many members do you have?

JEFF WENTZEL: Well we just officially launched last week so we really haven’t done a big member campaign
but we will have several hundred members within the next couple of months.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you very much.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions from the Committee? Thank you, sir. Okay are Marlene Wilhelm or Pam Patalano here? No, okay so Cody Roberts you’re next followed by Norman Plude followed by Michael Goodenough.

CODY ROBERTS: Good evening, everybody. My name is Cody Roberts. Thank you very much for waiting patiently for my testimony and listening to everyone’s testimony about hemp. I am here supporting all three hemp Bills that are in front of you guys today. I am also representing Connecticut NORML. I am on the Board for Connecticut NORML the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws. I am part of the Connecticut Hemp Association. I also work closely with Cure CT and I am also helping run the farming expo, the Hemp Farming Expo which is March 9th at the Olfield Theatre. We are having people all from New England come over, all hemp farmers, so you guys are all welcome to come, learn and ask questions. It is going to be a great time.

A couple of things I want to get out there. I was one of the hemp farm growers at UConn college for the past two years, one of three of us. What a surreal experience it was. The symbiotic relationship for growing your own medicine that is going to heal your own body, you can’t speak highly enough of it. I’ve been clean off pharmaceutical drugs since May 13, 2009 thanks to cannabis. Cannabis has saved my life. I found a new healthier
gateway to a better, healthier lifestyle with cannabis. Growing that helped me do so very much. There are numerous and numerous of farmers showing interest in this. With over 50,000 uses for hemp alone that tells you right there there’s at least 40,000 different jobs that could be generated right there alone. To deny this, to slow-track this even more than Connecticut already has, and I understand it’s not really your fault, the Governor last semester was not havin it. I understand. But now its crucial. If we do not get seed in the ground by May 1st, June 1st the latest, we are not farming this year. How are you just going to tell all our farmers, eh got to wait another year, sorry? Sorry for you guys. It’s not fair, it’s not right. You guys are Representatives, you represent us as people. The people, the farmers want hemp legalization. I feel a lot of you guys do to. I don’t understand why we gotta hold off on getting regulations going. You guys had plenty of years to do it since 2014. We are the only state in New England that does not have regulations that protects us from the Federal Government to grow hemp.

It’s just sad. It’s unreal to sit here and say people don’t have information and stuff, use Google, use your own initiative to learn. I’ve provided plenty of information for the past four years for everybody here. You guys can reach out to us anytime. We have multiple organizations to provide any information you guys need. I’ll sit and I’ll help right the regulations for you guys, like we need this really badly and this is gonna happen regardless. I know numerous farmers, they are gonna grow this year regardless and what they’re gonna do is they’re gonna have their crops, they’re gonna go
across state lines because it’s federally legal to cross state lines with your crop and they’ll get it processed in New York or Massachusetts and, boom we lose money, again another year. Thank you guys so much, I’m sorry for being so very passionate. Again saved my life. I love this plant and would do anything for it.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): You breathed new life into the room. [Laughter] So thank you for your passion, Mr. Roberts and your testimony. Are there any questions from members of the Committee? Okay, thank you so much. I’ll just check again Maureen Wilhelm here or Pam Patalano? Okay then we will move on to Norman Plude followed by Michael Goodenough and Christian Misen.

NORMAN PLUDE: I don’t know if I could follow that [Laughter]. Good evening. My name is Normal Plude and I am here in support of our hemp Bills today.

A little bit of my background, I’ve grown industrial hemp at UConn under the research program in 2017. I also work as a lead cultivator in that project. I’ve grown medical marijuana and medicinal hemp in Oregon as a Connecticut medical marijuana refugee.

A couple of points I have on the Bills. As a patient at this point here it is the only way that a patient as myself, which is one reason why I went out to Oregon, is I cannot as a medical marijuana patient get my medicine here in Connecticut. I use raw cannabis. I eat it right off the plant. We can’t get that here so again I had to travel out of state to get something that every other medical marijuana patient in this state can have legally.
Once the hemp Bill passes as a number of people have said, we are in a time constraint. I’ve grown out in Oregon. In Oregon we could get three outside crops. In Connecticut we could get two with utilization of greenhouses through the early months of winter. For instance January, February, March and April into May four and half to five months would have gotten us a seed crop. Those seed could have been used for our spring planting. Along with those seed we also lost a very, very lucrative cloning market where in the process those plants going out to seed, we would cut clones. Clones again, we’re paying 17 cents for seed but we’re getting $5.00 dollars for a clone. A typical greenhouse could hold 20,000 four inch pots so we’re looking at $100,000 dollars a month that growers in this state are losing because we don not have a hemp program and that is even without seed.

Again I have four farms that I’m currently working with, two in Monroe, one in Woodbridge and one in Trumbull. Two of those farms have greenhouses. One gentleman is looking to move to Florida because he simply can’t make in the agricultural industry in Connecticut anymore. Another one in Woodbridge that I personally worked for is a cultivator there for mums, azaleas and everything else. He is finding it difficult to survive. This is a crop he could have. He has a half-acre greenhouse and he could set up a section of that greenhouse and he could save his farm simply by growing hemp in areas in his outside where he normally grows his mums and everything else without taking away from his normal business but still bring in enough to get oil for his heaters for the greenhouses. To be able to pay his help which is one of the reasons why I left is because he
couldn’t make payroll because there isn’t a crop here in this state that is small production a greenhouse can survive on.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I you could just summarize for us that would be terrific.

NORMAN PLUDE: In this state once production does happen we, of course we need regulations but we don’t want to shut out the little farms, the little greenhouses. We don’t want to even at this point here, we’re talking about recreational marijuana to be legalized in this state, are we going to allow people in this state the opportunity to grow a few hemp plants also. Again it is medicinal and it also a food so we don’t want to lock them out in the process even though they are not in that hemp industry for industrial hemp. Connecticut isn’t going to be huge industrial hemp industry for plastics and paper. We just don’t have the land mass here. Out in Oregon we’re plating 300-400 acres at a time. We’re not gonna get that here. We’re looking at a craft medicinal hemp product. It is going to be grown the same way as the medical marijuana. The same conditions, regulations, do they have to be the same? No but I understand that the larger plots of land we do need some sort of tracking. So we don’t have that. We don’t want to shutout everybody.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I’m sorry but I have to cut you off. Just out of courtesy. We’re going to be very late as it is, so we need to make sure that we’re sticking to our three minute time limit. I will open it up to the Committee for any questions. Okay, thank you so much for your testimony, Mr. Plude.
MICHAEL GOODENOUGH: Hi, folks. Good evening. My name is Mike Goodenough and I am here representing DG AgTek that is DeSousa and Goodenough Agricultural Technologies. I am a combat Veteran from the Marine Corp. I served in the cleanup Desert Storm and Somalia and I’ll tell ya when I was over there just about the only thing that kept me alive day-to-day was dreaming about what I could do when I came home. I came home and I was able to take over a 208-year-old farm that was a family farm of ours which was going up for auction. They had already sold the majority of the land because my grandmother and family couldn’t afford to grow or to have cattle on that land anymore. I’ve been very lucky in being able to keep that farm. We have no one of the largest hydroponic footprints in the State of Connecticut and I am going out of business. I am going out of business because lettuce, tomato, basil and all the other things I can grow based on the cost of the electricity, based on the cost of fuel, based on the cost of taxes and all the other components that are associated with it, I am going out of business.

I have a Veteran Agricultural Center within that greenhouse environment where we teach Veterans, one of the most healing ways to get over taking life is to give life and so for me it was beyond therapeutic. We have hundreds and hundreds of Veterans coming back to this State that are lost, dazed and confused. We don’t need to hand them a medical cannabis that is going to help them get high. We need to hand them a way that they can make money. We need to hand them a way that they can learn that they can give life back to the land that
they’ve had to protect. That is only one side of the story.

The reality is I’ve been doing this now for well over six years. We’ve been processing so I do extraction, parts of my team do biodiesel today, do biofuels. We take the same technology which is a fractional distillation process and we can extract CBD or any of the cannabinoids. So we can separate THCs, CBDs, and CBAs you name it, we can remove them fractionally piece by piece and literally have each one of the components that make up that total plant matter. These are the type of extractions and process that we need to embrace in this State not butane drive, not CO2 driven, we need to simply divide what this product is into the components that are acceptable and we need this done rapidly.

You guys have heard everybody else’s statement, right. Everybody else’s statement is, “I have got to buy my seed legally” in order to do that I have to put in purchase orders and I have to be able to do that in the right timing sequence. Although I am a greenhouse farmer I also have land that we’re leasing in multiple other states and my investors want be to backout of Connecticut right now. I have a $2 million dollar investment that we’re looking to make and my investors are pushing me to back out of Connecticut and I will not. I stand true to this State as much as I stand true to this Country.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you so much for your testimony and thank you for your service [Applause] to our Country. Just one moment because [Laughter]. Representative Wilson.
REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you, Madam Chair and thanks for coming. Can you tell us your name again please?

MICHAEL GOODENOUGH: Michael Goodenough.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Michael, thank you for your service and thank you for tenacity in trying to survive here in this State and you’ve expressed some of the dilemmas of the farmers but many business owners here in the State of Connecticut. I appreciate it. How many employees do you have?

MICHAEL GOODENOUGH: So our Veteran Agriculture Center we have the ability to train 10 Veterans in a five week program. So those 10 Veterans would be considered employees I think by a standard but they are not. We actually take the money that is given to us to do Veteran Community and we give it back to those Vets so we don’t see it as a profit. We have about six different individuals that help work on the greenhouses when they are fully thriving and running and then for the extraction piece I will have nine people that will be working within that but of course I can’t, at this moment in this State and so the equipment that we have is not an enterprise class. It is not true full industrial class.

REP. WILSON (53RD): So moving forward with the hemp proposals as we have them here, as quickly as possible would help you survive in your business?

MICHAEL GOODENOUGH: Absolutely. It would allow us to get crops in the ground. It would also allow us to a) be training these Veterans on hemp on another profitable crop as opposed to lettuce, you know
which is pennies on the dollar so absolutely it would allow us to kind of expand that.

REP. WILSON (53RD): And just an off topic question, how would a Family Medical Leave and the minimum wage proposals effect your business?

MICHAEL GOODENOUGH: I have to say I am not familiar with the Family Medical Leave so I would rather not comment. But as far as minimum wage I’ll be quite honest with you I plan on sharing a large percentage of the profits that come through our farm back over to the folks that work with us so there is a profit share for all of my employees within our company.

REP. WILSON (53RD): I appreciate that but the question isn’t a profit sharing issue, it is a requirement to increase your minimum wage. Are you aware of that proposal?

MICHAEL GOODENOUGH: Not enough to speak on it, sir.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you very much for coming, I appreciate it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for your testimony and I’m sorry I missed a part of it. I just wanted to ask when is the deadline to plant seed?

MICHAEL GOODENOUGH: So you heard the statement around George Washington said at the beginning of April, right. The reality is realistically June 15th is the safest point to avoid any possible freeze. This is not a weed that you can just throw the seed out on the ground. That is a massive
misnomer. This plant needs to be taken care of, it needs to be consistently trimmed. It needs to have leaves taken off of it to avoid mold so it has to be taken care of. The reality is in order to purchase the seed and put the pieces in the ground I would have them in by June 1st right. But they should also be propagated. They should also come to you in three inches to a foot tall plant. In order to be able to truly grow a yield, you’ve heard a lot of numbers that have been thrown out there, this is based off one-half pound to a one pound per plant being grown. In order to grow a one pound plant you need appropriate time. You need appropriate photosynthesis, you need appropriate vegetation time. You can’t just throw a seed out there and go, yeah it’s gonna produce $60 grand it is not going to produce those kind of number unless it has had the appropriate time to grow.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): So planting the seed by June 15th is really.

MICHAEL GOODENOUGH: The deadline.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): The deadline.

MICHAEL GOODENOUGH: Yes, sir.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I know somebody touched on it earlier, Senator Miner but if it comes out of Committee then it would go to the Chamber, potentially it might go to another Committee, then Chamber, the House. There are three yeah, confusing. But it could go to one House and then to the other Chamber. So there is a road for the proposed Bill if it makes it to become a law. So I just wanted to make sure that this is clear and, you know, it’s the way it is.
MICHAEL GOODENOUGH: Yes, sir and by my math honestly we have time to get it done, if we start today right. If we wait one more day we are going to fall behind and we will to the point that was made earlier, every other state is ahead of us. We will loose this race. The equivalent to the race to space or the race to the moon and we have a choice of either being in that race or falling out of it. And this country has thrived on being a melting pot and being number one in those races.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I fully support it, so I’ll do what I can. But thank you very much.

MICHAEL GOODENOUGH: One other small factor soil reclamation, we haven’t heard anything about that. These plants will eat, eat a lot of those issues that are in those soils right now. So for all of us that have been growing corn for our cows and everything else we can reclaim that soil with this plant. One crop will allow us to reclaim a substantial amount of area. So it is a really important thing. I know that is huge on all of your docket.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): I’ll make it real quick since we’ve all been here for forever. I want to thank you for sticking with us tonight and I also want to thank you for your altruistic lookout at all of this. You know having friends who went the Vietnam Era and their road back with feeling useful in society and now very much of what you said, touched base with what I learned from friends of mine. So I
want to thank you for that. But I also want to thank you for your business plan. You know it’s not to often that you see an enterprising person wanting to give back to the community and then also their workers. Far too often we get lost in an idea of profits over people. Well I think you seem to be a good example of how that’s not what we need to be doing and I’m sure I could speak for most of us up here, we are gonna do our best. At least, I’m gonna do my best and maybe this guy over here who keeps talkin all the time, but we’re gonna do our best to get ya there. But I just wanted to say, I just want to thank you for your testimony. It is very, heartwarming to know that there are industrious people out there who still look at their community as their family. Thank you.


REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Just a quick one, Madam Chair. Is your operation the same one that works in Florida with the Veterans?

MICHAEL GOODENOUGH: No, no we don’t. We do stand a number of different groups. There is a number of different groups that we do work with but right now our plate is very full.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): The one in Florida is really successful and the Veterans are actually improving their mental health as well as growing things.

MICHAEL GOODENOUGH: Yeah and it’s critical. We have a million Vets getting ready to come home, a million and we need to truly be able to give these folks another outlet. And to the point that was made earlier when we come home we fell like we got
nothing but to be a police officer which is a very
noble business but it also a huge commitment or to
be a bodyguard and generally it is the bodyguard for
some type of Saudi prince or someone else so, me
personally it took a long time to understand my
value and my worth back in this country and where we
came from and to get rid of that alienation that you
feel naturally when you come home. To be able to be
around other folks that feel the same way is very
powerful but to give life to something and make
money from something it gives you a future. It
gives you a direction.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Good idea, thank you.
Thanks, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Starting new
industry and creating new jobs is never a bad thing
so thank you very much for your testimony and I
think we are all set. So next person is Christian
Misen, is Christen in the room? Is Marlene Wilhelm
in the room? Is Pam Patalano in the room? Going
back through the list here a little bit. Okay I am
going to move on. We don’t have anybody testifying
on SB-893 or HB-5481. So item number eight on the
Agenda is House Bill 5386 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE
SALE OF TRANSFER OF DOGS, CATS, RABBITS AT PET SHOPS
THAT ARE NOT FROM ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS. And
first on the list is Peach Reid, followed by
Courtney Hogan followed by Jerry Flavin. Welcome
Peach thank you for your patience.

PEACH REID: Thank you, Chairman Cohen, Chairman
Demicco, Esteemed Members of the Environment
Committee. Thank you for your patience in listening
to all of us. Again, my name is Laura “Peach” Reid,
I am the President and CEO of Fish Mart Company
located in West Haven, Connecticut and for 45 years now we’ve been a wholesale distributor of aquatic and companion animals not including cats and dogs to retailers throughout the Northeast. For many years now I’ve been an advocate for the responsible pet industry, not only at my business, but as a member of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, PJAC, where I currently serve as the Board Chair.

So today I am here to oppose House Bill 5386. I view this as a Bill that would undo five years of Connecticut leadership on the issue of pet store sourcing and impose an across the board ban on the sale of purpose-bred dogs, cats and rabbits at pet stores. I am surprised to be here discussing a Bill that is so dismissive of what has already been done so well by this very Committee.

When the idea of a pet sale ban was proposed in 2013 the Assembly convened a task force and discussed how Connecticut could best be a leader in addressing the state of breeding nationwide and the result was a sourcing and signage requirement which together with the expanded warranty law made Connecticut pet stores the best and most regulated in the country and in fact served as a national model in which a couple dozen states have the same model. Since then I think it is safe to say that Connecticut pet stores have show themselves to be responsible community partners in pet care.

At the same time in 2013 you convened a task force to examine the treatment of animals in regional and municipal shelters throughout the state. I continue to support this. Animal care should be the same no matter where an animal originates. This task force was to deliver it’s report by January 1, 2015, tis
Monday you voted to extend its reporting deadline to January 1, 2020. This means that you are now being asked to consider a Bill that would require pet stores to source their animals from shelters and rescues beginning three months before you receive task force report. You are being asked to throw away regulations that protect pets in Connecticut and consumers and require stores to source from shelters and rescues whose practices are far less regulated and transparent. And just let me say with the prior testimony earlier, it was ironic to hear in the kennels and the rescues and shelters that we’re talking about regulating the unregulated but here the pet stores are regulated.

So as you’ve heard we have 180 registered rescue organizations and shelters who imported over 23,000 dogs this past year and we only have 12 or 13 pet stores that sell pedigreed animals and so why if we have 180 outlets for rescue and shelter animals now, why would we want to impose that model on the 12 or 13 stores that sell the pure bred purpose bred dogs.

I share your desire to continue to ensure that Connecticut is a leader when it comes to animal care and I support continued work on the standards and regulations governing not only pet stores but shelters and rescues alike. As a pet owner who has bought companion animals into my home all through the years, from all kinds of sources, pet shops, breeders and rescues I had a choice to decide where I want to get my pet and I think consumer deserve a choice. They should be able to get their loving companion from a rescue, or a shelter, or a private breeder or a pet store. So I just ask you to not throw away all the work we’ve done so far in favor
of this ban on purpose breed pets. Thank you very much for your attention and consideration.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions from the Committee? No questions, okay thank you so much. Oh, oh, I’m sorry you almost got off, almost. Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I just wanted to say thank you for the harmonica earlier. [Laughter]

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I do want to just make an announcement that there are certainly a lot of people testifying on this Bill and I see a lot are from the same organization. I am not taking away your three minutes but should you choose to combine and come up together you can share the three minutes in the interest of time, if you don’t think you’ll take your full three minutes you do have the option to sit before the Committee and share your three minutes. So just know that that option is available to you and just let us know your names when you come up. So next on the list is Jerry Pleban, followed by Pete Noel, followed by Rebecca Noel followed by Darcie Robinson. Welcome.

JERRY PLEBAN: Good evening everyone. My name is Jerry Pleban. I am the owner of All Pets Club. We have four locations in Connecticut Wallingford, Branford, Southington and North Windham. We are proudly celebrating our 30 years in business.

Today I want to give you 13 reasons why not to vote on HB-5386. The impact on this proposed Bill will force us to close our doors after 30 years. We can no longer protect our consumer’s choice for pet ownership under regulated industry as we would
require us to source from an unregulated world of rescue. The state would lose hundreds of thousands of desperately needed tax revenue by putting us out of business. Americans spend $2,500 dollars a second on pets. We will not be able to provide what we have a license for. No other organization in Connecticut has the obligation to the State to sell or adopt puppies, rabbits or kitten under the current strict laws that ensure that we are sourcing though humane established USDA breeders that must comply with high standards of care and are state and federally inspected regularly. It would impact all my friends, family and customers who are looking for a special pet.

My 88 employees who work so hard everyday entertaining and educating and filling special needs for our customers, therapy dogs and new additions to their families, filling life with loving animals. I could not continue my mission statement “Bringing Families Closer Together” as we would not be set up and cannot support animals from unknow origins under the current law.

We as Connecticut residents have done a great job with our pet ownership through Pet Stores, rescues and shelters. Shelters rarely have pure breed puppies that consumers want and will be forced to go to the dark-web to obtain. If you believe in pet ownership you need to support Connecticut pet shops who provide pets to loving home under strict laws, penalties and fines. Without responsible pet stores there is no oversight laws to protect consumers, give choice, collect taxes and have accountability. An eight-week-old puppy in most cases is not a rescue it is a pet that needs a home. It is unfair
that we have followed the laws for the last 30 years that you have set forth for Connecticut pet shops. We are the victims year after year to put us out of business.

This proposed Bill is driven by pressure, by special interest groups who continue to push their agenda to deregulate the regulated industry. This Bill does not support animal welfare and will only create more problems. At the end of the day my choice, my life, my mission, my hard work, my career and my state that I worked hard to support could take away the future of All Pets Club.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Mr. Pleban. Yes, Representative Michel.

JERRY PLEBAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Since you are from the same company, there was a person I think earlier that spoke on behalf of your company, do you have any comments regarding those two petitions that we found on the Channel Eight article and all that material we can find online.

JERRY PLEBAN: I’m not sure that should be discussed here but I am not sure what we’re exactly referring to or what cases but.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): That’s fine. That’s fair. Can I ask you then a different question? Why would a breeder who cares about where his or her or their puppy ends up sell through a pet store rather than directly to the public?

JERRY PLEBAN: Well again not everybody has a choice. I mean when you are USDA licensed and you’re state and federally inspected you could sell to pet stores. We used to be able to buy from local
breeders but those laws were taken away many years ago and we can’t buy any local. We used to purchase from local breeders and it was pretty scary. Inside the homes were dirty, the animals were not well taken care of, there was no shots, no accountability. All our breeders take good responsibility, they have to do welfare checks on all their puppies, they have state and federal inspectors coming in three to five times a year inspecting them. We receive puppies and they are vet checked within 48 hours. We give a full guarantee for six months on all our dogs up to the purchase price of medical bills if the animal becomes ill and we give six months on hereditary and congenital defects and we have a penalty if we don’t follow the laws. Nobody else has those penalties. And again, I’m not sure what other industry has up to the purchase price of medical bills. Again a lot of times its mother nature taking its course if an animal becomes ill. Again when you’re in the spotlight and you have a business you are the target of the mission.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): And I think one of the brokers was named earlier Hunt, but I think they changed the name. Do you know their new name?

JERRY PLEBAN: I buy direct from most of my kennels. Most of my kennels I’ve used so close to 20 years. So I have a relationship and a commitment. I have gone to my kennels many years ago. I have purchased their puppies. I’ve seen generations after generations of beautiful puppies coming through. You know, when you’re breeding puppies you have to have experienced people because their job is to do the right job for what they’re doing. They watch
breed standards, hereditary defects. These puppies are vet checked prior to coming to us at six weeks and eight weeks and then re-vet checked. Our puppies are vet checked every week or every two weeks by law in our store. So again we’re doing the very, very best job for our animals, for the welfare of our consumers and our animals. There is no neglect, no abuse. We love what we do because we work with people’s hearts and we fill people’s prescriptions but were not a surgeon.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I just invited others to look on-line at Eight’s investigation and all kinds of stuff.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Thank you for staying here till tomorrow I think at this point [Laughter]. Everything that you’re saying I agree with as far as, you know, pets and as far as and I’m probably gonna go on a little what I said four, five, six hours ago I think it was at this point when we had earlier testimonies. Everything you are saying is nice and it’s good and I don’t think much in this Bill really changes that if you are a responsible, you know, pet shop and this is not a target against pet shops. This is, you know, this is not. And honestly there is not a push from dark area of the world trying to push this out there. These are concerns of things that many of us heard of when we were knocking doors to get up here to talk to people. These are issues that we do hear from. If anybody knows me very well, you’ll know that I am not easily influenced by outside sources. In fact it kind of pushes me the other way. I would think that
if your breeders are doing all the things they say, I think you fall within compliance. I think if all the activities that you speak of with your organization are founded then you fall into compliance so I don’t think there is an issue with that. Sadly many times and I’ve said this earlier, laws get put in place because people do things that now require a law. So, you know, if everybody was as altruistic or as well-founded as you say that your business is then we wouldn’t be here or having to discuss this. So this is more sadly, laws are more of a reaction rather than, you know, trying to stop things. So I don’t know if I really have so much of a question but that is kind of how I’m seeing this stuff. This Bill is evolving and it is gonna continue to evolve and I appreciate you making testimony and I appreciate you coming forward with your ideas but again, we have to listen to all sides and there is no dark conspiracy here, there is no special interest here and I just want to make sure that you understand that. I am happy that all of your animals and your pets are coming from clean, safe environments. Because you even said it yourself, you know, when you were buying locally you were concerned about dirty environments. The houses being dirty, the treatment being poor but we are also hearing that some of the supplies through pet stores, not your fault, but maybe where you’re getting some of your product from, I hate to say product in the form of animals they are falling into possibly the same area so that is why these things come forward. But I appreciate you staying here and testifying.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Yes, Representative Dubitsky.
REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for coming. Were you here when the proponent of the Bill testified earlier here?

JERRY PLEBAN: I’ve been here all day, yes.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, so I’m sure you, I’m quite sure you are not going to agree with their proposed solution to the problem but do you agree that there is a problem?

JERRY PLEBAN: Of?

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Of puppy mills sending sick dogs into Connecticut?

JERRY PLEBAN: Well, our puppies are vet checked when they come in.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): I’m not talkin about your specific dogs. I’m talking about, they indicated that there is a problem of some sort they are trying to fix. Do you acknowledge the problem?

JERRY PLEBAN: I don’t see a problem because again I guarantee to the consumer, we have a warranty in place, we have staff, we have procedures in place. Our intent is not to cause harm, it is to do the right job possible and follow the state guide lines that you guys have put us to. We are at the highest plateau. The amount of guidelines and restriction that we have to do and again we are at the center of everyone’s attention every day when people come into our stores and look at our animals. We have nothing to hide. We do everything right. We care for our pets. We care for our staff and again the animals that we get are healthy and there is background with pictures of mom and dad and all the information of all our breeders, USDA inspection reports, pictures
of our kennels are all posted right next to the kennels, all the information where our puppies come from is handed to all our customers. We sell to attorneys, we sell to doctors, we sell to a lot of wonderful people here in Connecticut.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Do you acknowledge that there is such as thing as a puppy mill?

JERRY PLEBAN: Well again I think we really need to come up with a true definition of what a puppy mill is.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Well what do you think it means?

JERRY PLEBAN: Well a puppy mill would be a substandard kennel that doesn’t meet inspections or reports and deplorable condition. None of my kennels could operate and pass inspections.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Do you acknowledge that those exist somewhere?

JERRY PLEBAN: Oh yeah, we have backyard puppy mill right here in Connecticut.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay through you Madam Chair. So you acknowledge that they exist. Do you acknowledge that they sell dogs in Connecticut?

JERRY PLEBAN: Well there’s people who are raising puppies and selling them without a standard of care, yes.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Now through you Madam Chair. The proponents propose solutions to that problem is to regulate you. Do you have a different solution?
JERRY PLEBAN: Well we’re already highly regulated. I would support that everyone else who handles puppies or kitten should step-up to the same plate and follow the same laws and inspections that we are going through and also collect sales tax.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions from the Committee? All right thank you so much. Okay, next is Pete Noel, Rebecca Noel, Darcie Robinson and then Kylee Short, that’s the list. Welcome, Mr. Noel.

PETE NOEL: Thank you all for your time. Mm name is Pete Noel. My dad opened his first pet store here in Connecticut when I was nine years old. I was born and raised in a pet store with animals and I’m still here and I have no congenital problems that we know of. Animals are my passion and I love them very, very much.

Imagine your dad owing a pet store. I had tarantulas on my head. I picked ticks off pythons. I’ve stayed up day and night for six weeks, every three hours hand feeding baby parrots because the mommy died. Even at Misquamic last summer, there was a seagull that the kids were teasing and he had a dislocated beak, my wife will tell ya, I walked up and snapped that beak right back in and the bird flew away. I love animals so much and this Bill is absurd in all good will.

It was determined through the last task force meeting that approximately 46 percent of puppies in the State are from rescue, 46 percent or so are from breeders between breeder and internet and only eight
percent come from a pet store. The other two sources breeder and rescue are like the wild west. There are no rules, there are no regulations. They can do puppy farms, they do puppy farms, they do the most horrible puppy farms, they call them the Humane Society Horrible 100 those all exist through rescue I can prove it to you and through breeders and there are good rescue for sure and there are good breeders for sure. But when I read the intent of this Bill, it says to “Prohibit the sale of animals from puppy mills.” If we’re only eight percent of the game, and we are so regulated and so tight, and so inspected, why beat the crap out of us? It doesn’t make sense.

I would like two things please, and I do know the buzzer went off, the FTC and the Better Business Bureau did a study this past year, approximately 370,000 complaints in regards to on-line puppy purchases also the FTC did a study one out of three on-line breeder website are a scam. Anyone can sell ‘em on the internet.

Finally I would like to close with this and “God bless” the rescue folks. They do a good dead. I’ve been doing a lot of research on this and my business is not rescue that is a different skill evaluating pets that could bite some kid in the face or behavioral issues or whatever. That is not our skill but why beat on just the eight percent who are already regulated. I would like to close with this and I very much appreciate your time, it’s been a long day. This Humane Society woman quoted the Washington Post, ironically this is the Washington Post from this past summer. This is beautiful. "Bidder affiliated with 86 rescue and advocacy
groups”, this is Washington Post, April of last year. “86 rescue groups and advocacy group shelters throughout the United States have spent $3 million dollar buying 5,761 dogs and puppies from breeders at only two dog auctions both in Missouri.” There are livestock auctions at the puppy farm places every single month in the Midwest. These are rescue groups buying from the puppy mill in order to enhance their selection. Washington Post. Both in Missouri. According to invoices, checks and other documents I’ve included in my packet. The Washington Post obtained at the auctions, rescuers have purchased dog from some of the same breeders who face activist protests including some on the Humane Society of the United States Horrible List. They buy ‘em at auction to enhance their selection then they pretend to have em from wherever where to these baby Golden Retrievers come from. My manger always looks on-line they find em boxes behind Walmart.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Mr. Noel, you’re way beyond time.

PETE NOEL: I am beyond time, it’s my passion, it is my life. I have a beautiful team. The Humane Society we support locally but if the objective is to prohibit the sale of animals from puppy mills hit the other 46 percent and clean up the rescue first folks. Clean up the internet breeders please folks. We have been regulated. Senator Miner you’ve been there. You know we’ve been regulated.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Mr. Noel. Thank you, Mr. Noel. I appreciate your passion Mr. Noel. I am going to ask. Senator Miner.
SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you Mr. Chairman. So through you. I just wanted to say that every year that I have seen you come here you have been just as passionate. You’ve impressed me with the fact that you care just as much and have never come here without a thought about a way forward. And so I do want to thank you just because I know you’ve been here before and I appreciate how hard you work at your business and how hard you work at helping us try and have a program here in the State of Connecticut that protects not only the dogs and the cats that are sold here but also the people that want them to be their pets. So, thank you.

PETE NOEL: Thank you, sir.


REP. MICHEL (146TH): Yes, thank you Mr. Chair. So Mr. Noel I have some questions. First, it’s the same question I asked earlier what is the new name for Hunt?

PETE NOEL: The owner of Hunt died perhaps 12 years ago and to my knowledge they went out of business. They were a giant puppy re-saler. They would not breed any dogs, it’s common knowledge within the group and within the Committee.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): They were a broker?

PETE NOEL: They were a broker. Now this was all prior to the task force hearings that would establish we can only get ‘em from top USDA breeders, no bad puppy mills allowed in Connecticut unless the bad puppy mill dogs are sourced from rescue or on-line breeders.
REP. MICHEL (146TH): So question, do you recall through Hunt having received puppies from _____ Young or Keith and Lyla Retzlaff?

PETE NOEL: My wife would tell you. I cannot remember yesterday, sir.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): This I found on the 30 not a hundred list of horrible places, horrible pictures really to tell you the truth and some details, Young for example was cited several times for dead and dismembered puppies. Keith and Lyla Retzlaff were repeat offenders despite official warnings. These are sort of the, did you, are you checking.

PETE NOEL: I read the Horrible 100 List. One of the most ones I found most offensive was Beverly Hills Puppies. You can look that up. Beverly Hills Puppies, that sounds terrific. That guy.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Let’s keep it to the question and I am so sorry to do that because we are running out of time but otherwise I am more than happy. I’m French [Cross-talking].

PETE NOEL: I agree with what you are saying.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Then would you remember Connie and Harold Johnson?

PETE NOEL: No, sir.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Sick dogs and repeat violations as well. Then I’ll ask you another question, you were quoted in the Patch saying, “I’m just puppy Pete who runs a pet shop in Meriden” Noel said. “I want to work on a solution with everyone except the maniacs who’ve called me a child molester” he added emphatically. There are good guys
and bad guys you said, “specifically the Amish country, they’re terrible. They figure they can make even more money raising puppies in chicken coops than chickens. That doesn’t mean we’re doing the wrong thing, but it’s still America this isn’t broken like Obama Care.”

PETE NOEL: Those were famous words that I can only say I did say that, sir.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I’m just getting to the point. When I reported using both breeders and brokers and said he had not visited them in three years. I can’t be in Connecticut and all over the country, which I can understand. This bring me to the question, do you verify, do you visit the sources of your puppies.

PETE NOEL: Yes, my staff here, right behind me, seven of them are going to be testifying. I did visit approximately two and a half years ago. I am visiting this April and I do visit the sources. I just like Jerry behind me, have been in this business, my dad opened in 1969. Now does a restaurant stay in business since 1969 if the food stinks? No. You go, people go back because they love ya, because they’re friends, their family, their grandparents, etc. and that is why I am still standing after all this time as the only other gray beard other than Senator Miner here because we have been doing the right things. So the answer is I do visit, I am a very busy man. I have an elderly mother, 18 employees and a very large business that I am very proud of and provides a lot of love to a lot of families.
REP. MICHEL (146TH): Then, I’m sorry, this might be harsh and my intent is not to be harsh but.

PETE NOEL: I’m a big boy [Laughter].

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Can you talk about what happened in 2010?

PETE NOEL: Yes, sir. I would love to address that and actually it started in 2008 but anyway I’d been around as we discussed since 1969 as a child, as an adult and as a businessman. Tragically in 2008 it was horrible. My wife had to move out of the home. I received death threats, a disgruntled employee made up false charges against me. Charges were indeed filed. I was indeed arrested. They were indeed found to be false and the case was dismissed. It took two years to get through court with many different hearings. But it was a former disgruntled employee. I have had hundreds of employees, you would think if it was something that was a pattern of any sort someone else would have stepped forward. Fox News came to my front door. My youngest daughter answered the door, we didn’t know what was going on. I would assume that a fair minded person would know that if one out of perhaps 600 employees over the years makes an accusation, it is proven to be false, the prosecutor chose to drop the case because there was no evidence, it was a false accusation, made up accusation by a disgruntled employee. It was a horrible chapter in my life, sir and it still is and personally that was not very gentlemanly for you to bring that up. You could have spoke to me outside when you said call me David [Applause]. That hurts me, that is not honorable.
REP. MICHEL (146TH): That’s what you think. We’re talking about a Bill.

PETE NOEL: [Cross-talk] come out in the hallway and we’ll talk person-to-person, gentleman-to-gentleman. Thank you, sir. I would love another question about the USDA.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): You know what Mr. Noel I will see if Committee members want to ask you more questions? Any other questions for Mr. Noel. Representative Harding.

REP. HARDING (107TH): Talk to me about the USDA [Laughter].

PETE NOEL: Thank you so much. That came up earlier with the first two folks who were the Bills sponsors. You guys did a terrific job in your legislation and I will attempt to be very brief. The Humane Society of the United States says there is about 100,000 breeders in the United States. No one really knows but we do know there is 1900 USDA licensed breeders in the United States out of those 100,000 so that’s two percent right there that step to the plate. Now one thing they didn’t mention is the USDA has the right to go to your home and inspect it without you even knowing they’re comin and they carry guns and they go there with full inspection. Now they don’t have enough inspectors but maybe your house is beautiful when you know folks are comin but what about you know they ain’t comin. That is why most people don’t get a USDA license. They don’t want the Feds coming to their house if you don’t know their coming. So only two percent of breeders have a USDA license but you guys in your wisdom and I give you credit made a law that
upon any inspection if there is one animal that is found ill and the USDA writes it up, that is called a direct violation. One animal in a two year span that breeder is now illegal in the State of Connecticut. So what I’m contending is if there is 100,000 breeders, 1900 are USDA that’s already two percent maybe 600 of those 1900 would have a perfect record in a two year period with the animals. So what does that equate to, 600 breeders out of 100,000. Now that doesn’t mean that everybody is perfect but that is pretty god-dammed good. Now if you lineup, let’s say you’re a Labrador breeder and you have 40 labs, lets have 40 of us, right now strip naked, and get a physical and all 40 are perfect. It ain’t me either [Laughter]. So that is pretty good is what I’m trying to say. That’s pretty good and that’s the Connecticut standard. The Connecticut standard is no direct violations, not one guy with the bad knee, none. They even check rotten teeth. Now the bad thing about the USDA is they’ll write up all kinds of violations and yes there are sick animals, sick animals they write all the violations but they don’t close ‘em down. But Connecticut law is you can’t have even one. So you guys did a great job. No breeder with even one direct violation is two years can be allowed in Connecticut unless that puppy comes from a rescue or from an on-line breeder. Pet store is illegal. Don’t pick on the eight percent, you already solved, folks you already solved it. Let’s clean up the rest of the game. Thank you for the question, Representative. [Applause]

REP. HARDING (107TH): Thank you for your composure and your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Representative. Are there any other questions from Committee members? Okay, Mr. Noel thank you very much. We appreciate it. Thank you, sir. Mr. Noel, you know what Mr. Noel we’re not gonna do that. Thank you.

PETE NOEL: I apologize.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): So, the next person on the list is Rebecca Noel, to be followed by Darcie Robinson and Caylee Short.

REBECCA NOEL: Thank you all so much. I know it has been a long day so I am just going to read my testimony pretty quickly for you all.

I am here to oppose Bill HB-5386. I am Rebecca Noel, Peter Noel’s daughter who just spoke. I grew up in the pet store as well. I am a register nurse. I currently work in an adult detox unit and I know what caring means.

I have had a dedication and love for animals since I was a child. I grew up in the Gentle Jungle Pet Store along side my sister Katie where I saw firsthand my father’s love for animals. I am very proud of my father, Peter Noel, his devotion to all the animals that have been in his care at the Gentle Jungle. My father has taught me from a young age that everyone has a purpose, a duty and a calling. My father’s calling and purpose is within the hearts of animals and families.

Growing up I learned an important lesson from my father, “If you’re going to do something do it to the best of your ability or not at all.” My father has applied and enriched the Gentle Jungle with this
belief. He goes above and beyond to ensure that every animal is advocated for.

At the Gentle Jungle we have a licensed veterinarian, Dr. Joseph Ross who checks all the animals once every week to ensure that the animals are healthy. We place over 200 kittens for people who cannot find homes for them including feline AIDS and leukemia testing and vaccinations by our veterinarian. We donate and promote to local shelters because we believe that every animal deserves a loving home.

Gentle Jungle is highly regulated. We only use USDA licensed breeders with all their inspection reports open to the public. We have a warranty on health that extends to 21 days as well as a warranty for congenital defects that extends to six month. We guarantee these regulations to our animals and customers because we value the well being of our animals. Our mission is to find loving homes for animals and we follow strict regulations to ensure that animals are advocated for.

Proposing a Bill to stop this work we strongly believe in would be a tremendous downfall for the puppies, and cats and rabbits in our care. My dad instilled in me that caring for animals lives is an honorable duty and passion to carry through life. Growing up in the Gentle Jungle setting taught me what caring means. I became a registered nurse and I am proud to say that my father was the perfect role model to help me excel in my career, the reason simply being that he cares and is nurturing to every life. He instilled nurturing and passion in me through childhood working at the Gentle Jungle.
I believe it would be a great injustice to pass this Bill to ban puppies, cats and rabbits from our care. I hope you will consider the facts and see that we are doing the right thing and vote no on this Bill and please allow us to continue the loving and honorable work we do for all the animals and families at Gentle Jungle. Thank you for your time and staying so late.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you for your testimony. Any questions from the Committee? Thank you so much. Next is Darcie Robinson, followed by Caylee Short, followed by Robert Checkus. Darcie, welcome.

DARCIE ROBINSON: Thank you. My name is Darcie Robinson. I’ve rescued pets and I’ve bought pets. I’ve worked in the pet industry for over 25 years. I quit school when I was 16 years old and I have worked with animals ever since. I am a single mom and I have two children and this is my livelihood. Do not take that away from me. My children have grown up at Gentle Jungle. My daughter is enrolled in a VOAG program at Southington High School to pursue her dreams of working with animals. Many of our other employees are also VOAG students learning and receiving their hours in our store to aid in their pursuit of higher education.

My daughter raises money at our store to help the New Britain Dog Pound. We also post New Britain Dog Pound dogs on our Instagram. We have over 500 followers to help them get adopted. We also donate money to Meriden's K9 police unit. We also find homes for anyone who calls us with unwanted kittens, guinea pigs, rabbits, hamsters and birds that could otherwise be abandoned.
Approximately 4 years ago, a task force was set up and made us highly regulated. We only use USDA licensed breeders whose reports are available to the public. We have a 20 day warranty on health and six month warranty on congenital defects. This was only required for pet stores. Shelters, rescue, hobby breeders and internet purchases have no warranties, no consumer protection and no regulation. Even though there are only a few pet stores in Connecticut compared to hundreds of shelters, rescues and hobby breeders we are the only ones that were included in this. Why are rescues who are bringing hundreds of dogs weekly into Connecticut from other states? The CDC estimates more than one million dogs are imported every year. How are a lot of these puppies found in boxes at eight weeks old ready for their new family? Also many of these dogs are brought from other countries. The State of Connecticut has no idea how many animals are coming to the state without regulations. We do know that if this state eliminates the only regulated source of dogs, cats and rabbits 100 percent of animals entering Connecticut will be unregulated. I support shelters and rescues although the ASPCA and Humane Society believe that all of our puppies come from horrible people in horrible places. Even though they make slogans against pet stores to adopt and not shop.

Despite this we have donated money to municipal dog pounds whose dogs really need homes. Most of these dogs are pit bulls and pit bull mixes which I have seen for myself since I go there monthly. Everyone in our pet store loves and takes care of all our pets with all of our hearts. We have repeat
customers because we do the right things when it comes to care of our animals. This is America, we should have choice, whether we want to purchase at a pet store, or go to a shelter, rescue, hobby breeder, or purchase online. This is our right, Adopt OR Shop. I would also like to say one thing the woman from the Humane Society told you that all of our pets are unsocialized, she has never even been to Connecticut as she told you so how does she know? She’s never seen our puppies.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you very much for your testimony Ms. Robinson. Any questions from the Committee? Okay, thank you. Caylee Short, followed by Robert Chenkus followed by Nicole Leardie.

CAYLEE SHORT: Good evening. My name is Caylee Short and I’ve worked at the Gentle Jungle since I was 16 years old. When I applied over five years ago I did so because I really love animals and I knew I wanted to work with them. There aren’t many jobs available for high school students that allow them to follow their passion but I was lucky enough to find the pet store.

In my time at the Gentle Jungle I’ve only grown. I’ve been able to deepen my understanding of animal care, work alongside a licensed veterinarian and improve my confidence with customer service. I have helped countless families experience that feeling of love that animals have brought into my life. I am proud to have gotten a dog from the Gentle Jungle myself. In December 2017 I purchased by Australian Shepherd - Corgi mix I named Piper. Piper was and still is a happy, healthy dog. I was able to go through the same process that I’ve helped many of our customers go through and experience it
firsthand. Perhaps the most reassuring part of taking my puppy home from the Gentle Jungle was the guarantee that if she had any health problems after bringing her home they would pay for those medical expenses. This kind of guarantee is exactly the kind of security our customers and the animals deserve. For people who adopt or just from a private breeder or purchase an animal over the internet they simply do not have that support if that animal becomes ill.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my job, aside from the opportunity to care for animals, is the feeling of joy we bring to families who decided they have found the right animal for them. Time and time again people come to our store because they want the chance to raise their new animal from the start. While adoption is a good option for some people, I believe our customers should be able to know the history of the animal they are bringing into their lives especially for families with young children the stakes are too high to bring an animal with an unknown past into their home. Perhaps the most important point that I would like to make is that people in this state should not be deprived of opportunity. The opportunity for children and adults alike to interact with the variety of animals we have in our store, to experience the joy and hard work that come with owning an animal, to chose for themselves which breed is right for their lifestyle, to adopt an older dog or start from the beginning with a puppy. The point is just that people should be able to choose. To shutdown our store would deprive our community of the freedom of choice and would deprive thousands of animals the loving homes they deserve.
So, Environment Committee I am asking you as a pet store employee, as an animal lover and as a member of this community to allow pet stores to continue to find dogs, cats and rabbits the loving homes they deserve. To do anything else will come with a significant cost. Businesses will be closed, jobs will be lost and most significantly animals will suffer because unregulated breeding will run ramped and the only regulated channeled animals, pet stores will be closed off. Please do what is right and do not pass HB-5386. And I would just like to add that there has been a lot of talk about USDA breeding today, the U. S. Department of Agriculture is a Federal Agency so why should that responsibility and that burden of regulation issue fall on small Connecticut businesses, why should you take jobs away from this economy, why should you take jobs away from people and why would you allow interned and unregulated breeding to go ramped. That should be the Federal Government’s job, that shouldn’t be the small businesses of Connecticut.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Ms. Short. Does anybody have any questions based on the testimony? Okay, thank you. I think one of the things that has been, you know, pointed out throughout this process, the hearing process is that perhaps there is a need for some regulatory requirements with shelters and rescue organizations as well, you know, that is certainly something we can look at and that is why we have these hearing so that we can hear where perhaps there are holes in our law currently, so thank you.

CAYLLE SHORT: And if you would allow me, I would like to clarify, people who run pet stores and who
work for pet stores and who sell animals at pet stores are not anti-adoption and we are not anti-shelter. I think the appropriate term would be prochoice, pro-opportunity. Democracy is input from others so I don’t see why one interest group and one side should have the controlling voice over others.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. I appreciate that. Okay Robert Chenkus, followed by Nicole Leardi, followed by Linda Ciancimino maybe.

ROBERT CHENKUS: Hello everyone, my name is Robert Chenkus. I am actually reading this on behalf of Jeffery Herget. He is actually a police office in Meriden and he is actually working right now so he can’t read this so I want to read a little story from him. This is his letter:

So he has actually been a police officer in Meriden for the last 17 years. He is currently a patrol sergeant who also supervises the canine program. As the K-9 supervisor, he said he loves animals and he takes his role very seriously. In all his training and experience, he has had the opportunity to meet some really nice breeders, trainers and pet store owners.

Recently, this is from his point of view: Recently, my daughter has had several surgeries at Boston Children’s Hospital. The hospital has a Boston terrier mascot that my daughter fell in love with. We attempted for almost three months to find her a healthy terrier to give her as a companion while she recovered. After searching for rescue shelters, it was apparent that I was not going to be able to locate the dog that she so badly wanted. I then searched for local breeders and didn’t find any in
Connecticut. While patrolling the Meriden Mall, I located three Boston Terriers for sale. I met with the owner and visited with the puppies several times. I was allowed access to see all of the records and was thoroughly impressed. I purchased the dog who is named Foxy and has become a huge part of our lives. Without the ability to purchase a dog from a pet store, I would have never been able to locate a healthy Boston terrier puppy before Christmas 2018.

By adding new legislation, you not only hurt the consumer who wishes to buy a specific breed, but you also will hurt so many pet shops in the process. How will pet shops stay open if they can only sell what a shelter gives away? In my case, I didn’t want someone else’s problem, I wanted a healthy Boston terrier and that is what I purchased. Imagine if you could only buy a certain brand of motor vehicle, because someone else decided that this was what was best? I have read Chapter 435 of CT CGS and have found that there is plenty that can be done to ensure that puppy mills are not the source for any of the pet shops. I am not naive and realize that there are likely pet shops who use questionable sources. I ask you to hold those pet shops accountable.

In closing, I have no relationship with any pet shop or any owner. I only have strong feelings towards my options being taken away due to the questionable conduct of a few. If you really want to stop puppy mills, then start enforcing the current legislation that is already on the books. Thank you in advance for your time and I hope that you agree with me. Also, the term puppy mill is not well defined which
is something we kinda discussed before. He got kinda sassy there, so sorry about that [Laughter].

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you for your testimony. Any questions from the Committee? Nicole Leardi, followed by Linda, I’m sorry I going to butcher your name again Ciancimino. Thank you, now I’m gonna get it and followed by Liz Dousa.

NICOLE LEARDI: Senators, Representative and Members of the Committee. I am here today in opposition of House Bill 5386. My name is Nicole Leardi, I’m from Newington. I have worked at Gentle Jungle for over four years now and while I can’t speak for anyone but myself, I would like to offer an honest, realistic look at what it means to be a pet consultant and an animal care giver on our store on a daily basis.

Currently, and basically this whole paragraph says everything that everybody else already said about USDA breeders, and regulations, and cage cards, and breeder reports but the big thing that I would like to point out is that state law requires that our Vet, Dr. Ross comes every two weeks but we have him come every single week because puppies grow so fast. Our store is family owned and operated and our staff is an outstanding group of animal lovers from all walks of live. Without the opportunity to be a member of this team, I would never have found my passion for animals and their care.

In fact, and this is a true story, I was afraid of dogs when I first started. I knew hardly anything about small animal care and I was essentially useless at counseling people regarding the health and care of their puppies. Now, I can name the
traits and characteristics of over 200 dog breeds. I can analyze and provide for the health of eight different small animal species and I can recognize and interpret a dog’s body language to determine their needs and I’ve developed a skill for explicitly explaining the sometimes overwhelming process of taking care of a puppy.

So basically I’ve learned a lot. It is here that we defer that we differ from rescues though not in the ways you might think. I am not sitting here today attempting to demonize those who oppose us rather I man here to open up the dialogue a bit more about what I firmly believe should be the choice every individual is allowed to make. If you pass the Bill a lot of the customers that come in like first time owners, apartment dwellers, families with young children, elderly couples and so many more who we’ve heard time and time again go to rescues and can’t get dogs because, you know, they don’t meet the requirements. That is totally fine. They wouldn’t be able to get a dog at all because they wouldn’t meet the requirements and we really don’t have those requirements. But contrary to popular belief we don’t just sell a dog to anyone who walks in the door. We use discretion and common sense and while we don’t go through an extensive background check we can deduce just after a few questions whom we would be able to trust with our pets and make no mistake, these are our pets. We know these dogs and cats better than anyone else, rabbits, ferrets, hamsters, everything. We care for them, feed them, play with them. They are ours first.

When I send a puppy home I go into explicit detail as to what the dog likes, dislikes, fears, needs,
wants and if a customer doesn’t give me their full attention or totally engage in learning about the puppy they’re buying I refuse the sale. If they can’t be bothered to learn they can’t be trusted to take proper care of the animal.

In short, the biggest thing I wanted to say, very last, thank you for your time is if you couldn’t tell by now I genuinely love what I do. It’s not just a job, it is not just my job on the line, it is a passion. There are my dreams I am fighting for today and in that I believe I’m speaking for everyone else as well.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Ms. Leardi. Thank you for your testimony. Any questions from the Committee? Thank you. Linda Ciancimino, followed by Liz Dousa, followed by Jesse Sarno.

LINDA CIANCIMIN: Good morning, good afternoon, good evening and good night, that’s where the day has gone. I’m Linda Ciancimino. I am from Burlington, Connecticut and I would like to inform you about our pet store Gentle Jungle. I know I don’t have much time to do this, so I’m just going to go over some of things, basically most of this stuff is what everybody else has said.

I have worked at the store for over 20 years and to me it is much, much more than just a job. I help match the right breed of puppy or kitten to the family that is looking to get that forever home for their pet. We take excellent care of our animals, we exercise them multiple times a day. Our puppies and kittens are checked once a week by Dr. Ross and of course the state law requires that it’s two times a week but we have them come in every week. We also
follow the current state law where the puppies and kittens can come from and we post them at the store for public knowledge. Our families are able to interact and get to know their pet rather than seeing a photo on-line or picking up a pet at the airport with little knowledge of where it actually came from. It they do not find a certain breed for their family at Gentle Jungle I tell families to visit local pounds and rescue organizations. By doing this I am providing families the option to chose where they want to get their new family friend. I also explain to the families that no matter where they decide to get a pet that the responsibilities and proper care for the animals are still the same. We also take in kittens that people are unable to keep at Gentle Jungle and the doctor also check those for feline leukemia, AIDS tested and then their shorts and they are sold to people for forever pets.

Also parents with their children come in and play with puppies, kittens and rabbits in our playroom. Some families come in and interact with these animals to decide which one will be their next family member. Other families come in to get their children acquainted with the animals. It is important for children to grow up with animals, learn about them and take proper care of them. I am an animal lover and have taken care of many stray and feral cats in my area. Over the years I’ve taken Gentle Jungle, I’ve gotten five puppies, seven cats and other pets including birds. These animals that I brought home had long and happy lives and today I have one dog and four cats from the store. My entire life has been dedicated to taking care of animals.
Here in the United States we have the freedom to make choices. Our opinion should not be limited to a small percentage of people who do not understand the Gentle Jungle, how it is run and how the animals are taken care of. To take this freedom away is unjust and unfair to so many people who have received many years of happiness from their pets. You should not make an opinion about our store before you have all the facts to support that opinion. Thank you for listening. I hope you all enjoy the unconditional love and memories you have received from your pets no matter where you go for them. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you so much for your testimony. Any member of the Committee have questions? Thank you so much. Okay, Liz Dousa, followed by Jesse Sarno, followed by Eric Benites. Welcome.

LIZ DOUSA: Hello. My name is Liz Dousa and I am speaking on behalf of Christopher and Dick Carthy since they are not able to be here today.

So, we are strongly opposed to Bill 5386. We have followed Connecticut Department of Agriculture requirement which detail everything from proper structural standards of all the enclosures as well as how often to feed our animals and record keeping up to date with all their vaccines up to the animals age as well as spaying and neutering if the animals stay with us after six months of age. We have all of our animals vet checked two times before selling them and we also have them Parvo tested before they even enter the store directly on the truck so that we can make sure that all of them come in already healthy to us and not any of these are just pet shop
suggestions, they are regulations that we do have to follow.

We offer a warranty that is given to all our customers. In the event of being a sick dog, we pay all vet bills that are required and more. We operate The Dog House and Save All Dogs Rescue so we have a unique situation where we both operate a pet store on one side and a rescue shelter on the other. We provide the same level of care that we do for all of our rescue animals that we do for all of our pet store puppies. Should a rescue dog have any kind of medical issue after he or she is adopted we do our best to assist the adopter with either reimbursement of the adoption fee or providing vet care through our own veterinarian at our own cost even though we don’t have to. We do it out of our strong commitment to animal care.

I can speak with firsthand knowledge that offering rescue dogs as this Bill proposes is not a viable alternative. In doing so the following is what we have experienced. Rescue puppies who are born in unknown through typically poor and unhealthy conditions have more health issues than breeder raised puppies who are up-to-date with all their vaccinations by the beginning when they are supposed to have them. Most rescue dogs come from unknown backgrounds and therefore also have unpredictable temperaments because we don’t know what they were put through. They were either starved or beaten or they have never had any kind of human contact therefore there is more risk involved with families from adopting a rescue dog than purchasing a puppy. Caring for cats and dogs is very expensive. Some of these expenses include vet care, vaccines, food
clean bedding, heat, air condition. We definitely lose money on rescue dogs. Just by having an adoption fee we don’t get back the money we put into them. It is clearly based on our experience that operating both a pet store and a rescue program without the financial support of the pet store, the rescue program would fail. We don’t have the resources that we need just by being a rescue. We are a 501 (c)(3). We are non-profit but we just don’t have the grants like they do down south to operate.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Could I ask you what the name of the organization is?

LIZ DOUSA: It’s Save All Dogs Rescue.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, Save All Dogs Rescue and Save All Dogs Rescue is just the rescue portion of the business.

LIZ DOUSA: It is strictly rescue. We actually drive down to Tennessee, we came back last night with 12 rescue dogs all from different situations.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): But there is also a pet store next door.

LIZ DOUSA: So were located, we actually have.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): What is the name of that, I’m sorry.

LIZ DOUSA: The Dog House.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): That’s The Dog House, I appreciate that. Can you tell me how many dogs approximately, and I don’t care if you tell me annually, monthly go through Save All Dogs versus
how many puppies are purchased through The Dog House?

LIZ DOUSA: The rescue dogs we bring in dogs approximately once or twice a month and we get out about 25 percent of what we bring in. We bring in about 68 dogs each month with the rescue. For the puppies we bring in about 20-30 a week and we get out almost all of them the same week.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): So what do you do with the rescue dogs that don’t.

LIZ DOUSA: They stay with us until they get adopted. Right now we actually have a pit-bull whose name is Titan and he has lived with us for three years.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, so when you say you are getting them out, you mean the same month?

LIZ DOUSA: There are getting out as being adopted or sold.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): But did you say 28 percent get?

LIZ DOUSA: Twenty eight percent in a month will get adopted, yeah not too many.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): And did I hear you say that there is no profit involved what so ever with the rescue, is there.

LIZ DOUSA: Not at all, just because.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Every rescue?

LIZ DOUSA: Not with every rescue. I would say just because the Humane Society they’ve been around longer, the rescue that we offer has only been open
for five years and we don’t have the volunteers. We have volunteers come in but not as many as we should. We don’t get any grants or state funding and we were just recently given a 501(c)(3) as of August of last year.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): And is there any qualification for an organization that you get your rescue dogs from?

LIZ DOUSA: What kind of qualifications.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Do you only use, do you only work with certain organizations?

LIZ DOUSA: We work with one woman in particular but she is the one who pulls all the dogs out of the kill shelters so she gets some from different environments.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): So they can be, are most of them pulled out of kill shelters?

LIZ DOUSA: Most of them are pulled out of kill shelters or they are confiscated by police.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, I don’t have any other questions. Anybody else? Yes, Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for your testimony. Just curious five or six years ago do you recall getting puppies from Gary Phelps?

LIZ DOUSA: No.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): No. Okay, cause there is some report that I found on-line again that this guy was fined $18,000 dollars by the USDA for violations
since USDA has been mentioned a couple of times I thought that would be interesting, for nonpayment yet is still licensed but that was five-six years ago which is funny sort of around the same time you guys open a shelter, right a rescue. And it says clearly says that it sold pups to you guys, to The Dog House. So the problem they found with those, with Gary Phelps was excessive feces under the cages and rotted support beams on bricks so danger of a collapsing structure, so lack of care for the puppies. Just no recall.

LIZ DOUSA: No, I’ve only been with the rescue for three years, no I don’t recall that.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Okay, thanks so much for your testimony. Okay Jesse Sarno, followed by Eric Benites, followed by Laurel Huggler. Hi, Jesse welcome.

JESSE SARNO: Hello, my name is Jesse Sarno. I am here for you guys to vote no on HB-5386 A BILL INTENDED TO UNDERMINE PET SHOP ANIMAL SALES.

I’ve been working at All Pets Club for almost ten years. I started when I was 16 years old and the fun has not stopped. From taking care of puppies to taking care of customers I couldn’t enjoy my job more. I, myself have bought two Cavaliers from All Pets Club. Unfortunately my childhood dog passed away at the age of 14 but my Hashbrown is the best thing in my life.

I don’t agree with this Bill HB 5386 because it will affect many lives. There are so many people that love to come into the pet store and see the puppies. We have many regular customers that have bought many
multiple dogs from us and recommend us to all their friends and family. We allow customers to enjoy first person experience by interacting with these puppies. We have customers that know what breed they want and are willing to wait weeks until we can satisfy their needs. Some customers need our help and guidance in finding the right puppy for them and their home. We can help educate the customers that aren’t familiar with certain breeds. If someone wants to bring they dog into play for meet-and-greet for the puppy we give them access to do that and spend their time with them so that we can assure that they are making the right choice. We allow our customers to find compatibility with our puppies without having to travel or pay in advance for a puppy that might not be a good fit for their home or family. These energetic, fun loving puppies bring so much joy into so many lives. Many college kids will pass by and spend their time with the puppies just for stress reducer during different tests and exams. Group homes will come in weekly, strictly weekly, every week just to play with the puppies. You should seriously see the smiles on their faces when they have the chance. Many parents will bring their children in just because the children are no-stop bugging just to see the puppies.

Now if we do get the shelter dogs in the parents aren’t going to be coming as much because what parent is gonna want to bring their kid to be playing with these shelter dogs that we can’t give them the information that we do have access to as a puppy.

When a puppy does go home we make sure the family is getting everything they need to take care of their
new family member. We follow up by making multiple phone calls to check-in after the dog leaves to see how he or she is doing and adjusting. We follow the CT Lemon Law and fully go over that with our customers before purchasing. Every single puppy finds a home and every puppy is loved. All of our puppies come from USDA breeders and we keep all our inspection reports on file. Their USDA numbers and information is on every display window, every dog tag has their date of birth, registry, sex, color, microchip, breeder information visible for everyone to see with their origins. Phone numbers for the breeders are available for the customers if they have any additional questions. There is nothing to hide and there is nothing to be ashamed of. I am proud to say I work at All Pets Club. Customers will constantly say to us we have the best job in the world and I believe them.

On a personal level I hope that this Bill does not get passed because I will be without a job along with many others. We have schools and programs and kids with special needs to get experience working and I would hate not to be able to provide that and give them the opportunity for that anymore. I hope that what I say can enlighten you in your thoughts on HB-5386, so please vote no on the Bill.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Mr. Sarno. Any questions from the Committee? Thank you so much. Eric Benites, followed by Laurel Huggler, followed by Colleen Dwyer. Welcome.

ERIC BENITES: Colleen had to go. She has a kid and stuff. Good evening guys, how’s it goin?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): HI.
ERIC BENITES: My name is Eric Benites, I go my job as Ricky, that is what Butch has know me as since I was six. My family has been in the business for that long working there. I work there now. I’ve been employed for about four years in the Wallingford location and I’ve come to love what I do.

I love animals. I’ve grown up with 12 foot snakes, puppies, cats, skunks, you name it, I probably had it, honestly. It’s just amazing to be at that business and all the service that we provide the people. And the employees, we offer a great opportunity to the employees that are going into the veterinarian field. They get to learn about medicine, general behaviors, nutrition which are all very big key components in their field. This job has also given me the tools to educate customers and help them out with their personal pet needs. Many customers have come in looking for service animals whether it be a police dog, a seeing-eye dog, a farm hand, guard dog, you name it we definitely help people find just that, even emotional support dogs for college students is something that is very common now especially for Quinnipiac students.

We put in maximum effort every single day to ensure that our animals have healthy and clean environments. We keep our protocols above and beyond what they need to be, over what the USDA regulations are honestly. We keep the best interests of the puppies and all the other animals, the rabbits, ferrets, all the small animals and each one of my co-workers have a passion for these animals and care for them as if they were their own because half the time we end up taking them home.
anyways. I’ve taken home two dogs, Laurel has taken home too many dogs, Butch has taken home dogs, everybody in the store has probably taken home at least six dogs or small animals from the store honestly.

So I would just say that, you know, I could reiterate what everybody else has said, we have USDA breeders, we follow regulations. I could say all of that but you’ve already heard it twenty-several times so I kind of, yeah why reiterate it when you know it, right? So I just kind of oppose this Bill, vote no on HB-5386. I thank you for your time.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Mr. Benits. Any questions?

ERIC BENITES: Beat the buzzer! {Laughter]

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): You’re good. Good job. All right thank you so much. Laurel Huggler.

LAUREL HUGGLER: Good evening Committee Members. The services our pet store provides by selling from quality breeders to people who don’t even know what dog they want, they come in and say, I want a dog for my family. Some of the things they’ve even said, is we belong to a rescue group but because we have children under ten they will not give me a dog. I said, okay, let’s work on it. Sometimes we bring out breeds of dogs they’ve never heard of that will fit definitely in their family.

These families want puppies to fit their families, to train the pup the way they would like. Shelter dogs are not so easy. Some have issues. I have worked with shelters. Some even puppies are various are breeds, you get a lot of hounds from down south,
nothing wrong with a hound but it is not what somebody for their dog. They want something that is for themselves. I also know some rescue groups, not the best ones in the world that will go down and empty out a shelter by paying $25.00 dollars for each puppy or dog and then come up and sell them for $500 and $600 dollars. I don’t say all of them are like that but some of them are.

There are a lot of different things. We take our customers and make them our family. We have had people come in that have bought three, four, five, six. We had one lady that bought 12 dogs from us over the past couple of years. So, it’s not that puppy should be an unpleasant experience. People should be able to buy a puppy where they want to or a dog where they want to. People come in and say, boy did I get scammed. I sent money to a breeder and now I can’t get ahold of them. I have had people say that they’ve done all sort of things. There is a place for everything in here that people should have the choice of being able to buy where they want to buy and what they want to buy.

One of our breeders was in a book. I went and picked up this book, it said where to buy puppies, where to get dogs and all of a sudden there is a whole chapter about Judy Miller who was talking and I called Judy, which we can do. We can call our breeders and the people who buy dogs from us can call the people that they get their dogs from. I says, Judy you’re in a book, “Well” she says, “They finally put that book out did they?” And I says that person had noting, she says it’s a big establishment, she’s a very good breeder and the breeder knows everyone of her dogs by name. She
brings some of them into the house every night. She says, “I liked what I saw.” This same woman gives dogs to soldiers who have PTSD. She also gives them to people who need special needs and she will guarantee her dogs forever. We have other breeders that actually brings dogs and puppies to nursing homes. These are not people who have anything to hid. One thing that did bother me was that some of the groups here are making fun of the USDA which is a government run type of things and then they are putting things into your head to say now you make the rules, you’re government too. So is it that they don’t like some government things and they like some, you’re supposed to like everything that goes along? Thank your for your time.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Well I don’t know that I like everything that goes on [Laughter].

LAUREL HUGGLER: But you know what I’m saying. You know, they’re picking and choosing on who they think should do what in everything like that.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I appreciate your testimony. Any questions from the Committee? All right thank you so much. Okay so I understand Colleen Dwyer is not here. I’m sorry, sir what is your name? I mean everybody has a long ride home so you’re saying?

GARY NUDELMAN I have two cochlear implants and the batteries are running low.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): And they are gonna die. Okay, I understand. Well if everybody is okay with that, I’m fine with that Gary. Okay, thank you.

GARY NUDELMAN: My name is Gary Nudelman and I am actually the Director of New York Pet Welfare
Association and now I live here in Connecticut as well. I am an animal behaviorist canine specialist. I work canine units. I’ve worked pretty much on just any kind of dog you can imagine. I trained over 45,000 dogs in my life.

The HSUS woman who said our dogs are not trained or socialized has no idea of what she is talking about. Training is absolutely free in my store. I can’t get excited [Laughter]. Just wanted to tell you who I am and I’ll try to sit.

So I have a long pedigree. I’ve been doing this since 1974, when we opened up our store and now I’ll read from here.

My name is Gary Nudelman and I am the owner of CT Breeder in Norwalk CT. After doing research and finding that Norwalk was a very friendly atmosphere, we decided to make Norwalk our home. In March of 2017 we opened. Our investment into the business was over $1,000,000 dollars. We actually own CT Breeders and United Veterinarian Center. So we put up a big animal hospital next to our store. Our dogs literally can be seen every single day. Just tooting my own horn. Since opening I found the area to be very friendly and are happy to be serving the community and beyond. We bring in customers from nearby states like New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and we’ve even people from Vermont. We are licensed by the state, we are insured and inspected pay taxes, and are proud to work within the very stringent CT Connecticut guide lines. We have been in business since 1984 in New York and this is our third location. The reason we have stayed in business is by providing the client with excellent customer service, great advice, healthy
puppies, and being there for them even going so far as offering free training which each purchase.

Attempting to change our successful business model and having us source from rescue only would not only put us out of business but would do an injustice to your constituents. If a family needed or desired a dog that is small, doesn’t shed there is no guarantee that they could find that in a rescue or shelter. They would then have to seek out an unlicensed breeder, unregulated or uninspected source. There would be no way for them to be protected. Connecticut could not monitor the sale of an animal and would lose sales tax and revenue you currently have coming to the state. There is also no guarantee that rescues would have enough puppies to supply the stores. With the amount of dogs they’re bringing in at this point, you really want to bring in more? I mean they’re coming from Korea, St. Thomas they’re coming from everywhere. I was just in St. Thomas, I saw them. As reported most recently by a 2016 Connecticut Department of Agriculture report, almost all dogs imported into Connecticut by shelters and rescues are coming from unknown sources in other states and even other countries.

The state of California banned stores from selling puppies in a misguided attempt to end “puppy mills” a term which still has no clear definition. If the Representative has a definition, I would like to hear what a puppy mill is. The truth is we still have not seen the impact that the California law has had on improving animal welfare or shutting down any bad breeders. I have seen the impact on businesses in California. I know people who have been forced
to shut down as a result of not being able to compete with larger pet store chains. That goes to the narrative of us just start selling supplies and not puppies cause we can’t compete with PetSmart, Petco, Amazon, it’s an impossibility. We will be gone like that [snaps fingers]. It is not easy to run your own business. It takes a lot of hard work, dedication, and passion. In order to be successful, you must be reliable and build a strong customer base.

Our customers rely on us to provide them with healthy family pets. There is a place for rescues and shelters and we support them but your constituents deserve choice which you’ve heard so many times. The Bill does nothing more than target the diligent people in your state that work hard providing well cared for, responsibly raised, specific breeds to fit the needs of your constituents. These stores have a state mandated warranty and strict laws regarding the care of these puppies. We employ your constituents and are active in our communities. We are also in this business because we love what we do.

I ask you to continue to support responsible animal care, protect pet choice, protect pet owners in Connecticut, and save jobs. All right.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Appreciate your testimony. Oh, somebody might have a question for you. Somebody have a question? Anybody. Representative Wilson

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you for staying all day. I’ve kind of watched you over there in the corner. I’m surprised they didn’t have to tie you down
[Laughter]. So you mentioned the amount of money you invested in Norwalk for your business. Can I ask how many employees you have?

GARY NUDELMAN: We have about 20-22.


GARY NUDELMAN: The animal hospital and the store.

REP. WILSON (53RD): And you heard me ask a gentleman earlier who was a farmer and talking about the hemp Bill. I asked him the same question, how many employees and I am again go off topic here because what we’re hearing from all you folks that are in the pet store business it is really about business, it is really about jobs, it’s really about the economy here in the State of Connecticut and so how would the Family Medical Leave Act and the minimum affect your business?

GARY NUDELMAN: Okay, I have stores in New York City. The $15.00 dollar an hour is ridiculous. I can no longer afford to have as many people as I used to. I cut the hours of my store, I mean this is happening to me right now. So we used to be open from, we used to have our staff there at eight o’clock in the morning. We would open at ten. We would close at nine. We would have more staff members and I could afford to have maybe extra people to answer phones, do paper work, things like that. I can no longer afford to do that. At $15.00 dollars an hour when you’re talking six to eight people, not only is.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Sir, I’m just going to interrupt you for one second only because this is not what we’re debating here today. So
Representative I would just ask that maybe we save those questions for offline if you are interested in how businesses will react.

GARY NUDELMAN: Any of you are invited to come to my store, any time that I’m open and inspect. How’s that.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. I appreciate the invitation. And Representative Michel do you have a question?

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Sure. Thank you, Madam Chair. Hello, Mr. Nudelman. Thank you for your testimony. I am not going to define what a puppy mill is, I think everybody in the room knows what the intent is. But I will just ask, I’m again making some searches on the internet. I’m sure there is some reason.

GARY NUDELMAN: I just need to see your mouth.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): There are numerous complaints regarding your businesses in New York, not in Connecticut so it might not really be appropriate but just wondering any comments you might have about that, you’re selling puppy mill dogs and different things, rip off report, USA complaints, USA consumer complaints, BBB Better Business Bureau.

GARY NUDELMAN: Against me?

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I just said it. I mentioned a couple of websites that where your name is and the name of your stores are where there are some complaints regarding.

GARY NUDELMAN: My store. Did you get elected by 100 percent of the people?
REP. MICHEL (146TH): No, no of course, 30 percent might complain about me.

GARY NUDELMAN: I’ve sold 40,000 dogs in my life.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Okay, I’m here to ask you the questions. Okay, thank you.

GARY NUDELMAN: I heard you picking on the other person. Go ahead.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, so does anybody have any questions? Thank you, sir. Thank you for your testimony. Okay, next is Oriana Zingas, followed by Joanne Basile, followed by Katie Kelleher. Is Oriana here? No, okay Jo-Anne. I know you’re here. You okay? Thank you for being so patient and welcome.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Good evening Co-Chairs, Ranking Members and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee. My name is Jo-Anne Basile, I am the Executive Director of Connecticut Votes for Animals which is a grassroots 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 all should want to live in.

We have submitted testimony on several Bills but today, or this evening I am going to talk very briefly about 5386. You’ve heard a lot of things this evening and I would like to focus, refocus the attention of the Committee to really the issues that we’re talking about here which are puppy mills or puppy factories or puppy factory farms if you would
prefer calling them that because that is indeed what they are. We don’t have anything against the stores. I am sure the stores run very great operations and bring children in and it’s a great educational experience and so on. That’s not our issue. Where they get their animals from is in fact our concern.

For those of you who were here five years ago, Senator Miner certainly was, and you saw what we went through the 2014 Bill. IN terms of trying to implement that law, which was something less than perfect to many people but it granted, supposedly transparency for the dogs sold in the Connecticut pet stores. The Department of Agriculture never had the manpower to be able to implement the law. They absolutely followed up on complaints that were made but they don’t the manpower, they don’t have the staffing there. In order to find out whether or not the stores were getting animals from compliant breeders that was being done by volunteers who spent hundreds of hours in pet stores, getting the list of the animals that were being brought in and then checking that out with the Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Agriculture their animal welfare inspection. As you know that information is now no longer available to the public.

So many of your are pet owners, I know that and I know you would be horrified if you were to see the conditions under which these dogs are breed. Seeing the cute puppies in a Connecticut store maligns the horror that the breeding female. Seriously {Laughing}. All right I’m gonna cut right to the chase here. There are horrible conditions that they
live under. If you think about it as a pet owner, if you think about your dog in a cage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for their entire life, is that the way you want to have an animal spend their life and that’s just the top of the line in terms of things in which the USDA certification standards mean. They’re talking why are flooring, stacked cages, no daylight has to be available just light bulbs, contact with other dogs or humans is minimal. Bedding of other methods of conserving body heat is only required when the ambient temperature is 50 degrees. We recognize this is not an easy task that the Committee has but we are ever hopeful that the Committee understand that there is a path forward that will be human, relieve the suffering of thousands of animals, find loving homes for those that have none and be good for Connecticut businesses. We are here to help the Committee take that path forward. My prop is my dog. His name is Mac. I rescued Mac a year ago. I adopted him. He is 10-1/2, he is blind and he is mostly deaf and according to surrender information he is blind because of a genetic defect. Mac was breed by a Midwestern USDA certified breeding facility called Dot’s Dogs. He was purchased at All Pets Club in Branford. The breeding dog had many dogs before Mac and had many after Mac.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): JoAnne, I have to ask you to summarize.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Yep, on that last sentence, who went to good unsuspecting homes. The question of his condition, his condition raises a question, how many of Mac’s littermates are also blind out there to unsuspecting homes. Thank you.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): And I’m just gonna ask you the question I asked of Amy Jesse of the Humane Society which is these rescue organizations, is it where they have their animals are there conditions that are very different from that of these puppy mills that you described.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Yeah. Well I think that what you’ll find is that if you’re asking Senator Cohen about when they’re brought up here to the State of Connecticut one would hope that, yes they’re usually in other foster arrangements or in people’s personal homes. We do in fact have some shelters that are private, non-profit shelters and they’re actually brick and mortar facilities and we were supposed to have some regulations on those but they haven’t been promulgated yet out of OPM and that’s been two years. That is another issue. So yes the conditions are quite different because they’re not breeding facilities and the dogs are not required or left actually in crates with no human interaction. And we’re not talking about the dogs that ultimately end up in the pet stores here, we’re talking about the parents of the dogs and that is the chain that we’re trying to stop.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Is it possible that enacting legislation like this we create some sort of underground black market that would exacerbate the problem of having more of these puppies that need to be rescued?

JO-ANNE BASILE: Well you certainly don’t want to exchange one problem for another. And it may have been said before, you know, this is actually a good time for Connecticut to not to be first because you can see what has happened in places like California
and also in Maryland. We know that there has been, they’ve identified some problems in the California having just that issue having kind of a underground rescue operation that has started to evolve there but my conversations with the people in California just earlier this week said that right now it is very limited, it’s isolated and they believe they are going to resolve it. One of the things we would certainly want to talk to the Committee about is to make sure that the language doesn’t permit or allow or have a loophole in it that would enable that kind of underground operation to evolve.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Any questions from the Committee? Yes, Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. So as we continue to go down this path I think I mentioned that when I went through the list that the Department of Agriculture, our Department of Agriculture put together it seemed clear to me that some of the animals that came to Connecticut came from puppy mills and ended up in the rescue kind of organization. Should we, should we be concerned that the standard that some people advocate, in fact we passed a law that said they can’t have them from puppy mills, should we be concerned that in the rescue organization that seems to be permissible and maybe widespread or is that, should we be blind to that?

JO-ANNE BASILE: You know, Connecticut folks would certainly support looking carefully at the whole issue of rescues, you know we do believe there needs to be some safeguards put in place as respect to rescues. We’ve got issues her in Connecticut we know that. With respect to some of the rescue
purchasing dogs that they get from puppy mills that perhaps they get from auctions, I know personally that there are some rescues that do that because they are rescuing, these were breeding dogs that have been given up by the factory farms because the dogs are no longer, are not good for them any longer, they don’t produce enough puppies or whatever so they get thrown into these auctions and so the rescues buy them off of those auctions but it is not so they are buying puppies they are buying, you know, 8-year-old dogs that have been pretty well spent so to speak.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you for being here. Thank you, Madam Chairman for the opportunity to ask the question.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Any other questions? Yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for coming. Do you know what percentage of the dogs that come into Connecticut that are sold in pet stores are from puppy mills?

JO-ANNE BASILE: Because they have to come from USDA certified facilities, and I don’t think, the pet store dogs they would all probably pretty much meet the definition of a factory farmed dog. That is how those dogs are, and you know what the pictures look like, you know there are these are large facilities, some of them and you and if you haven’t seen the numbers I would be more than happy to provide you with some of the maps that have been put together on how many of these commercial breeding facilities are in a particular state and the number of dogs that they breed within those facilities. You don’t find
in those facilities, you don’t fine anybody who breeds fewer than 50 dogs. That is, you know, if we think about if you had a dog, a female dog that was going to have a puppy, going to have a liter you have maybe 12 dogs if you had like a lab. You wouldn’t have 50, it’s a lot. And those are the smallest and then they run up to, you know, 400-500 a thousand and there are, I can provide you with maps where you see this in individual states and which states have those kinds of commercial breeding facilities. We don’t have any in Connecticut, they have one in Massachusetts. They are not in the New England area where you guess they would be, in the Midwest and also Pennsylvania and Ohio.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So are you saying that none of the dogs that are sold in any pet store in Connecticut come from a reputable breeder?

JO-ANNE BASILE: I would probably, if you were to ask me do I believe if any of the dogs that are sold in Connecticut come from a breeder that is that is a USDA breeder and if they meet those minimum standards they are in sufficient as far as I’m concerned.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So do I get this right that by virtue of being certified by the USDA that makes them a puppy mill?

JO-ANNE BASILE: You know that the certification is merely a, it’s a qualification. It is not a quality standard. It is, if I read some of the requirements of having USDA certification you are allowed to have things like you can have the dog sitting in wire-mesh crates. Do you know what that does to their paws? And then you can stack ‘em up. I mean Dots’
Dogs used to be like 3,000 dogs. The place that this dog came from all stacked up in crates, in Missouri.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So you’re saying that the USDA requirements are too lax.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Yes, yes absolutely and not only are they too lax but now they are not even being enforced and we know that from information that has been coming out. And over time USDA has been cutting back on their, they were overtaxed to being with in terms of the amount of inspectors they had and their ability to be able to go out to these commercial breeding facilities and now it is even less so.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, but is there anything in the USDA regulations that is mandated that requires these places to treat their animals poorly?

JO-ANNE BASILE: You know that is a funny twist and to treat them poorly, they probably don’t say that specifically in the regulations but if the regulations said that you had to feed your animal, you are only required to feed your animal once a week and that your animal didn’t have, you weren’t required to be able to have any human interaction with that animal, and by the way we’re talking about dogs as we all know thrive on human interaction but it doesn’t say that you have to treat them badly but is that the way you would want to have your animal treated.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay what I’m asking is there is a set of regulations that allow, that you believe it too lax that allow people to do things that you think are bad to animals but is there anything in
those regulations that requires them to do things that you believe are bad or is it possible for somebody to follow the regulations and still treat their animals properly?

JO-ANNE BASILE: Anything and everything is always possible, Representative Dubitsky. Do I believe it happens, I don’t and I don’t because of a lot of the information that I’ve read and that is the reason why? I mean to I believe that there are obviously gradations because there is a Horrible Hundred but so there are some that are better than others and I believe some of the stores in this state probably work at getting to some of the ones that are better than others. Do I believe it is optimum in the way in which animals should be bred? I don’t.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Yes, Representative Mushinsky.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): I’m just trying to figure out where we go from here. We’ve been working on this for I don’t know, 25 years, trying to weed out the bad sources of puppies and identify them and tag em and make sure they don’t sold in Connecticut because we can’t really touch Missouri from her.

JO-ANNE BASILE: The only way we can touch it is by cutting the supply line. Absolutely we can’t go over to Missouri and tell them how to run their business.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Correct, so what do we do next that makes sure those bad actors who we know who they are, unless they change their name, but we
know who they are, how do we make sure they aren’t sold in Connecticut short of banning the sales of puppies in Connecticut?

JO-ANNE BASILE: I think what is unfortunate right now is that it is so difficult to get information about those animals and I guess what I would really like to see, is I would like to see the pet stores say that they want to revolutionize and change the way in which animals are raised. I don’t have a problem with people goin to breeders, I’d like them to go to breeders and I hear horrible stories about some breeders too, they’re terrible and we all know there are problems with the rescues as well. We’re looking for a humane way for an animal to be raised and I would like the pet stores to be perhaps partners with us in finding a better way of getting dogs bred than the kind of, the kinds of places that these dogs come from. I don’t think any dogs that are bred in facilities that breeds 50 to 500 dogs is a way for a dog to be bred.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): No, you’re right but I am trying to say practically speaking are you trying to say that you want the customer to be able to see the breeding facility with their own eyes or are you saying that anybody that’s a breeder that’s not from Connecticut shouldn’t be allowed to sell in Connecticut or what are you saying?

JO-ANNE BASILE: You know, the Connecticut piece is an odd thing because, you know, yeah would I ideally like us to be able to control some of the stuff here within the state? I would. We don’t have the resources to do that. Our Department of Ag and then me might and we stop so we can’t burden them with that.
REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Okay, so is your total ban on puppy sales is that because you think that is the only answer to this problem?

JO-ANNE BASILE: Let me put it this way. I would never be closed to having a conversation about other options.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Okay, we have to mull this over for a while and think of other ways to do this.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Well I would, that’s one of the things also I would really like there to be a more.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): We can talk about it on a train. We ride the train a lot together. We can talk about it on the train.

JO-ANNE BASILE: We can talk about it one the train [Cross-talking, laughing]. We do the train together Senator Cohen by the way.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Maybe I’ll join you.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Yeah, it’s very relaxing.

JO-ANNE BASILE: And they have Wi-Fi so we can get internet too.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Well maybe on the train or whatever but we really should think about is it all or nothing or is there another way we can do this that, cause I know exactly who your targeting it is just hard to right this cause they’re out of state for most part.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Right, right exclusively because we don’t have any USDA facilities here in the state.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Okay thank you.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Jo-Anne were you here the whole day?

JO-ANNE BASILE: Since 8:30 this morning.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Oh, thank you very much for your testimony.

JO-ANNE BASILE: After taking an hour and a half to get here because there was snow on the coastline.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you very much. I just want to thank you very much for what you are doing and for staying here all day, just like everybody else by the way and my colleagues. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): And thank you, Representative Michel for staying as well. [Laughter] Any other questions? Everybody gets a pat on the back for stickin in.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Doesn’t anyone want to say how cute Mac is?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Mac is cute. Okay thank you. Thank you very much for your testimony. Okay we have, I just want to make sure Arianna is not, gone - okay, thank you. Katie Kelleher, followed by Deb Terozi followed by Julie Parsons.

KATIE KELLEHER: Deb and Julie aren’t here anymore, they had to leave early unfortunately. Sorry, like 4:30 this afternoon. Julie was in the hospital last week and Debbie was her ride and Julie, you know, couldn’t stay anymore and were here since this morning.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Sorry to hear that but thank you for letting us know. Welcome, Ms. Kelleher.

KATIE KELLEHER: Thank you, as you know my name is Katie Kelleher and I am here in opposition to Bill 5386. I am a current employee of The Dog House and have been working there for about 4 years. I would also like to add that the owners Christopher Carty and his father, Mr. C were hoping to be here but could not because Mr. C is continuing to have complications while fighting a rare form of cancer in a New York hospital.

I have also worked for Save All Dogs Rescue which is funded by The Dog House as well as volunteered for Our Companions in Manchester, Connecticut and T.J. O'Connor in Springfield, Massachusetts. I have been on several trips to Tennessee to pick up rescue animals and transport them back to Connecticut. I can say that is a lot of work for little pay. You do it for the dogs.

I have been an animal lover my whole life and would not work somewhere that I believed was cruel to animals in any way. I know for a fact that the owners care for animals as deeply as I do and work very hard to ensure they are sourced and cared for responsibly.

My boss has a mix of rescue dogs, purebreds and unsalable puppies as personal pets. We do not support puppy mills. We constantly do our best to make sure we buy from responsible breeders and immediately stop doing business with any breeders who we discover do not meet our animal wellbeing standards. Please ask the USDA to improve their standards. We are not the problem.
Among my duties in my current role at The Dog House, I process vet claims and less than four percent of our puppies sold have a claim submitted of which we almost always reimburse the customer above and beyond any current legal requirements. Additionally the majority of these claims are for simple issues like kennel cough which a puppy can get from stress of a new environment, from the vet or from the dog park.

I have fostered rescue dogs and retail puppies alike because they are all living creatures that sometimes require extra attention no matter how well you take care of them. I originally fell in love with a rescue dog I wanted to adopt, but unfortunately was not able to get. However, I later fostered a puppy from The Dog House who is now my dog. Though I love rescue and support it wholeheartedly, I felt comfortable purchasing a puppy from The Dog House because I know what an upstanding company they are. Three years later, I am now considering purchasing a second puppy because I have come to appreciate that my dog doesn't shed and would like another hypoallergenic dog which are hard to come by in rescue.

I believe that all animals should be properly sourced and well cared for and people should have the choice to get a type of dog that is best suited for their lifestyle and their family.

Basically in summation, I have been an employee at a rescue. I have been an employee at a pet shop and I think that it’s not fair that The Dog House and the other well-regulated pet stores like us in Connecticut are very focused on animal welfare and it would be unjust to target such businesses based
on the unfounded notion that they are bad for or cruel to animals. This is the breeders, the USDA and we do our very best to make sure we have high quality breeders which is now part of my job as well. I call them, I talk to them, we tell them when one of their puppies is sick. One of the breeders called us like everyday asking how the puppy was [Crying], sorry. I’m just very passionate.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I appreciate that.

KATIE KELLEHER: And I love my animals and [sniffs] and I’ve dealt with the animal activists and I’ve been an activist myself in many things and these are just misinformed and they are unwilling to listen to what we have to say.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay thank you, Ms. Kelleher. Anybody have any questions?

KATIE KELLEHER: I can answers questions, I swear on either the rescue or the pet shop, I’m happy to answer questions. I’ve been there about four years and I’ve become kind of the executive personal assistant to the owner so I’ve done a lot inside work. I work in the back office now. I started out in daycare. So, I know a lot.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I don’t know that the Committee has any questions. But that you so much for your testimony. Okay Karen Williams, followed by Tom Bosie, followed by Wendy Paul. Welcome. Thank you for hanging in with us.

JAYE MARKWELL: I hope you don’t mind, that’s Karen, I’m Jaye. She doesn’t want to testify and I am
number 49, so it helps us get home earlier if that’s okay.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): You are Jaye Markwell. Yes, and I actually since you are saying that I will reiterate that again, I did say that at the beginning of his before we started this Bill but if anybody would like to share their three minutes feel free to come up together. We won’t object. Welcome.

JAYE MARKWELL: Okay. Well thank you. Jaye Markwell. I am a member of Desmonds Army, an animal advocate group that we go into court each week to speak for the voiceless and that is what we are here to do today. I’m gonna skip a lot of this cause it’s already been discussed. Jo-Anne beautiful job.

The regulations of the USDA is bare minimum. If you were to check with DoAg, Department of Agriculture in Connecticut and check out some of these pet shop’s complaints, if you were to check out the breeders and brokers that they use and you were to go online and investigate them you would see some things, I can’t express the words right now, some really bad places that they’re getting their dogs from. Let’s not be naïve here. These are really bad places. I did do some checking and when I upload my testimony you will have a series of links of places that they use and what they actually look like.

I am kind of going off here. So I guess, ignore everything I have here cause it’s basically been discussed. A couple of things I want to ask, do you think that anybody who testified today, from a pet store, is going to tell you that they use a puppy mill? It’s just a thought. How much to they pay?
These are questions I would have asked, how much to they pay from the broker or breeder and how much do they sell that dog for? So there a lot of money involved here, a lot of money. I can tell you know from cards I’ve seen in stores or I’ve gone on their Facebook pages or their websites you’re talking $2,000 dollars or more for a dog. What happens to the puppies when they age out? Do they still adopt them out, where do they go?

If I could really quick, the Connecticut pet stores are not innocent, it is a money making business off the lives of innocent dogs who have no voice. With this lack of oversight by the State of Connecticut DoAg, animal control officers are very sparse right now, they are retiring, they don’t have a lot of people to get out there. With the Federal Government the USDA doing a very job right now, nearly half the U.S. States are banning some or all puppy mills in their states. I strongly support HB-5386, it’s the right thing to do. Thank you for your time.

KAREN WILLIAMS: Karen Williams and I support 5836.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, thank you both.

JAYE MARKWELL: I have a puppy mill dog that was bred who was left to die when they were done with her.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, thank you. I think the Committee my have some questions. Representative Reyes.

REP. REYES (75th): Thank you, Madam Chair. Good evening, ma’am. Thank you for your testimony. I’m just, out of curiosity, I have no idea what you’re
talking about when a puppy ages out? What are you talking about?

JAYE MARKWELL: So in other words, how old before the dog gets to where they can’t sell it because the person is coming in for a puppy. So, you know, do they have some that maybe end up being a year old and never gets adopted or sold, excuse me, sold. I’m used to the rescue world. Do they have two-year-old dogs in their shop? Do they have one-year-old dogs in the shop? Do they discount them? I’ve looked at their pages and seen, you know discounted dogs. What happens if that dog still doesn’t sell, where does it go?

REP. REYES (75th): Okay, thank you for your answer. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. So you just asked the question what happens when they get older? You tell me, do you know?

JAYE MARKWELL: I don’t know. These are the questions I would have asked the pet store owners. It would be nice to hear an answer. And I can answer the question about Hunt and Choice Puppies if I may?

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, sorry.

JAYE MARKWELL: There was a question asked several times about Hunt Corporation and Choice Puppies and the pet store owners were saying they don’t know. Actually Choice Puppies bought out Hunt Corporation.
REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay that wasn’t my question. You don’t have any information that they do anything bad to the dogs when they get old, right?

JAYE MARKWELL: No, I just think it would be good investigative work of asking, you know, what would happen to these dogs once they’re not puppies anymore, they’re not cute, fuzzy little puppies that are being bought for thousands of dollars, what happens.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, all right. Thank you. Through you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Hi, the question has been asked several times tonight, can you define for us what a puppy mill is?

JAYE MARKWELL: Ah, huh. A commercial breeder, this is my thought process, a commercial breeder who has no thought for the animal itself but a money making opportunity and horrible conditions.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I think you guys covered pretty well the USDA.

JAYE MARKWELL: Yeah I mean I was just gonna, you know, I could have said the same thing that has been said over and over. Can I say that the pet store owners are proudly touting the USDA, USDA but if you went and looked at the regulations, I would not be doing that.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you for what you do.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, other questions? Okay then we have Tom Sebose [Phonetic]. Thank you. Wendy Paul. Welcome.

WENDY PAUL: So, I’m Wendy Paul I live in Enfield and I currently work at Gentle Jungle with a lot of the other people, so you’ve heard a lot already about everything we would probably have to say.

So what I want to talk about is there is this idea that we can bring in shelter animals and rescue animals into our stores instead of getting them from what you call puppy mills, that all USDA breeders are puppy mills and I understand that the USDA is very lax and that is probably where we should be fighting but this is where we are. I have reached out to almost 20 rescues, pounds, Humane Societies, etc. asking if they would allow their animals to come into our stores and for us to partner with them and I received about seven “no” responses, four “I’ll get back to you”, five just no responses. I’m sorry, seven like I’m not going to responses and then there was five that they just didn’t get back to me. So based on this information and some of the words they used and one of them was saying that 100 percent of legitimate rescues and Humane Societies won’t work with pet stores. So if this is the case then with these laws or with this Bill, sorry don’t know the language, you are shutting down just mom and pop owned pet stores because we can’t compete with PetSmart and Petco, they have thousands of chains across the country so of course they can survive rescue animals that come into their facilities and it would be fantastic if we could all share the burden of rescue animals but in this case it is not plausible and in terms of any rescue in
Connecticut they don’t want to work with us. I think there is this kind of taboo of pet stores because of the puppy mills which is rightfully so when true. We are dealing with these breeders who are destroying the lives of the puppies that they have and of course we don’t want to work with them, of course we want what is best for the puppies but you also have to take in account that there are other’s who do follow the laws and it does sound like there is a huge, huge horrible thing with the USDA that I have no knowledge of at all, but according to what I’ve heard it needs to be fixed and if that’s what we need to be fighting then we should be fighting that and not shutting down the pet stores in which we, they are getting puppies from where I believe personally, I’ve only worked at the pet store for about a year, are from good breeders and the puppies that come in, we love them and work with them. So I don’t have a bunch more that that.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you so much for your testimony Wendy. Any questions from the Committee? No. Thank you. Okay Laura Simons. Laura? We will skip over Laura Simons perhaps she will be back, Jess Corsaletti, followed by Lauren Meren.

JESS CORSALETTI: Hi, my name is Jessica Corsaletti. I am here tonight to support HB-5386. I have been volunteering in animal advocacy for the last ten years in the State of Connecticut. I am a former veterinarian technician.

I first would like to address the Gentle Jungle cause I know that they had come up here and I would encourage you all to visit it. I personally have visited this store. I interacted with a dog that
was under three months old. I picked it up. It growled at me. You know, I want you to understand what is really important here is that in some of these facilities or pet stores, these animals are not socialized. This is a crucial time in their life when they are puppies to be socialized so that they don’t go out into society and bite another animal or bite a child. When I interacted with this dog I mean it really brought that home. But, you know, the pet stores have done a fantastic job tonight of deflecting and shifting things onto rescues and importing. That’s not what we’re here for tonight.

It is disappointing to me that after this amount of time after the Humane Society, ASPCA has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars for years educating the public on how bad puppy mills are that we’re still sitting here tonight and we’re discussing this. You know, it’s terrible to me and then they sit here and say they would be out of a job. I don’t buy it. California’s recognized the problem. California is much bigger and they’ve change it.

We have a responsibility as a society to just eliminate. This puppy mill industry should not exist to begin with it, its terrible, its cruel. If you went to a puppy mill and with all due respect to these youngsters who came up here to testify tonight they haven’t gone to a puppy mill. You know its great that you work that you’re happy but there are animals in Connecticut that need rescue.

The USDA unfortunately it is not regulated like you think it is. I’ve personally filed a complaint on a pet store, I was a neighbor of a pet store in Connecticut and what happened was, and I did send in
the report, you can see by the report that they were visited by the USDA after I submitted the complaint. Initially the USDA responded to me and told me that they don’t have enough officers to go to these puppy mills to inspect until a complaint is done. Our state agency, our USDA does not have enough officers to regulate and inspect. That is a huge problem. So we really need to stop this. The puppy mill industry it has been established, it’s cruel, it’s inhumane. There’s cages stacked upon cages. Animals are unsocialized. It’s cruel. You wouldn’t do it to your own animals why would you think this is okay to continue. It’s not. So please encourage them and please do the right thing. I mean as a society we should have a moral obligation to do the right thing.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you Ms. Corsaletti for your testimony. Good you tell me do you think any of the, from just your experience and knowledge of the industry, do you think that there are any organizations from which the pet stores purchase their puppies that are not puppy mills or what you would consider a humane place that puppies are bred and given to the?

JESS CORSALETTI: There’s ways of obtaining animals. There are reputable breeders. Reputable breeders, you can go on location, you can visit the mother, you can visit the father. These breeders will take the animal back if you can’t keep it anymore. Then there is pet stores and then there’s rescues. I have foster rescues for many years. Not only do I look for an adopter, I make sure that the animal is going into a home where it is going to be a success story. I don’t want to place an animal that has
high energy in a home where it is not going to be treated the right way, exercised the right way. You know, thrive. Rescues have nothing, reputable rescues have nothing to profit from doing this. I’ve put in hundreds of hours to do this. I don’t stand to gain anything unlike some of the people behind me. So it seems to me the only problem is the pet stores who are funding by purchasing these animals and then selling them. They are funding the puppy mills. We need to stop the puppy mills. So to answer your question I don’t see why that can’t follow suite with Petco, PetSmart they are very successful in adopting out animals to people. So I definitely think that is the way to go and, you know, again Senator Miner was bringing up importing animals. Reputable rescues don’t support that and we don’t do that. So if they are taking any from puppy mills that maybe a puppy mill that was just shutdown. A lot of times you’ll see Humane Society will put on a commercial, those are puppy mills that are shutdown and if a reputable rescue is taking from them, they are helping those animals that have a lot of problems afterwards.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you Ms. Corsaletti. Does anybody have any comments or questions? Yes, Senator Haskell followed by Representative Michel.

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you so much for your advocacy on behalf of Connecticut’s animal population and for your patience in this hearing this evening. You referenced California and the positive experience the stricter regulations have had in that state specifically with regard to economy surrounding pets. I just want to give you
an opportunity to expand on the experience in other states with similar legislation.

JESS CORSALETTI: Well, I also just want to remind you to that Connecticut does have a PetSmart and a Petco and they are very successful with adopting out too so it’s not that we’re doing it, it’s just that we could be doing better, by again not funding the puppy mill industry. So I can’t give you the numbers on California, we’re not California but obviously they’re conducting, you know, everything this way versus funding a terrible industry. You know, there’s a business for sex trafficking, we don’t support that so I mean why would we do this to animals. Why would we breed them in these kennels and under horrific conditions, it’s just not?

SENATOR HASKELL (26TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Senator. Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Chair. Thank you for testifying and what you do in your daily life. You mentioned that you filed an USDA report, can you elaborate on it this report, you made some comment about not being effective. So which way. Thank you.

JESS CORSALETTI: Correct. So I was directly next door to a pet shop in Connecticut and I’d spoken to the people who showed up at the pet shop with problems. I have over 15 documented reports at home of these individuals who had purchased a dog from there. After I started documenting all this information I called the Department of Agriculture. They went out for inspections, nothing happened.
Business as usual after that. I then consulted with the United States Department of Agriculture and had to do a FOI request and submit a formal complaint cause like I said, initially what they had said was, “Ma’am we just don’t have enough people to do out to these puppy mill facilities and check them regularly unless a complaint is filed.” So a lot of these consumers, you know, usually people don’t go as far as I went. They will do a Yelp review. But I did file a report and it was investigated and I had sent that in and you will see on the bottom of the report that there was only a warning. This continued, there were numerous reports, numerous reports and all they did was warn this backyard breeder. So business has continued as usual for many years beyond that.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you very much for doing that and attempting. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Reyes and then Representative Mushinsky.

REP. REYES (75th): Thank you, Madam Chair. Ma’am thank you very much for testifying here tonight. Just a quick summary in my own head. You said you were a veterinarian?

JESS CORSALETTI: I was a former veterinarian technician. I am now a dental hygienist.

REP. REYES (75th): For how many years?

JESS CORSALETTI: Which one?

REP. REYES (75th): Vet, working with the veterinarians?
JESS CORSALETTI: Approximately two years working at the veterinarian office.

REP. REYES (75th): And just out of curiosity, in the two years that you were in that vet’s office did you see or treat any puppies that came from a small pet shop that was abused?

JESS CORSALETTI: At that time the pet shop that I was speaking of that I had personal experience was not in that area so we did not address any pets from that area. A lot of the pet shops will have a relationship with certain veterinarians that they go to exclusively and the veterinarian I worked for did not find anything and did not do business with a pet shop. I’m sorry, I will say that they did have a branch in West Hartford that did a lot of business with a pet shop that is now closed down because of all the problems.

REP. REYES (75th): Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Muchinsky.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Thank you, we’re sharing a mike here. If as a possible solution to this, what if the pet stores were brokers between a customer and a breeder and it was a Connecticut breeder so you would get a reference from the pet store who would be the go-between and then you would actually go out to the place where the breeder is and pick your puppy from the breeder so this way you would have your own eyes on the facility. Is that what you’re lookin at?
JESS CORSALETTI: Well I would certainly feel more comfortable with that versus what it is right now. There is a need to have, I mean there’s plenty of shelter pets. If they, lets say choose not to do that, I would rather that they go to a reputable breeder and I think the consumer would rather too. Ideally you do want to meet the parents, like I said, a reputable breeder does genetic testing, they take their animals back, they want to know that their animals are gonna go somewhere good, so yeah. I certainly do think that’s better.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for coming in. You mentioned that you once went to a particular pet store and a puppy growled at you. And you said that it is because the dogs are not properly socialized?

JESS CORSALETTI: So at that particular pet store in Meriden and you’re welcome to go there anytime too, there are others that are in this room where that is not the case but that particular pet store they are all in individual cages. They have grates underneath as well. Yeah, that’s what I’m saying is that they only get out and interact when someone asks to hold them.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Do you have any evidence that puppies from pet stores are, have any more behavioral problems than puppies from animal rescues?

JESS CORSALETTI: That’s a good question. No, but I think any behavioralist would tell you that and this applies all across the board, if an animal is not
socialized then it does have more problems. I mean it is with anything. If you socialize it with other animals while it is young, it is more likely to be more friendly. Socialize it with people and children is more, you know, likely to be friendly with them as well so that is why dog parks exist and training, you know. There is an element of socialization that is certainly mentally healthier for these animals. When your isolating them in cages in a pet shop and they are not interacting with others that is not good and that is their foundation.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): All right. How long were you at that pet store?

JESS CORSALETTI: I was in there only about an hour. I usually don’t go into pet stores to begin with.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So do you know how those animals interacted with other people or other animals the rest of the time when you were not there?

JESS CORSALETTI: Oh, when I was not there, no.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Are you an animal behavioralist?

JESS CORSALETTI: Um, no but I have done evaluations on about 200 animals that were in a municipal shelter to determine if they were aggressive, or adoptable or what behavioral problems they did have in an effort to screen them to put them in homes that we felt were appropriate.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Do you have any formal training to do that?
JESS CORSALETTI: No, I don't. No besides working with animals in the veterinarian field, no and hands-on in the shelter. I think the topic came up of animals that were in pet shops and what happens when they get too old. When I was in that particular pet shop I will mentioned that there was also a St. Bernard that was going on six months old, the animal was marked down several times, so I know that you had inquired about that. A lot of times they will be marked down so they can sell faster.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): That doesn't mean it was abused, right?

JESS CORSALETTI: No. Keep in mind it was sitting there for all those months in a critical point in their life where they should have been socialized. It would have been beneficial for the animal to be socialized.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Thank you so much for your testimony. Okay, Laura Simon. Followed by Lauren Meren, followed by Dee Corzales.

LAURA SIMON: Okay, I'm gonna try to cover four Bills wearing two hats in three minutes. {Laughter} My name is Laura Simon, I'm from Bethany, Connecticut. I am going to cover House Bill 5386 I want to support this Bill having adopted a puppy mill dog that was totally neurotic and feel this Bill is very important.

Also want to support House Bill 7158 regarding the regulation of kennels. I don't know what I would do
without Rover and our pet sitter who I trust entirely with my dogs care is here, Monica Colbus who will be testifying and they have been a lifeline for me.

I also want to jump to opposing Senate Bill 586 on black bear hunting. I am a wildlife ecologist and now I’m gonna put on my hat as a wildlife ecologist graduated from the Yale School of Forestry. I am also the president of the Connecticut Wildlife Rehabilitators Association and I feel that it is very important that you look at science based evidence. The recreational hunting of nonproblem bears will not reduce bear problems. The science shows that resounding. What’s needed is for the kinds of techniques that are used in states around the country to solve bear problems, aggressive public education campaigns, hazing programs. There are a lot of methods for dealing with problem bears that need to be emphasized and adopted here in the state to a far greater degree than then they are now. We are also concerned about the orphaning of bears. Bears cubs spend two years with their mother. When the mother is killed these orphan bears are at a loss, they will die a slow death. They will go up to people. It is not true that they are self-sufficient at five to six months. That is just not true because you see in nature they spend two years with the mother, they would not be spending that amount of time with her if they were self-sufficient at six months.

I also want to point to the fact that bow and arrow hunting of bears is allowed in this bill is grossly inhumane. You need the kind of precision and forcefulness to kill an animal through archery
hunting that is just not possible humanely with this method in terms of killing bears.

And then I want to jump to House Bill 6014 the leg-hold trap ban. You’ve heard a lot of scare tactics here that have been used by trappers. They’d have you believe that these are essential tools for resolving nuisance wildlife problems and I can assure you we have great solutions to problem solving with beavers and coyotes. With beavers there are flow devices that can be used to stop flooding. If you trap out beavers, new beavers come in to recolonize the same areas. You do not solve problems that way. You solve problems by using flow devices and I want to talk about more, but I’m out of time.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you so much. Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for testifying today. First I would like to speak about the pet shop Bill. You familiar with Hunt, the broker, Hunt?

LAURA SIMON: I’ve heard of Hunt, yes.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): You wouldn’t happen to know, cause it’s like a mystery when we research him we find another name, and another name, and then another name. The same address like Sunrise Puppies or Choice Puppies, do you have any, do you know anything more precise about these guys?

LAURA SIMON: Like you, the road gets very complicated with Hunt and it leads to many directions which leads to a lot of suspicion, yeah.
And I think it leads to puppy mills is the bottom line.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Yeah, because we see them associated with a lot of cruelty places.

LAURA SIMON: I think Hunt equals puppy mills.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): All right and then for the black bear, the hunting black bears does killing a bear in an area where people might feel threatened resolve the problem?

LAURA SIMON: The problem is we aren’t used to bears. We are not used to coyotes in this state. People get fearful and I ran a wildlife hotline for 18 years where people would assume an animal is being aggressive because it looked at them funny. They could see it outside, they assumed the animal had a certain motivation that it was coming to get them whereas the animal was just there. People don’t understand urban wildlife. They don’t understand why the animal is there. It is usually there because it has a denning site or a food source and they are fearful of the animal so they assume the animal is aggressive and out to do harm. So you have to really ferret out what is really going on. With bears, you know, people provide food and then they get angry with the bear for coming to it. They have birdfeeders out, they leave out pet food and the same with coyotes. So we need to teach our citizenry to stop providing all these bounty, buffet of food because we’re pulling animals in. We’re telling ‘em come for the free buffet and then we get angry at them for coming.
REP. MICHEL (146TH): Okay, thank you and thank you for spending the whole day, again like everybody else. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Anyone else? Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have one question for you. You said that you are supporting 7158 because you love Rover?

LAURA SIMON: We use Rover extensively and we feel that this has good provisions for providing for those people who provide care for animals in their homes to operate sufficiently, yes.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): It is my understanding that that Bill is directed against Rover and against that whole industry, is that not your understanding?

LAURA SIMON: That’s not my understanding, no.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Mushinsky.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Thank you, Laura. Are any municipalities using the beaver deceivers in Connecticut?

LAURA SIMON: Yes, we had a program called Beaver Remedies where we provided solutions. A number of communities in Connecticut are providing what is called beaver baffles or deceivers and the beauty of the system is when beavers cause flooding, when they dam up rivers or ponds, and it creates flooding, people get very upset understandably and what they can do is put something called a beaver deceiver
through the dams. These are PVC or ADS flex pipes which actually fool the beavers. Beavers don’t understand when you put pipes through their dam and control the water level, they don’t get what’s going on and if you do it properly you can keep the water level where you want it and allow the beavers to remain in the habitat. So it is a great solution. We worked with a number of communities that provided this solution and it is the perfect answer to solving beaver problems because if you go and trap beavers what you end up doing is creating an opening, a vacuum and other beavers will come in and fill that niche and create dams and create flooding but if you put these pipes through their dams they don’t know what’s goin on. They are very instinctive, they don’t get it and you can control the water level and allow them to stay in the habitat and that is the way to answer beaver flooding problems.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Thank you. And would you consider an exception in the Bill for DEEP to trap coyotes on occasion for scientific research. For example if they had to take blood samples and the coyote is to clever to be caught and they have to use a leg trap to catch it, to collect the blood sample, would that be acceptable to you or?

LAURA SIMON: Well here’s the problem. We have heard, for example there is a biologist who is speaking next month at our organizational meeting, his name is Jonathan Wray, he is from Rhode Island. He does extensive research with coyotes and he box traps them all. He does not use leg-hold traps. He feels they are unnecessary, so you can use box traps to capture coyotes which is far more humane than
using leg-hold traps. You have to do it properly. I mean if you don’t know what you’re doing you are not going to catch them. But he has said there is no reason you can’t catch coyotes with box traps because he does it all the time for his research. So we would be opposed to it just because it is not humane in our opinion and it is not necessary. There is another alternative.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. So early on you spoke about us providing food opportunities for wildlife and I don’t disagree with you, I think there are many things that we can do to continue to help humans understand that in some cases they are part of the problem. But I’m still in a quandary as to what to do with many of the people across the state that have lost livestock, lost pets, lost fowl and I don’t think they’re all owning these or keeping them intentionally as food or bait but I think you realize that wildlife sees them the same way they do other things that they would find in the wild. Is there any point in your mind at which a property owner has the right to protect their animals, whether they are cats, dogs, livestock any point through lethal methods?

LAURA SIMON: I think I couldn’t agree with you more. I think people need to protect their livestock, their pets, other animals but the thing is if you let animals free roam, cats and dogs, if you let your chickens free roam you are subjecting them to the forces of nature. There are going to be foxes
and coyotes and even dogs out there that are going to prey upon them. So if you want to protect your pets you’ve got to do it the same way you protect your home. You put locks on your home, you have burglar alarms, you know, why are people, I think we’ve gotten laze quite frankly. We get used to allowing our pets to free roam and assume nothing is going to happen to them and then when predators come in and prey on them we get angry. That’s not fair. These predators don’t know they’re not supposed to eat your chickens, that they’re supposed to eat something else. So I think if you want to protect your pets and your livestock you’ve got to do it. You’ve got to have good chicken coops, you’ve got to keep your chickens in, you can’t let them just run around loose day and night. You’ve got to protect the animals you value in a way that these predators can’t get at them. And whether it’s a coyote or a bear, with beehives, people say why should I protect my beehive. You know, I’ve got them, never had a problem before, well hey bears are around, you’ve got to use electric wiring which is effective and you’ve got to protect that which you value the way you protect your home. I think, you know, we move into the country and then we want to pull the country out of the country. If you’re moving in the country protect what you value and you’ll be okay.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And so for you, Madam Chairman, my question was is there any point at which you think it is appropriate or should be acceptable to include lethal methods, I can tell you I have electric fencing around my beehives, I can tell you there’s certain times of the year it does not work. I have my chickens in an enclosure. I can tell you that at certain times of the year, it
doesn’t work. I have constituents that have lost calves at caving time, it’s part of the business but there comes a point in time when you can lose too much. I am aware there is a business up in Goshen that has lost something over 100 animals to coyotes. I would think almost any reasonable person would think that that could be too much. So is there any point in time, any, where in your mind it would be appropriate to use lethal force in those circumstances?

LAURA SIMON: I would want to know exactly what you’re doing or what they’re doing and how we could improve it. You know, what are they doing to protect their chickens? Are their enclosures strong enough? What is the failure. I would need to analyze on a case-by-case basis and provide you with my best expertise as to what we could do to protect those animals because I don’t know, I don’t accept there’s a point-in-time, I look at if you’re really protecting that which you value properly you should not be having a problems and if you’re hazing these animals, if you’re for example it’s coyotes, if you look out west, I look at states that are experiencing say coyotes to a far greater degree than we are for many more years, what are they doing that’s working. Well they are doing hazing programs, they have learned to live with coyotes, they are not putting out a call to trap and hunt them, they are teaching people how to haze them and it solving their problems, so what are we doing that’s not enough. What are we doing that’s not correct? I would really want to talk to you about the specifics and help recommend the best solution I can. I don’t believe there’s a point at which we
need to kill unless we’ve tried everything else first that should work.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you. I’ll take that as nothing, thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairman.


TARA FLEMING: My name is Tara Fleming. I have been a pet shop owner since 2007. My business model began with "local puppies only" meaning I had never shipped a puppy into Connecticut. When Connecticut laws changed in 2014, I could no longer source from local breeders and be compliant with the law. I was forced to make a major decision about remaining in business. I chose to continue doing good in my community with the hand I was dealt and follow the requirements of the state.

The majority of customers who shop at my pet store have been drawn to our store rather than rescues and shelters either due to personal experience or a lack of availability of the pet that suits their needs. You might be surprised how many families need hypoallergenic dogs, dogs that are under 45lbs or dogs that are therapy quality. Forcing families to settle on a breed, a mix, or any pet that is the wrong match for them will only lead to more animals being released to shelters. That is a real consequence this bill as written risks creating.
I am in business to help good families find good pets that are a forever fit. Legislation like this undervalues the important role that pet stores play in the process and creates an unfair stigma on pet owners who obtain dogs from pet stores. I have multiple consumers that say they feel societal pressure to "rescue" and that when they bring their new pet home, they will be telling everyone that it came from a rescue. Some customers say they don’t want to argue with others. This pressure takes away from the joy of bringing a new pet home. People should be excited to tell people they found the perfect dog for their family, regardless of where it came from.

I refuse to put my customers, their families, and my community at risk by selling animals that I do not know the background on and for which I have no or inaccurate health information. This would be the final straw for me. We have all discussed the economic impact and the risk of losing our businesses and jobs in Connecticut, but the worst part for me would be all those families who no longer get great joy and the right pet through our exceptional service. That’s all I have.


FAITH FLEMING: Hello, you probably assume that that was my mom. My name is Faith Fleming. My parents, especially my mom have owned a pet shop from the time I was seven years old. I was raised an animal lover, raised around livestock, cats, dogs, reptiles, birds, bugs, everything. I watch these
animals interact with each other, with me, with my siblings, with other people. I’ve watched them reproduce.

I remember at a very young age hearing stories from my grandparents about my mom’s true passion and love for animals, all the different types she would keep inside her little bedroom from turtles to fish, to rabbits and guinea pigs and you know, all the way to cats and dogs she would keep in there to spend as much time as she possibly could with them. When my parents had any free time they always wanted to be at pet shops, they wanted to be seeing different kinds of pets and stuff like that. Starting at age seven I would go to work with my mom ever single day. I would get off the bus from school and we would go to our little pet shop in a rural town in Pennsylvania. I would watch her, listen to her, anybody that walked inside that pet store you could tell it was her calling and it was she was meant to do, it was what she loved.

My mom wanted to spread her joy and happiness of animals with everyone she could. You could see the love in her eyes when she touched a baby bunny or little poodle puppy. My mom didn’t open a pet shop to make money or to exploit animals, she did not open up a pet shop to capture or confine them. She opened up a pet shop to spread joy, to share her passion with others that could connect other people with souls, spirits, friends that they never had before. Animals fulfill and enrich people’s lives. One of the biggest misconceptions about pet shops is that they are built for money and that animals are only there for profit and that could not be further from the truth. You can hear a lot of different
things but I am here to tell you that could not be further from the truth. I can almost positively say you’ve heard a lot from all different pet stores but I can almost speak for all of them in saying that sparking joy in someone with these animals is what we love to do. Owning a pet shop does not make you rich in the monetary sense but it does make you rich in the heart and in the heart of others.

This industry is by no means easy. We are constantly being ridiculed and hated and dehumanized by people that don’t understand. They don’t see a pet shop owner as a person that has love and compassion for these animals. They think we look at them as something in a store that is there for a profit like the pair of shoes you see, you know, in a retail store. It is extremely important that pet shops stop being stereotyped and automatically considered bad places, people need to get to know a pet shop owner for who they are as a person, who they are as an animal lover and who they are as a human being because I think that grouping everybody together, not being able, let’s say you were talking to these people and you didn’t know they owned a pet shop, you know, you were just talking to a person you met on the street and you talk about animals and your love for animals, the second you say you own a pet shop you’re automatically looked down upon, automatically you support those puppy mills, but when you talk to them as just a person, it’s a very different experience. And I think it is important to know that it’s not black and white. It is important to know that people in pet stores, I all the time tell my customers if we don’t have a pup here you want, go to a rescue, go see if you can find something. Rescue an animal. We love animals,
we support rescue. That’s not, that’s why its not black and white, there is a huge gray area that I think a lot of people don’t see.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Thank you so much for your testimony Faith. Any questions from the Committee? No questions. Okay thank you so much. Okay, Stephanie Jordan, followed by Shawn Silverman [Shawn has left] Okay, thank you. Hi Stephanie.

STEPHANIE JORDAN: Good evening, Senator Cohen, Representative Demicco and the Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee. I am honored to have the opportunity to speak here today and I have also previously emailed by written testimony. My name is Stephanie Jordan and I am in support of House Bill 5386.

I adopted a puppy which was my first pet store puppy named GiaMaria on January 10, 2019 from Puppy Love in Danbury, Connecticut. She was determined to be fit for sale by a veterinarian on January 8, 2019. Gia was allegedly from Puppy Love owners Nancy and Sean Silverman’s private kennel Captiva Kennel. I was not informed until I finalized my purchase that Captiva Kennel was located Tahlequah, Oklahoma and was not a local breeder.

Since my purchase of Gia she has been diagnosed with giardia with over fifty active egg cysts, kennel cough, coccidia and recently has had to have five deciduous teeth removed. She may also have a collapsed trachea which is a genetic abnormality. She has experienced psychological distress at undergoing numerous medical procedures including two complete blood panels, two subcutaneous fluids, a
Captiva Kennel is not compliant with Sec. 22-344d Part C of Chapter 435 of Connecticut pet store laws. Their registration with the USDA has been cancelled since August 4, 2016 and their last USDA inspection was February 6, 2016. You can also look this up as USDA #73-A-2709. I paid $1,549 dollars for Gia and I have paid in the month and a half that I’ve had her an additional $1,382 dollars in nonroutine medical care. I have only been reimbursed by the Silverman’s for $306 dollars of it.

I know the buzzer went off but I feel this Bill could also benefit from including ferrets and small companion animals because ferret breeders such as Marshalls Farms and Triple Ferret Farms have numerous ethical violations from PETA for negligence and unsanitary living conditions. I feel House Bill 5386 could only be strengthened by extending it to encompass all companion animals. I am happy to answer any questions you have and thank you for allowing me to share my testimony on this matter.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, I’m sorry for all that you and your animal have been through. Are there any questions from the Committee? Yes, Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Just real quick, so when you purchased this puppy you were told it was an in-house family breeder and what was the name of the breeder that actually it turned out to be from?

STEPHANIE JORDAN: Puppy Love’s owners Nancy and Sean Silverman have an alleged private kennel called Captiva Kennel, LLC. It is USDA number 73-A-2709.
REP. GUCKER (138TH): So when you had, if I could through the Chair, sorry it’s getting late so my protocol is getting a little. In fact it got late about ten hours ago. So when you confronted them with this, you purchased this under them saying it was their own dog or their own in-house breed and then you find out it’s not. How was that handled?

STEPHANIE JORDAN: So because of the incurring medical expense I’ve had, I have sent numerous certified letters, I have also been in contact with the Connecticut Animal Control Department and I filed complaints with the USDA.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): An if I could? I believe they are in Danbury?

STEPHANIE JORDAN: Yes they are.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): We know them well. I’m from Danbury. Have you followed through with Animal Control in Danbury?

STEPHANIE JORDAN: Yes, with Richard Gregon.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): And what was his findings or nothing?

STEPHANIE JORDAN: He did tell me that they are not USDA compliant with Captiva Kennels and he has been assisting me with trying to obtain reimbursement for my medical bills.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): I would like to talk to you later about some of that as well since I am in your area and maybe depending on where you live, might actually be your Representative.

STEPHANIE JORDAN: I’m actually from Springfield, Massachusetts.
REP. GUCKER (138TH): So you came to Danbury for a puppy?

STEPHANIE JORDAN: We were kind of driving and ended up in Danbury and we ended up seeing the puppies and I didn’t intend to get one because I’ve always been very adopt don’t shop, but I fell in love as many people do.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Well, I’m hoping that your bad experience with puppies don’t have you not come back to Danbury anymore [Laughter]. Thank you for taking the time and spending here all day and bringing your testimony forward.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Thank you so much for your testimony. Okay we have Robin Majlak, followed by Sue Kaulz, followed by Nan Zyla. Robin, welcome. Thank you for being so patient and hanging in with us.

ROBIN MAJLAK: I am a pet lover, I am not a rescue. I’m just a straight out pet lover. I thank you for Bill 5386. I am in favor of it wholeheartedly. Should have been passed a longtime ago. I have a couple of questions for or I have a couple of answers for Representative Dubitsky. You had a couple of questions, can I answer those instead of going into a little speech? Oh. I’m sorry.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I’m sorry I was distracted, what?

ROBIN MAJLAK: Representative Dubitsky had a couple of questions that nobody really answered and I think I would like to answer him instead of just going, is that okay?
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Sure, feel free to use your time as you feel.

ROBIN MAJLAK: You were asking about what the USDA. Do they enforce bad laws? I will tell you what they enforce. So, the Animal Welfare Act, that is the Federal Rules that the USDA investigates. That’s what they investigate and here is what is allowed under the American Welfare Animal Act: There is no limit on the number of dogs on the premises. A puppy mill could have hundreds or thousands of dogs. There is no requirements on the number of staff that must be available for care for the dogs. Dogs may be kept in stacked cages. Mesh or wire flooring is allowed. Dogs may be forced to relieve themselves in their cages. Dogs may be confined in spaces only six inches larger than their bodies, no including their tails. There is no exercise requirement, if dogs are housed with other dogs. Human interaction is not required. Breeding female at first heat cycle and every heat cycle thereafter is permissible. Unwanted animals may be killed or auctioned off and that’s were a lot of the rescues come that are pure breed. Many of the AWA requirements are vague. So if you ask if they are promoting bad conditions for the dogs, you tell me, is that something you would want?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): So we’re not having a discussion about this. I appreciate you answering the question.

ROBIN MAJLAK: No, no, no. I was answering the question. And another question was about being sick. Well I’d like to answer them because everybody has kind of gone around them but nobody has really answered them. So about puppies being
sick, coming from puppy mills and when dogs have
generic issues they aren’t always taken out of the
mix. So they are bred over and over and over again.
And a lot of the common diseases are epilepsy, heart
disease, kidney disease, hip dysplasia, diabetes,
blood disorders, eye problems, deafness, glaucoma,
distemper and this just keeps going on and on until
they take the dogs out of breeding. So that is a
puppy mill. I am always very surprised when people
don’t know what a puppy mill is because if you see
one, I don’t think you’ll ever forget one.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you.

ROBIN MAJLAK: Thank you so much I hope I answered
everybody’s questions.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Well, we’ll find out in a
minute cause their might be more questions. So thank
you for your testimony. Does anybody have any
questions? No. Thank you so much for your
testimony, appreciate it. Okay, Sue Kautz. Thank
you, welcome.

SUE KAUTZ: Good evening Members of the Committee.
I am very nervous, so I’m probably gonna read my
testimony which I have submitted. I have a few bills
I wanted to go over but I am definitely in support
of 5386 and whether at pet shop is good or bad, for
me it’s just that they’re enabling the puppy mills
to continue.

I’m going to move on to Support House Bill 6014, the
use of the leghold trap. When I mention to people
in Connecticut that there is the ongoing use of
these barbaric contraptions over and over again
their response is, “They’re not still legal are they.” I get that all the time and the sad
sickening truth is yes. It is beyond sad and comprehension that in a civilized state and country like ours we have not evolved far enough to embrace some compassion to all being who are suffering in the way that occurs to those caught in a leghold trap. I mean if you just imagine yourself in their place, feeling the jaws clamped down, tearing and crushing, fracturing your limbs then staying in that excruciating pain for hours and sometimes days before someone comes to kill you if you haven’t already died. So animals chew their limbs off in the agony and fear and free themselves only to die of infection or inability to protect themselves due to severe injury. Last year I got a call from a wildlife rehabilitator in my town who said there was a fox with a leghold trap attached to his leg running loose in circles behind the backyard of a resident’s property so I went with here to see if there was anyway we could help this poor creature and when we got there, we saw him with bone and tendons showing on his rear leg and panting heavily. He was terrified and ran from us dragging this archaic device behind him. So we set a Have-A-Heart trap, we looked on and off two days for him and never found him as the brush in the area was too thick to follow him. He most likely died, a long lingering death. These traps are supposed to be labeled and checked every 24 hours but that is not always done and enforcement is ineffective. Trapper could use humane traps if there were problem animals but they are more costly and inconvenient so they don’t and the animal pays the ultimate price. Come on, Connecticut can’t we do better than this.

NAN ZYLA: Good evening Chair Cohen and Chair Demicco and Members of the Environment Committee. My name is Nan Zyla and I have submitted written testimony.

I support HB 6014 AN ACT PROHIBITING USE OF LEGHOLD AND BODY CRUSHING TRAPS. They are know as landmines for animals because they are extremely cruel and inhumane. Several professional veterinarian organizations have declared these traps inhumane. They are completely indiscriminate that children and even adults and dogs, cats, deer, songbirds, owls any animal who unfortunately wanders into a trap has been caught and since the target of traps cannot be predicted there is no way they can be considered a management tool because other animals or people even, kids have been caught in traps. As was said, many animals chew or twist off their limbs in a desperate attempt to escape.

In terms of padded leghold traps that consists of extremely hard strips of rubber that are required to be 3/32 of an inch thick, the thickness of a credit card. This is what padded leghold traps are. Again bodily and dental injuries are the same for animals biting at the metal trap whether they are padded or steel jawed. Several states, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Jersey and over 85 countries have banned leghold traps and I just want to say that the first DEEP Commissioner Dan Lufkin was in favor of banning traps, leghold traps and he expressed regret that they had not been banned.
I also oppose SB-586 AN ACT AUTHORIZING BLACK BEAR HUNTING IN LITCHFIELD COUNTY. DEEP uses an unscientific method of counting bear, the bear population which is reported sightings. After all a bear could show up in Manhattan and be seen by a million residents and the headlines in the New York Times would read, “A Million Bears Sighted in Manhattan.” Not only is DEEPs method for counting wildlife populations unscientific the agency does not conduct any sort of impact study to predict the outcome of their culling actions such as how will the killing of one species effect other species and what is the management plan for a changed ecological environment.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you very much Zyla for summarizing that for us. Any questions from the Committee? Yes, Representative Dubt, ah sorry Demicco [Laughter].

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): I thank that was a compliment, I’m not sure. Is that a compliment? Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Zila. I have a question, so we have conflicting testimony on the leghold traps just like we have conflicting testimony on everything. So if we did do away with these traps, what would be the alternative and would it be effective?

NAN ZYLA: Well there are, there is a humane alternative box traps which is trap and release. Also I think Laura Simon mentioned beaver baffles in the case of beavers. There are humane ways to deal with very problem and frankly it is a matter of personal responsibility for people who have livestock or pets to be sure to secure their animals and remove food sources for bears or whatever. So
there are humane ways to solve, I believe, almost every problem.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Okay and again I’m, you know, my problem is I’m being told that these humane methods are not necessarily effective so I guess that is what we need to try to figure out.

NAN ZYLA: I agree with Laura Simon who said she would like to see the specifics of any failure using a humane method and see where the holes could be plugged and for instance with bears, we need to have a public education program and that’s how bears have been managed up until now in this State. There is a fairly small population of bears and as I say, I don’t believe they are, the population is expanding and there are ways to deal with them. Boulder, Colorado instituted in 2014 the requirement that people have locking garbage cans and that solved, you know, people worry about bears getting into their garbage cans. That became the ordinance and that was successful. So there are ways to deal with this.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, I appreciate that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Yes, Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. So to the garbage cans. I for years left my garbage cans out on the side of the driveway and then got tired of picking up the garbage and I moved it into the garage, right so I hear. So on garbage day, I open the garage door, bring the garbage up to the end of the driveway and guess what happens at the
end of the driveway? The bears tear it apart and take it allover the neighborhood.

NAN ZYLA: Well you need a locking garbage can.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): So, cause I want to try and make sure that the picture is clear. So the locking garbage can you’re suggesting does that allow for an automated garbage truck to pick up the garbage can and dump it or does the guy in the truck have to come out and unlock it first?

NAN ZYLA: This is in Boulder, Colorado and I don’t know anymore about how they pick up their garbage but.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Okay, so what I’m trying to do is make sure that before everyone leaves here today they understand this is a Connecticut problem. And I get the fact that we should be further educating people about not feeding birds, especially when bears come out of hibernation or go into hibernation. I have a constituent that lost a 200 pound donkey not cause she tethered it out there for bear but because the bear got into the stall and killed it. Killed her donkey. Are you telling me that she did something wrong?

NAN ZYLA: I think I remember that story from last year that you told. But I believe there has to be other ways to secure, that was a fault in the shed or whatever. (From audience: It was in a locked barn) Okay well there has to be ways you can secure your animal, that is, you know, you have to look at.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): We need, everyone in the audience needs to be quiet.

NAN ZYLA: I don’t know the situation.
SENATOR MINER (30TH): So and I get it and I understand. Through you Madam Chairman that this is not easy but as God is my witness I have constituents that are actually losing animals, regularly. I have a constituent that had a dog torn up, not humanely, I’m telling you that dog was shredded on camera. And so the problem we have here is that we have these hearing, and people come in here and talk about things and we could be doing and should be doing and I promise you my constituents do them but there comes a point in time when they have a right to live their life and that includes the enjoyment of a dog but I still don’t see anybody on the other side of the argument saying, “You know what Senator Miner in that case you’re right.” Not once, not once has anyone come here from that side of this issues and said, “Senator Miner, you’re right, in that case lethal methods is warranted.” Everybody always wants to know about the rest of the story. So I apologize, Madam Chairman this is really what the crux of the problem is.

NAN ZYLA: Well I understand things can be frustrating but I believe in not stopping when you think there is a barrier, I believe you can solve something if you look at it carefully and the suggestion was made that you have to know where the failure is, maybe you need to get more information and find out what went wrong.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Senator. Any other questions from the Committee. Thank you for your testimony. Okay, Pat Young. Is Pat Young here? Deb Bresch.
DEB BRESCH: Thank you for this opportunity to speak, staying so late. I’m Debra Bresch. I represent the 30,000 Connecticut supporters of the ASPCA. I want to begin with just to respond to Representative Dubitsky’s question about relative aggression, behavioral problems in pet store dogs versus dogs, well we didn’t say versus but there was a peer reviewed study conducted by the University of Pennsylvania in conjunction with Best Friend but it was peer reviewed that showed that dogs sold by pet stores showed considerably greater rates of aggression than dogs sold by, puppies sold by small scale breeders. So I think that’s useful to know and I think that’s a good place to start because I think facts should guide us not some of the misinformation that we’ve heard today.

When PAJC said, I was on the task force in 2015 so a lot of this seem like deja vu all over again as they say. But the PJAC said that, you know, there has been excellent oversight that the state law works. The sourcing law that we came up with works. I mean I think that was enacted, you know, with all due respect I think with a little bit of a hope and a prayer, I mean we went into the task force, I should say we came out of the task force knowing, a lot of the stakeholders on that task force knowing that there were significant problems with the law.

As we heard the Animal Welfare Act is very weak. Federal enforcement is poor, it was poor to begin with towards that time yet we created a scheme that depended on USDA enforcement. State enforcement has not been any better it has been essentially nonexistent. I felt like I was in a parallel universe when PJAC said how great the state
enforcement has been, unfortunately it has not been and federal enforcement has only gotten worse since then. Citations issued by the USDA have decreased by 60 percent since last year. There is a concerned effort at the USDA not to enforce the Animal Welfare Act and as we also know, the scheme on which the state law depends is to know exactly what the violation is they are issuing say, we don’t have access to that. USDA won’t give access to that.

So I mean the facts matter and I hope that you will consider the facts and not simply, not the misinformation and I think more of the emotional please pleas that you’ve heard today. The facts matter. And I think the facts are on our side and I think the facts support this Bill 5816. But I did want and I’ll say in closing that we believe that the Bill should be amended. We don’t think that pet stores should be able to be given the poor state enforcement. Pet stores should not be able to sell commercially bred dogs but we don’t think they should sell rescue dogs either. We should, Connecticut should follow the model of Maryland which is to require or allow pet stores rather to collaborate with 501 (c)(3)s which could mean the pet store establishes its own 501(c)(3) but to allow them to sell rescue dogs seems to be going down a rabbit hole and we’ve seen problems with that in places like Chicago that have tried that and it hasn’t worked. There has been a lot of sham rescues by pet stores.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you for your testimony this evening. Any questions from the Committee? Thank you. Before we move on to the next Bill I just want to check and make sure that we do not have
Lauren Maren, Dee Gonzales or Pat Young. Okay. Moving on we do not have anybody here to speak on SB-594 so we will move on to House Bill 6016 AN ACT REQUIRING MUNICIPAL ANIMAL CONTROL FACILITIES TO COMPLY WITH DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SANITATION AND HUMANE TREATMENT REGULATIONS. We have on person here to testify, Susan Linker. Welcome.

SUSAN LINKER: Good evening everyone. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify. I will try to be as brief as possible. I’m Susan Linker, I am the CEO and Founder of Our Companions Animal Rescue and I am testifying in opposition of 6016.

Basically I’m a little confused about this Bill but essentially the purpose of it is to require that private non-profit animal shelters and rescues like mine have the same standards as municipal pounds, or dog pounds. First of all dog pounds already have standards. There are already regulations for the operation of dog pounds and I am not against regulations. In fact two years ago I sat in front of you asking you as a Committee to consider legislation to regulate my field which is private shelters because at the time there were none for that and I believe very much in making sure all animal care facilities have the highest standards and the animals are cared for.

My concern with this Bill was not the intention to make sure everyone has proper regulations and the animals are cared for it’s because this particular intent is to require that organizations like mine have the same standards as municipal pounds or dog pounds. To give you an example of what I mean by that and in my testimony I put some photos and I have some here that I can pass around. Dog pounds
by law are required, municipal animal shelters are required to pick up stray dogs, or house injured animals or to quarantine animals that have bitten. It’s a very short-termed thing. The regulations that are in place talk about having concrete floors, floor drains, certain types of caging to secure the animals. In most of these cases the animals have an unknown vaccine history and there are groups of animals that are unvaccinated that are living together. So you need to be able to disinfect, you need to be able to keep your staff safe, you need to keep the animals safe.

Private shelters and organizations like sanctuaries actually rescue animals from these municipal shelters and if you look at the different photos, in my sanctuary we take animals from dog pounds, they rely on us to have a different facilities. We take in animals that have been abused, that need some medical, behavioral or rehabilitation. Their average stay at the sanctuary could be months to years so it is not appropriate to have them in cages. At the sanctuary they are given the care that they need so we could save them and find them a new home. A lot of animals that 15 years ago that were unsavable now have a second chance because sanctuaries partner with municipal shelters to provide a different type of environment to have this rehab.

So in summary, I support the idea of having proper regulations but the one-size-fits-all thing will basically not work and certainly will lower the caliber of animal welfare for a lot of the animals that need to be rescued from municipal shelters. So I hope that, and if the regulations need to be
update, you don’t need new legislation to do that. They already exist. I’m happy to take any questions.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you so much for that testimony. Any questions from the Committee? Yes, Representative Demicco.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you for coming and staying so late to testify. I’m a little bit confused. An organization such as yours, you already have regulations that are promulgated. I’m not sure how this affects you?

SUSAN LINKER: Well two years ago I worked with the Environment Committee to create standards and regulations for private shelters because there were none. Since then they have been sitting at OPM and the regulations haven’t been accepted I guess or released. So since the Bill, the Public Act has passed two years ago there are still no specific regulations. We drafted them in concert with the Department of Agriculture and I think they are perfect and suitable for private shelters acknowledging how they are different from dog pounds. But I would like your help in getting them enacted. It is basically a Bill now that has no teeth and that is unfortunate.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): So you’re satisfied with what’s been developed and you just want it to be enacted?

SUSAN LINKER: Yes, but I don’t want our rescue to turn into a dog pound.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): I see. Okay, thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Okay. Thank you. Okay next up
is House Bill 7158 AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF COMMERCIAL KENNELS. And first up is John Lapham. Welcome.

JOHN LAPHAM: Good evening, my name is John Lapham. I am the General Counsel for Rover which you’ve heard lots about today. I have two other folks here from Rover today as well. We came up from Seattle the last couple of days to help discuss this legislation.

We are in favor of this Bill which, while regulating kennels has an exception in it which says, “If you are watching three of fewer dogs you are not subject to kennel regulations. This is modeled after legislation that has been passed in the last three years also in California, Colorado, Rhode Island and Virginia which all range from three to five animals you could watch without getting a commercial license.

Rover was started on the principle that everyone should be allowed to enjoy the unconditional love of a dog and that requires safe, local, affordable pet care. People want to choose who to drop their dog with because they do love them like family members and that’s what we try to facilitate. We did not obviously invent pet sitting and what we have done is make it considerably less risky and we’ve done that through background checks, through assessments with Rover individuals on the quality and commentary around people’s experiences with dogs, photos of where they are, $25,000 dollars in vet insurance for things that go wrong in the coverage and as a place that is passionate about pets we did follow up with animals going to the Vet because that is what the proper course is.
We also have a 24/7 trust and safety team, it is more than 100 people we’ve hired that receive six weeks of intensive training. These regulations have been gone over by state vets in the past and they have added nothing. I’m thinking we have an incredibly intensive safety program for dogs.

Right now there are 4,000 people plus in the State of Connecticut that are registered as Rover sitters. These are people running their own business, they are selected on the other side of our electronic market place by owners who want to use them to watch their dog. There is transparency with this process and accountability because you have reviews that are posted that says exactly why you did or didn’t like your sit and we regularly go through and slice off and un-activate people who don’t meet these safety standards.

This morning we heard a completely factually inaccurate commentary around there being tens of thousands of lost and dead dogs because of rover.com which I think is as offensive as it is just false and I think that the internet is an interesting place and you can find lots of anonymous stories but that simply isn’t the case. We have complex safety guidelines in place and specialists for this.

It is an incredible economic opportunity. Last year along Connecticut sitters, just from Rover, which is a small part of the market received $2.1 million dollars in earnings from the market place. Our sitters are amazing people and watch dogs that kennels can’t. Dogs that are older, nervous, have medical issues a lot of what is saw here this morning.
The limit of three in the regulations is easy to understand. It is not easy to understand is what advertisement might look like. I guess the final thing I’d say since it’s late for everybody is regulation does not guarantee safety. There are articles including from the kennel owner that was here this morning when last year one of her employees was caught on tape beating a dog. You can’t legislate out the crazies and the stupid times and sometimes we get those people as well and we do the same thing. We fire them as did the kennel owner this morning had done with her employee. And so we would encourage you to use this accommodation and accept to allow three or fewer animals to be watched without regulation. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, sir for your testimony. Any question? Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair.

There are two parts to the Bill one is the exception the other one is the change in the definition? Do you have any problem with either one of those?

JOHN LAPHAM: No, we don’t. This dichotomy of what a kennel is and a commercial kennel is will be solved by this. It will say plainly that somebody watching three or fewer dogs does not transform your apartment, townhouse or house into a kennel. It’s still a house.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Yes, Representative Gucker.
REP. GUCKER (138TH): I think if we could legislate the crazy and the other you say, I think we all wouldn’t be here, we would be home by now. But if there was an event or lets say a pet owner had a problem with one of your customers what would normally be the protocol that they would follow?

JOHN LAPHAM: The protocol is that they would either use electronic communication or they would call in. We have 100 trust and safety people that do nothing but answer phones and deal with the people that have questions. This dog looks overheated, this dog won’t eat the food the owner left. A lot of times this issues are really simple because reality dogs get nervous when you leave and so a lot of times its practical common sense advise that we can give. If there is a more serious situation like a lost dog we have very practiced protocols for that as well. Sometimes dogs are faster than we are. I mean so they run and that happens when are sitters are there as well sometimes and we are statically better at finding dogs than the family is. So really the trust and safety team is the first line of defense if anything goes wrong and it’s free as are the vet visits. It’s just part of what we do.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): And has there been, what is the rate of that happening. I mean do you see that happening more often or not, do you see it.

JOHN LAPHAM: Definitely not more often than not. I can tell you that the last time that a dog ran away in the State of Connecticut with a Rover sitter and wasn’t found was in 2015 and a lot of that is because our sitters are really good at it. The difference between dropping your dog off at a babysitter or a home daycare as opposed to a large
commercial daycare. You’re getting that one on one or three on one on attention and they’re with those dogs. People don’t watch dogs if people don’t love dogs. You know there’s easier ways to make a buck. They do it because they love the dogs, their mourning a dog, they’re between dogs, graduate students do it, single parents do it. You don’t have to leave the house and so incident rates stay low because of that and because our default veterinarian care.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): I just asked about that stuff simply because it was brought up I think about three and a half days ago [Laughter] but thank you for addressing that and thank you for staying here as late as you have.

JOHN LAPHAM: Absolutely, thanks for your time.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. I actually do have a question before you leave. I had asked before somebody who actually advertised through rover.com for their services how they were chosen by Rover. Could you tell me a little bit about that process of how you choose will be displayed on Rover?

JOHN LAPHAM: Yes, I’m glad you asked cause I was told to bring it up and I failed. But the process is, we don’t seek out anybody. Sitters come to us, we advertise in places like Craig’s List and whatnot or you’re looking for pet sitting jobs. They come, there is an application process they have to fill out. We have several spots along the way where people might give up. You have to actually write a paragraph about yourself and your experience with pets. You have to actually get some high res photos
of you and animals so that we know, if you can’t supply three to five high res photos of you and animals something is wrong unless, I don’t know. There are various barriers to signing up. There is a background check that goes all the way down to the county level and city level based on what are records are digitized for any crimes involving cruelty or I guess honesty and things of that nature. That is also the most effective, so that kinda the basic application process. Your process will entail you talking to somebody at Rover, it’s kinda like how a, you know, person at the airport is looking for odd behaviors or whatnot. Our people are really good at smoking out somebody who doesn’t care about animals and is just trying to get up on the website. The application process is just that. If you’re gonna be a walker you go through a live harness test that you have to do with an actual Rover employee and so it’s designed to catch who aren’t interested. But really the best thing is just the transparency of the review process.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): And is there ever a home visit involved?

JOHN LAPHAM: No, there is not a home visit involved.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Is there ever a case where if there is a complaint how do you intervene should there be a complaint?

JOHN LAPHAM: Well we, a lot of times complaints are settled between the owner and the sitter because the sitter has their own business and the owner has their dog and we coach them on trying to resolve the problems. If there is a complaint, you know, it’s
usually someone from one of my teams or from our customer service team which is different that the trust and safety team, will call and talk to both sides. If there is a police engagement because you know, something got broken or somebody thinks something else happened, we fully cooperate with anything of that nature. And so we do have instances where, you know, investigation is needed. We have people that will go do those if it something that leads to a legal claim for instance and we hire people to do that for us.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, thank you. Any other questions? Thanks so much.

JOHN LAPHAM: We do send out 1099s by the way so the tax dollars do come in.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, thank you. Monica Kolbusz.

MONICA KOLBUSZ: My name is Monica Kolbusz. I am a recent U.S. Citizen and a longtime resident of Stratford, Connecticut. I am a fulltime engineer and a part-time pet sitter. I am here today to voice my support for HB 7158.

As I mentioned I am otherwise employed on a fulltime basis. However I recently purchased a home and I have adopted a dog with special needs. Offering pet sitting services through Rover on long weekends helps me to cover the extra costs associated with owning a home and my new pet’s medications while doing so, caring for dogs. Pet sitters like me who offer care through Rover are vetted in many ways. Before I was able to advertise my services, I passed a background check, my application was reviewed and approved by a Rover representative. I also receive
regular feedback from the people who know my work. My clients who also submit the reviews on Rover which is verified. I have about 85 reviews to-date. I work nearly exclusively with repeat clients, some of whom I have worked with for years. I have earned my score as a five-star sitter rating on Rover because my pet owner clients are happy with my work and say so publicly. By caring for just a few pets at a time, I am able to provide an experience that meets the needs of dogs who wouldn’t do well in a louder or busier environments, dogs with temperaments that are similar to mine. I have always met with owners and dogs in advance of providing a service to ensure that we are a good fit for each other.

If I wasn’t offering pet services, the pets I care for would instead stay with other family members or would be left alone at home. Many pets cannot thrive in busier environments and therefore require a quiet home setting. My services reduce strain within families and provide pet owners with the peace of mind that comes with knowing that their pets are being well cared for when they are away.

Thank you for hearing me and please support this Bill.


ANDREA DOBRAS: Hi, good evening Co-Chair Cohen, Co-Chair Demicco and Members of the Environment Committee. My name is Andrea Dobras and I am from
New Haven, Connecticut. And I am requesting your support with Senate Bill 245.

I live directly on the Quinnipiac River in the Fair Haven Heights section of New Haven and it borders on the Quinnipiac Meadows Preserve, a critical migration stops for Canada Geese, ducks and other migratory birds, as well as being the year-round home to over one hundred wildlife species.

I am appearing today not only as a New Haven, Connecticut resident but also on behalf of the Friends of the Quinnipiac Meadows Preserve, a group started in December 2017 with the sole purpose to ending the hunting on the river. Our group worked hard for the last 15 months organizing, reaching out to DEEP, collecting signatures, engaging our legislative reps, speaking at our Committee meetings and getting the press involved on the very same issue that our neighbors have been battling since 2009. It was only after our former Police Chief Anthony Campbell got involved last May that DDEP was willing to issue a 1-year moratorium to conduct a study to determine if hunting should continue in the area.

I’ve submitted written testimony earlier this week which goes into more detail about why we do not feel this area is appropriate for hunting so I would like to use my time here today to address the comments from other constituents testimony on how they feel this should not be a legislative issue. As a Connecticut resident I’m concerned that without frequent monitoring by DEEP how will we know that the current permissible hunting areas are indeed safe? I also want assurance that the recreational activities of organized sportsmen are not taking
priority over the local residents safety. It is my hope that the new administration at DEEP will be more receptive to resident concerns as a result of this experience so that other communities in the future will not have to endure the same intense level of effort in order to be heard.

Again, I am asking that you support Senate Bill-245 and legislatively put an end to waterfowl on the Quinnipiac River.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Yes, Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman and thank you for staying. So I just want to make sure I understand the area. The area that DEEP put a moratorium on last year, it’s not the complete stretch of the Quinnipiac River?

ANDREA DOBRAS: No, we’re looking to end hunting south of the I-91 border.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Got ya, thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Why do you want to prohibit hunting there?

ANDREA DOBRAS: Because I live right there and from every single window in my home I get to see the hunting. I see the ducks of the geese being crippled, floating on the water, waiting until it’s time for the hunters to go and retrieve and whipping them around by their necks to kill them and I’m an animal lover and I work from home and I don’t want it there. It’s too close to where I live. Not only that, that’s my personal belief but we live, it’s
New Haven, in the Fairhaven Heights Section of New Haven. It’s very urban, it’s affordable housing, it’s condos, it’s too urban of an area and if you even look at, I don’t know if they’re here to testify today, but you’ll find that the Connecticut Waterfowl Association agrees that hunting should not be permitted there.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): And where, did they submit testimony?

ANDREA DOBRAS: Yes, written testimony so you should find it on the website.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, I’ll take a look at that. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Wilson.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you, Madam Chair and thanks for coming this evening. So I just want to understand why isn’t this matter better left to DEEP rather than codified?

ANDREA DOBRAS: My concern is that we’ve been trying to, the neighborhood has just not been able to organize effectively until now and it’s been an issues since 2009 and it wasn’t until we went through those extensive measures where DEEP would even consider the moratorium and the only reason they did was because Police Chief Anthony Campbell said that it was a safety issue.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Reyes.
REP. REYES (75th): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you very much for testifying tonight. I know that Fair Haven area pretty well. Aren’t there some schools in that area as well?

ANDREA DOBRAS: There is Sound School and I don’t have children so I don’t know the names of the schools in the area but there are schools up and down Quinnipiac. There is also a playground right there on Front Street that overlooks the area where the hunters keep their boats.

REP. REYES (75th): And how long ago did the Chief Campbell put the moratorium on the hunting?

ANDREA DOBRAS: It was last May.

REP. REYES (75th): It’s still in place?

ANDREA DOBRAS: It’s still in place until this May but hunting season doesn’t typically start I guess until October or.

REP. REYES (75th): Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Thank you for staying here. Would you consider this a quality of life issues at this point, number one and number two I grew up in a rural area as well and I can remember times where somebody would be hunting over the side of the hill and I’d be working on my mother’s house and have to dodge the stray bullet once in a while, would that also be a consideration to where you are?

ANDREA DOBRAS: It is definitely a quality of life issue. For me personally it’s a mental health
issue. I can’t sit here in my house, in my dining room, in my bedroom, in my office, in my living room literally every single room of my house there is no way to get away from it.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): And if I could, would also maybe some of that trauma be from hearing the gunshots as well cause I’m assuming you’re hearing that which triggers you to want to go look or?

ANDREA DOBRAS: Sure it’s interesting because we wake-up to it. Generally they hunt in the morning and they can start a half an hour before sunset which is before I’m up. So we usually wake up to gunfire and because of where we live there’s that, you know, sudden fear and then we realize, oh it’s just the hunters. But I was working one day in my office where an inactive killer, not just a gunman, an active killer who had killed somebody across the way on Front Street at a convenience store had come down the side of my condo, jumped into phragmites, threw the gun in the river and we had the SWAT team come out. So when gunfire happens in my neighborhood we call the cops.

REP. REYES (75th): Well I thank you for your testimony and I would say that would be quite unnerving and I would think that, you know, there’s better places for this activity but, thank you for sticking out tonight.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Representative. Further questions by the Committee members? No, okay. Thank you very much. So one more time, is Gwen Samuel around? No Gwen, okay and then Ana Rio, no. Okay. So sticking with Senate Bill 245 the next person is Dan Kay.
DAY KAY: Hello. I am here today, speaking in support of SB-245 and looking for total support on this Bill. My name is Daniel Kay and I live directly on the Quinnipiac River in the Fairhaven Heights Section of New Haven. I was attracted to moving to the area about 30 years ago because of the beauty around the river. There are many condo developments, the park and a nature preserve and the area seemed really ready for growth and poised for continued beneficial development and also it was a seven-minute ride to downtown New Haven so that made it a great opportunity for me.

My current home borders the Quinnipiac Meadows Preserve and as you’ve heard it is a critical migration and other wildlife. One of the deciding factors when I bought my condo in 2000 was the great views of the Quinnipiac River and the Preserve. As I mentioned the preserve is home to a multitude of wildlife but despite a posted sign at the preserve indicating no hunting, I was disturbed to find that actually hunting is allowed in the waters that surround the preserve, a total oxymoron to me but that’s the way it is.

I experienced this first hand a few winters after I bought my condo because I was awoken by gunfire prior to dawn, I stepped out onto my deck and saw people in ghillie suits with shotguns crawling through the brush, other guys in an actual camouflaged boat with a dog in it, literally it seemed like I could throw a rock and hit them but by law I guess it’s 250 feet from a public area. That’s what I was told anyway. At the time there was a great uproar in the community. All my neighbors got together, there were a lot of
discussions, there were calls to the police and DEEP but there was no real call to action and nothing was done. Nobody really got together and codified and, you know, got together to really try to enact any change like we’re doing here today.

Most recently in January 2019 I was sitting at breakfast, drinking coffee, looking out at the birds flying overhead and one minute I’m drinking coffee and the next minute I’m just watching the birds falling out of the sky, landing onto the ice. It was in January and the birds, as has been mentioned before, you know, they’re often not killed immediately so they are lying crippled until the hunters are ready to pick up for the day and unfortunately the birds are sitting there crippled for an undetermined amount of time.

So, we’ve heard people suggest, you know, look the other way or move but, you know, our home is in a unique position so that every window we have is facing the reserve so there is really no way not to see it unless I’m gonna pull down my blinds and put in earplugs. So at this point, in the morning at 6:45 or whatnot, when the hunters come we have to leave the house.

So, in summary the question is, is there good gunfire, is there bad gunfire? When my neighbor is trying to sell her condo one Sunday morning she had to explain that the gunfire wasn’t somebody getting shot down the street, it was the hunter a couple of hundred yards away in the preserve. So, I’m not here to argue the merits of hunting, I am just questioning the logic of allowing hunting in a heavy populated residential neighborhood. So I urge you to support SH-245. Thank you.
REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Mr. Kay. Do members have any questions for Mr. Kay? Apparently not, so thank you, sir. Appreciate it. Thank you. Okay so we will now move on, there was no one signed up to testify for Senate Bill 894 so we’ll move on to Senate Bill 586 which is AN ACT AUTHORIZING BLACK BEAR HUNTING IN LITCHFIELD COUNTY and the first person to is signed up is Fran Silverman, to be followed by Michelle Crut.

FRAN SILVERMAN: Through the Chair I would like to request, we’re here for two Bills so we would like to split our testimony for efficiency and because of the late hour.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Sure, how are we going to do this now?

FRAN SILVERMAN: So I’m gonna speak quickly on the bear hunt and Pricilla will speak quickly on the leghold trap.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Okay, but again I think it’s three minutes, are you both signed up to testify?

FRAN SILVERMAN: Yes.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Well, why don’t you testify first Ms. Silverman and then it’s?

FRAN SILVERMAN: Pricilla Feral, President of Friends of Animals. She signed up for the leghold trap but we were gonna split our testimony and be efficient.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Mr. Chairman I think there is a history of allowing two people to testify at the same time. I think the question is can you do ‘em
both in three minutes? There were other people that testified on multiple Bills in three minutes, so.

FRAN SILVERMAN: We’ll speak quick.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Senator. I appreciate it, sure. Let’s do it that way. Thank you.

FRAN SILVERMAN: Okay, so here we go. Thanks so much Environment Committee for hearing my testimony today on behalf of Friends of Animals and it’s 6,000 state members. Today I would like to discuss bear hunt conflict mitigation efforts and I would like to get to some key points that have come up during the debate today.

One of the things I would like to say is that DDEP already has a nuisance bear program and I understand that the State allows for farmers who are having trouble with bears to take action. So there is already an action program in place for nuisance bears.

In the case of bear populations we could get into counts and what the counts are I think are estimates at this point because the last count happened in 2014 and we don’t have a new count but either way size doesn’t matter in the case of bear populations. Actually numerous scientific studies show there is a weak correlation between a population of bears and bear attacks. In fact, many states with high bear populations report small numbers of bear-human conflicts rather than states with small populations that sometimes report a lot of conflict. Densely populated Connecticut reported the highest number of bear complaints in a survey which means to me that
Connecticut residents need more help on how to deter conflicts.

Also in terms of whether hunting solves the bear conflict issue, many states with two seasons of bear hunts such as Washington and Montana report a growing number of conflicts despite hunts. That’s because the number one cause of bear-human conflict is human behavior. Limiting the availability to access to food attractions is and I quote, “The most definitive means to reducing conflict” and that comes from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency’s report. Hunting is risk all it’s own. While there has been zero human fatalities from bear attacks, there have been ten hunting related deaths and 118 injuries. Instead of killing bears we would like to support nonlethal management as suggested in Bill 894. Black bears are naturally shy. States with strong regulations that deter human habituation of bears have decreased negative encounters significantly. It’s time for CT to do the same.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): If you could do just maybe a quick summary.

PRICILLA FERAL: I will. In a state of three and a half million people, we have about 500 adult trappers and yet they have a stranglehold on wildlife policy as it pertains to trapping. We’re talking about two traps that we want to see banned. One was invented in 1840 the other in 1930. They are the most sadistic devices in the vast arsenal of animal abuse and they bring trappers seven dollars for a raccoon, nine dollars for a beaver, three dollars for a muskrat when the fur industry is tanking. It is in freefall. There isn’t any wildlife management involved and 500 people randomly
killing animals in traps that are nonselective, indiscriminate and catch probably three times as many animals they don’t intend as the intend. So we are asking for your support on this Bill and recognition that a state with this many people and a measly number of trappers, we need a level playing field. This is an animal cruelty issue. Thank you I can take any questions.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you both for your testimony. Any questions from the Committee members? Yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you for coming in. Thank you, Madam Chair. Have you read DEEPs testimony on this Bill?

PRICILLA FERAL: I heard it this morning, Rick Jacobson and he told a mistruth and that is he said the only leghold traps legal are padded ones, that is not true. It wouldn’t matter if they are padded or not but there is not a space between the jaws when they slam shut and I tried to bring traps here and I was told you wouldn’t take props so I had hoped to demonstrate for you Conibear traps and leghold traps today. I do think you should see them, I agree.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Oh, I have seen them. You can put your finger right in and they can snap on your and they won’t.

PRICILLA FERAL: Then you haven’t seen the kind of leghold trap that is catching a raccoon or a coyote or a fox.
REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay. The DEEP indicated that the purpose of these was indeed was wildlife management how is it that you think that it is not?

PRICILLA FEREL: I think DEEP treats hunters and trappers like clients in Connecticut and they regulate seasons and they get license fees and they cater to this group of people. Hunters are one percent, trappers are five-hundred individuals. So I don’t think you’re gonna hear an objective source of information. I’m an advocate. I admit that they’re advocates and they are advocates for these 500 people, they will be advocates when the numbers fall to 200. When the numbers fall to 50 they are still going to advocate unless they have a different mission for that wildlife agency and I think in fairness they should. They should reflect the 99 percent of the people here or more that don’t take up killing animals for recreation.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So are you saying that the DEEP has a conflict of interest?

PRICILLA FEREL: I’m saying they’re advocates for trappers and hunters and they should be advocates for the environment, for the well-being of nature and the animals that live here and the people that have a moral conscious about how they’re treated.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So you think they are lying when they say that the purpose is wildlife management?

PRICILLA FERAL: Well I kind of like Rick Jacobson, I don’t know why I’m saying that but I think that when he testified today and I heard him, he was not telling the truth.
REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. That you both for testifying today. Two things you mentioned a report from I guess Fish and Wildlife. Did you submit this for testimony? Oh, okay great, okay. And mentioned a nuisance bear program from the DEEP can you just talk about it a little more, what do they consider nuisance bear because I keep seeing the word nuisance left and right, nuisance animals.

FRAN SILVERMAN: Well what I can say is that in 2017 they responded to just five nuisance bear complaints so if there were marauding bears all over the state you would think they would be responding to more.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Okay and the bear population.

FRAN SILVERMAN: Based on estimates from 2014 we would like to see a current count.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Right, because earlier we heard numbers like I think they mentioned 1,300 calls DEEP received and that the numbers from UConn are about 800.

FRAN SILVERMAN: Actually we wouldn’t even think that much. I mean DEEP reported 8,900 black bear sightings obviously, you know, that ten people can report seeing the same bear and in Litchfield County I believe there is 200 bears according to the UConn report, 400 adult bears state wide and so we would like to see a current count and that, sorry, something I didn’t get to is just that the black
bear hunt in Litchfield County would allow hunters to kill five percent of the entire state population.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Right, because we already have enough car accidents to cover that apparently. That’s it and for the leghold traps, sorry I have to ask this question, is there any bi-catch. I mean how do you decide which animal is getting trapped in the leghold trap? Like you mentioned a human.

PRICILLA FERAL: Two days ago I looked at a video that was too long to send you, it was about 13 minutes but it showed an Idaho Fish and Game person setting up a trap for a coyote and by the time they’re done, it is under dirt, it has leaves sprinkled over it, there are glandular bates and urine that he’s sprinkled around that attacks hawks, birds of prey, foxes, all kinds of animals and he intended to get a coyote. The truth is any animal drawn to a scent, walking down that path would never have seen a trap, they just fall into it and when they fall into it, I mean the first photograph I took of a leghold trap was brought to me with a raccoon’s paw in it from Weston, Connecticut. I still have that photograph and that animal chewed itself out of the trap to escape the pressure and the agony of what that’s in when they panic. They agonize, it’s cruel and when someone testified here that their state had improved their regulations, really there isn’t a state that has done what they need to do. But Connecticut has done absolutely nothing and yet at least 80 nations, 80 to 100 have found that these trapping devices are so nonselective and unspeakingly cruel they have outlawed them. How could that be going on in Liberia and Africa and all Europe and Israel and every where
else but the United States and we have to struggle state-by-state in a progressive culture I think we’re ready for it now.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I see Diane Honer’s testimony has pictures of a dog so I imagine pets can get caught [Cross-talking] other animals.

PRICELLA FERAL: Last summer in Connecticut a raccoon was in a Conibear trap, set next to a swimming pool. Last July in Greenwich, Connecticut a cat was caught in a Conibear trap set for who knows who. The DEEP and in fact they did testify accurately on this they admitted because we have their numbers rabbits, dogs and cats that have been caught. And the trappers and I don’t wish them any ill but believe me they are not making a list for you of all the accidents, of all the animals the squirrels, the birds that God knows what caught, maimed, dismembered, bludgeoned to get out of the trap that were throw away as trash.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): And one last question for you, Madam Chair, sorry about that but then documentation here that talks about the fur business so it seems substantial in Connecticut out of the 500 trappers what would you say the percentage would be for, you know, to make money.

PRICELLA FERAL: I know what they’re getting at auction in New York and Connecticut and the prices are low. You know, it’s seven dollars, it’s three dollars, it’s ten dollars. River otters are not selling many skins at all. This is a recreation for trappers and I know they love it but I think it is despicable cruelty to animals.
REP. MICHEL (146TH): I agree, thank you. Thank you very much.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Thank you so much. Okay Michelle Krut. I have been getting a lot wrong but in fairness lots of people testifying and I’ve gotten a lot right too [Laughter].

MICHELLE KRUT: My name is Michelle Krut and I am here to speak in support of SB 586 AN ACT AUTHORIZING BLACK BEAR HUNTING IN LITCHFIELD COUNTY.

I can’t come up here and say different studies. I’m not gonna negate whose study is better than another but I would like to share some personnel experiences that I’ve had.

We’ve lived in our current home in Granby, Connecticut for eight years. We have always had bears in our yard. They used to just mumble on by. We’ve had moms with cubs, they didn’t come close to the house, they respected the distance, they were wary. Fast forward to last season. We had seven different bears in my yard, I own an acre and a half, four of those were cubs. So for people to say we haven’t seen an increase seven bears just in my yard, four cubs. We had one bear, cause they continue to harass my dog in her pen, I don’t let her run around fee, I know I’m not supposed to so she says in her pen. I look out the window to watch this bear continuously charge my dog in her pen. I called DEEP, I begged DEEP to come out and help, they were busy. They weren’t in the area, no slight on DEEP but to me this says we have a bigger issue.

We have bears that are not afraid of people. We have bears that are not afraid of dogs. I’ve heard some
testimony saying, you know, bears will smell dog and have the dogs in your yard and maybe that’ll help deter them, it doesn’t. I don’t have bird feeders, I know that is something I’m supposed to do so I don’t have ‘em. Garbage, they don’t get in my garbage. I put bleach on my garbage cans and I put bleach in my garbage cans. They have never gotten into our garbage, they are not attracted to the smell. If you want to buy stock in something, by stock in bleach because I go through at least a gallon every week to make sure I continuously put it in there. It is a deterrent, it does work. I’ve never had bears in my garbage. So why do they keep coming to my property.

I have a mother bear with three cubs that thinks my patio is hers. She does not come to my yard looking for food because I don’t have any available, we don’t compost, we don’t feed our dog outside, ever. This bear comes down my patio steps, lounges on my patio while her cubs go on my deck and play with my patio furniture. They look in my windows. I work from home, my boss knows if my dog is going ballistic in the house it’s because the bears are on my deck looking in my windows. We didn’t even bother putting the screens in my doors this year because we’re afraid to leave our doors open. The bear that harassed my dog also came back and started ripping decorations off of my garden shed. The shed never had food in it, it has lawnmowers, chainsaws, chair. DEEP came out for that, helped me pick up the decorations off my shed and agreed that it was very odd behavior for the bear.

So I am asking for you to please support this Bill. I’ve done everything I supposed to from an education
perspective and we still have a problem with bears coming back to my yard. I would like to add that a five minute walk from my house is hundreds of acres of state land, yet these bears continue to come to my yard, not for food, but to play with my decorations and patio furniture. That is not normal bear behavior. We are starting to have an issue and I need your help with it.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Yes, Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. This year I actually had a conversation with a superintendent of schools but I think it was maybe in Barkhamsted and he told me that this fall he ended up moving bus routes because the parents wouldn’t leave their kids out at the bus stops and so have you had any issues or your neighbors had any issues with that?

MICHELLE KRUT: So we actually have a call tree because we have enough young children and a mom that has two kids at home, young kids, a stay-at-home mom, we have a phone tree. So if one of us see these bears that are very comfortable we’re on the phone with each other to warn everyone to get in the house. My son, again we have an acre and a half. Half of it is cleared, half is wooded. My son is afraid to play in one half of my yard because the bears are back there. If he plays outside with the neighborhood kids, we have to unlock every door around our house so he has a route to run back into the house. We have airhorns placed at different doors of the house so that if he manages to get to some area of the house he has an airhorn to try to scare it away. So it is a problem. Up and down the
street you hear the neighbors with airhorns trying to get the bears away from their dogs or the bears away from their kids.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Senator. Representative Demicco.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you for coming to testify and thank you for staying so late. So I am just curious as to know in your conversations with DEEP did they indicate to you what it would take, what would be necessary for them to go any further other than to help you pick up your patio furniture? Did they indicate what would have to happen for them to do something further?

MICHELLE KRUT: They did indicate that additional steps could be made if they were able to get to the house in time to see the bears. So with that one single bear that was at the shed, I’ve done the hazing thing right, like the joke around my house is I scream at the bear like it’s my husband. I bang pots and pans, I’m yelling, they are not phased. I actually threw empty beer bottles at it’s head and all it did was stop and look at me and then keep doing what it was doing. So DEEP said I had done everything right, I did all the hazing stuff I should and the next step, if they were able to find the bear on my property would be do the beanbag or rubber bullet thing. Unfortunately they got to my house so late all we did was pick everything up and kind of track the route it had gone.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): I see and thank you. So I guess the other question for you is my recollection
and maybe I’m wrong is it Bill 586 talks about a limited bear hunt in Litchfield County which really wouldn’t do you any good. Am I right about that?

MICHELLE KRUT: Yes, you are right about that but my written testimony I actually ask for consideration to expand it to Hartford County.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Very good, thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for your testimony. I was just curious about the dog situation. Is the dog outside?

MICHELLE KRUT: So she is not allowed to free roam outside because we are well aware of the wildlife we’ve got in our yard. We’ve got bobcat, coyotes, bear, fox you name it we have it so she has a high fenced pen. She is not allowed overnight. She is not allowed outside without us there. When we’re home to get her air she is in her pen and that’s where the bear continued to charge her.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Okay, thank you.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Any other questions? Yes, Representative Mushinsky.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Just a suggestion if you haven’t tried this yet, one of the coming witnesses is training a bear aversion dog that chases bears away for a profession. So you might want to hire her.

MICHELLE KRUT: I’m up for anything.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, any other questions from the Committee? Representative Gucker.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): I’m just curious since it’s late at night, what is the preferred lawn furniture of the average bear? [Laughter]

MICHELLE KRUT: So it Target special, nothing fancy thank goodness but it’s funny because they’re cubs, they’re playing. They are not malicious yet. But the mother will sit there and sun herself on the patio, stay on the patio and the cubs go right up to the deck and start batting the furniture around and that’s just the route they go. But yeah, it’s funny because everybody at work, like I said, especially my knows when the dog is crazy the bear is on the patio.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): I think you’re missing a huge opportunity to be like a U- Tube specialist and wind up having more shares and likes.

MICHELLE KRUT: I work, load my videos, cause I’m constantly, yesterday I took a really good picture of a real beautiful bobcat and sent it to my boss and I was supposed to be on a conference call, I’ve done the same for bears. Everybody gets a kick out it at work.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Well thank you very much for staying here so late. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Sounds like a good excuse for being late to work. Any other questions from the Committee? Thank you for your testimony. Annie Hornish.

ANNIE HORNISH: Good afternoon, good morning almost, Honorable Members of the Environment Committee. My
name is Annie Hornish, I’m the Connecticut State Director for the Humane Society of the United States.

On behalf of the Connecticut-based supporters of the Humane Society of the United States we stand in opposition to Senate Bill 586.

Allowing a trophy hunt, or actually we want to support Senate Bill 894 which would compel DEEP to explore nonlethal management strategies with the proper lever of vigor. Allowing a trophy hunt of Connecticut’s small bear population is not in keeping with the values of most Connecticut residents and voters who want wildlife treated humanely and with compassion. Teams of biologists have explored whether hunting bears makes people safer or addresses human-bear conflicts. The resounding answer according to many peer reviewed and published studies as we document in our written testimony is no despite the claims of some agency officials. The answer to human-bear conflicts is robust public education, hazing if needed but by trained professionals or strategies like temporary diversions of feeding diversions to move the bears into another area, again by trained professionals.

Bear populations are slow to grow and are impacted by multiple mortality factors and I’ve provided a list of those on page 3 of the testimony. There are seven of them that we list. One of these mortality factors is DEEP’s prioritization of lethal management strategies.

I would, first I would like to talk about public education, what it should include. It must include the benefits of black bears teaching people about
that, mostly removal of attractants like accessible garbage, pet food left outside or bird feeders. Teaching people what to do when encountering a bear, the answer is stop, don’t run, make yourself big and back away slowly. Keeping dogs on leashes and when hiking wearing a whistle and periodically blowing that whistle and that may alert bears to your presence and keep them away. Bears are shy animals who avoid people when possible and when they are systematically frightened they not only stay away but teach their offspring to avoid humans as well. There is also nonlethal deterrents like electric fencing around livestock pens or hives. Those are the solutions that we recommend. Did the buzzer go off or was that? It did, I’m so sorry. Okay.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): This has all been a dream. [Laughter]. Thank you Annie for your testimony. Yes, Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you Annie for testifying. Just wondering, earlier I had an issue. I asked about the defining of the word aggressive by the DEEP and I just couldn’t get anything straight out of them about what they consider aggressive. Can you?

ANNIE HORNISH: Right, I can share in 2015 DEEP had a couple situations both in Granby and Burlington where they killed bears that supposedly were aggressive. I met with them with the then Commissioner Rob Klee and Rick Jacobson, the whole bunch of ‘em and Susah Whalen and asked the first question was how do you define aggressive behavior and they could not provide an answer and I was shocked. They could not provide an answer and today the same thing. They are not providing an answer.
They don’t define aggression and it’s easier for them when they don’t have a definition of aggression to respond with lethal force it’s easier to sell, they’re trying to increase social tolerance, I believe, for trophy hunting. When they don’t have a definition of something as fundamental as what is aggression, they don’t even know that, they don’t define it, it helps further their trophy hunting agenda and I think that is why they don’t have that defined. Behaviors like we just heard in the prior testimony of nuisance behaviors in yards that’s a perfect example that woman shared where you can have observe condition brought in, someone could be there when the bear.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): By professional.

ANNIE HORNISH: By professional of course, thank you for bringin that up, but rubber bullets being shot at those bears, training those bears to stay away is the humane, could result in a human resolution to that problem. But that is a perfect example.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I remember Susan, two words resonated from Susan Whalen earlier was animals are taking advantage of humans, taking advantage. The only thing I can see took advantage of was that lady’s furniture. The only thing.

ANNIE HORNISH: Absolutely. Absolutely, yes and.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): I think we’re limiting the area by continuing expanding human population. I think we are bound to run into, when the population is growing but wouldn’t you say that we are bound to have maybe more interaction with wildlife as we continue growing?
ANNIE HORNISH: Yes, yes and there are interactions and there does need to be something done about this. But I would also, you know, the sightings that DEEP cites which are in the thousands, you know, that’s a little I think inflated those numbers and I included in last year’s testimony not this year’s but I used to live right next to the McLean Refuge in Grandy and the hikers entrance was right outside my back door, right across the street. They put a sign in and so you walk into the park and it’s like 150 feet in and part of it’s good, “Be Bear Aware” its what to do if you encounter a bear. We support that completely but then it’s report bear sightings to DEEP. Now this is within a game refuge. And that’s insane frankly. That is were the bears are supposed to be and that in my mind that could having been done to increase the number of sightings for their records.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): And through you Madam Chair. Last question of the day, maybe, I don’t know. Has there been ever an actual study of bear population because my understanding from the DEEP is that they didn’t do a population study, they didn’t do a survey, they did a habitat study but not a population study through UConn, right with UConn?

ANNIE HORNISH: UConn did do a study where they estimated the bear populations, yes and DEEPs projection is, my understanding is based on sightings. It’s factoring in at 10 percent per year which we agree is between six and ten percent, they can go if there is food availability but, you know if your read by public hearing testimony it has a list of other mortality factors including like vehicle collisions which to my surprise I learned
today was 60 something last year, it was 43 back in 2016 that is a mortality factor with a population that’s small. So the concern, we have a small population I think humane coexistence is the answer, it’s what people are demanding. This is the number one issue I get complaints about or demanding from the HSUS is protecting the bears. That is the number one, overarching and when bears got killed by DEEP I get flooded with phone calls. And regrading aggression I would like to, with permission, submit this maybe over the weekend as public hearing testimony, this is the police report for the Simsbury bear that was killed, the mother bear by DEEP.

We’ve got that and one thing to point out, your question you had asked about aggression. And if I may, I’m just gonna read a short line but it describes the scene. The woman’s name was Ms. Roberts. Roberts said that she, “just looked up and the bear was standing about seven feet in front of her. Roberts said she yelled at the bear, no, no, no. She said that her dog Smitty was not aware of the bear at first but that when she started yelling the dog saw the bear and lunged towards it. Roberts said that the dog pulled the leash from her hand and ran towards the back of the bear. Roberts said that she turned to run, ran several steps and fell at the same time the bear swiped her right buttocks and thigh.” Okay and then she got up and went to her car. She was safe after that and if you go to the end her and DEEP arrives on the scene, a DEEP wildlife biologist Rego and Holly, those are the two bear biologists for DEEP and it says that, “they determined according to the DEEP black bear response guidelines this bear was a Category 3 bear.
Category 3A is a black bear that displays unprovoked aggression towards humans” and if that isn’t a case of provoked aggression I don’t know what is. The dog provoked the bear and so in that situation two cubs were orphaned and DEEP says, I question what they said today that bears can survive at six months on their own, not likely. They wouldn’t be staying with their mothers. They stay with them for two years, six months is way too early and we offered to intervene and place those cubs, this was that really frigid winter that we had and we weren’t sure, they were a little bit older so they might have survived but we still offered to, Dr. Ben Kellum could have taken them, DEEP would not respond to that request. So that’s, you know, just to show. I’ll submit this for testimony but I strongly encourage that people read it.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you very much for this very valuable information. Thank you, Ann.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Anybody else, Senator Miner.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you for being here. Thanks for staying. I don’t know if you were here earlier when I asked the question of a couple of other folks that have testified on this Bill but Representative Horn and I actually share the town of Kent in terms of they are our constituents. About a year and a half ago one of our constituents lost a donkey. It was actually inside a barn. Is it ever your position that lethal force is warranted in the -- is it ever your position that lethal force is warranted when it comes to a bear?
ANNIE HORNISH: Thank you for that question. In those situations there clearly, clearly was a failure somewhere to protect that donkey. Clearly there is a failure. I would say before any extreme measures are taken that failure would have to be addressed cause it would happen again probably. You know what I mean, there’s something went wrong there and I respectfully offer to that question is a little unfair because there is securing animals, securing livestock is the responsibility of the people who have them and value them, value their lives.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): And through you Madam Chairman. So I have a constituent that has, I think she has about 18 Morgan horses and if you know anything about Morgan horses they live outside. I have another constituent that has about 400 head of cattle, they live outside. It is therefore your position that unless all those animals are secured in some form of a cage there is a breakdown?

ANNIE HORNISH: Thank you for that question and I wouldn’t say some form of a cage but secure, proper fencing, some people use donkeys to help patrol their properties, there’s other options out there. We’ve been talking about the dogs, bear dogs. There’s other options that people can use to train bears, keep them away if that is a concern.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Senator. Any other questions from the Committee? Oh, Representative Demicco.
REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Annie thank you for coming and testifying and staying so late, I appreciate it. We appreciate it. So Connecticut is not the only state that has this issue. I assume that other states have considered having bear hunts and had conducted bear hunts. Would you be able to give us any information about the success or lack of success in some other states?

ANNIE HORNISH: Well other states that have commenced bear hunts the or our population is too low. It is under DEEP estimates it at 800 and its probably, that’s based on using sightings extrapolating from UConn study so it is probably a high estimate. But I can’t speak to exactly what other states have done but I know the populations are significantly higher but we, you know, it was successfully frankly lobbied by state agencies, that’s what happens. They all tend to promote trophy hunting when they can and that’s something we feel is not aligned with the values of Connecticut votes.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Okay, thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Thank you so very much for your testimony. Charles Munn.

CHARLES MUNN: Madam Chairman and Committee Members thank you very much. I had this down to three minutes but now some fact checking makes it a little difficult to maybe, I’ll see what I can do. Talk a litter faster than I would prefer to. My name is Charles Munn and I hold a PhD in Animal Behavior from Princeton. I am a recognized world expert in management in wild predators for photo safari
tourism. Today I speak in opposition to the Litchfield Bear Hunt Bill.

A bit of fact checking to start with, we can come back to this later. Male bears do not fight each other to death. They will fight over a female but generally they won’t fight even if they are feeding. We can talk about males bears fighting or not that is not really gonna happen.

If you hunt animals a little bit they may reproduce more to fill in the hole. So that is correct but if you hunt them more you knock the population down.

So the other gentleman is correct. I mean it goes either way, you’re both correct let’s put it that way but it’s not quite so simple. Right? You hunt more you’re definitely gonna knock the population down. So Senator Miner is completely correct in that respect.

Electric fences that bears back into, I would like to learn a little bit about that. That sounds amazing. The electric fences that Senator Miner say’s don’t work I’d like to learn all about that. And I’d like to learn exactly what that barn was like that the bear was able to break into.

My main testimony thought is about three points though. Black bears are almost never dangerous to humans. Everyone pretty much agrees there is an occasional outlier and I will go on the record saying as I did last year, you should euthanize a bear that is a proven problem bear. I said that last year, I’ll say it again. There is an occasional bear, just like an occasional human that’s on the edge of the bell curve of behavior that bear probably has to be euthanized. Don’t want
to do it lightly or frivolously but it should be taken seriously. Systematic use of existing methods of hazing black bears and other behavioral management which could involve different kinds of dogs or some of the bear dogs there, there are Great Pyrenees that are used against cougars in Chile and against bears and wolves in Spain. We can talk about different kinds of dogs and bear spray is pretty effective. We use bear spray, we carry it when we work with jaguars in South America. It is a pretty big bottle, it sprays all the way across to where you excellent legislators are sitting now and so that is something to be taken seriously and you may have to wear some.

So I have a bear officer that I am prepared to give to Simsbury to work with the Simsbury team to try to test ways to have the best mix of the hazing, to get the bears under control. I agree it is not like they are out of control there. There are large scale examples in Canada, and Brazil, Chile of nonconsumptive viewing of predators, bears, jaguars generating 1,000 to 2,000 percent more economic activity than sport hunting. I don’t want to talk anything more about this now but the bears in Connecticut could be a source of a lot of new jobs and this is pictures I took last.

Here is a picture of me, taking a picture of a black bear on a private property in Hartland and he is the actual picture of the bear. It was taken with this small camera so it’s not like it’s very difficult. I did have to wait an hour for this bear. So if you know how to manage the behavior of animals you can draw them away from where they are causing trouble
and put them into ways to create jobs. That’s probably all I should say for now.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, I appreciate your testimony. Any questions? Representative Demicco.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): To coin a phrase I’ll take the bait and I’ll ask you about creating jobs and as long as it could be relatively brief at this late hour I’d appreciate hearing about it.

CHARLES MUNN: Well I just looked at Litchfield County to start with. I measured the size of it and I figured how many interfaces there were according to the UConn PhD research between forests and houses, cause the bears actually do better where there are a few houses and forests it turns out. They don’t like the pure forest as much as they like the other cause they get some extra goodies when they steal the garbage and stuff which of course we don’t want them to get in the garbage. And by the way the Litchfield has the bear proof garbage can company Bearicuda and I guarantee the owner of Bearicuda knows how his bear proof garbage cans work within Connecticut refuse collection system. So you can consult him in Litchfield about that. I think you’re looking at a few thousand jobs you could create within five years, not 10,000 but probably 1,000 or 2,000. I’ve created a thousand job with Jaguar tourism and jaguars are a lot harder to get to in Central Brazil. You have 30 million people within a three hour drive of.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Just so I recall this from last year, so some kind of preserve is that what you’re talking about?

CHARLES MUNN: In Connecticut?
REP. DEMICCO (21ST):  Yes.

CHARLES MUNN:  Well no, it can be work even in Michelle’s backyard probably and I would like to drive the bears out of her backyard and make them useful instead of a nuisance. You have to get them away from houses, you don’t want them in her backyard. I don’t think you want them in your backyard really. So I would suggest maybe a kilometer away from her backyard but I have to sit down with her and look at the geography, preferably private land cause then if it’s on public lands its complicated because it has to be a whole process.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST):  So you would be able to accomplish what DEEP has not accomplished which is get the bears off her property?

CHARLES MUNN:  Well, its already been done with diversionary feeding experiments in Minnesota a long time ago and Washington State inductively feeds 2,000 black bears for several months every spring. I haven’t found any one who even knows but the guy got his PhD at UConn never even heard about this until I told him on the phone about this two days ago. For 20 years they have been feeding 2,000 black bears for tow months a year when they come out of hibernation so they don’t girdle the trees and they save $9.00 for every dollar they spend on feeding bears something nutritious but boring so the bears are hungry so they’ll eat it instead of girdling the trees. So I’m not suggesting you’re gonna feed 1,000 black bears what I’m saying is there is a mixture of different ways to manage the behavior, the behavioral management of these animals is probably a lot easier than jaguars and mountain lions and other animals that I work with that I
guarantee you’ll see, often as close as we are now, or your money back by the way. A little strange, I am also doing Harpy Eagles now, the world’s largest bird of prey.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. I actually have a question for you. So through these aversive condition techniques that you mention the bear spray, the bear dogs, perhaps which you didn’t mention the use of rubber bullets or other techniques do you believe that we could get to a point where we would re-habituate the bears to humans to the extent that they wouldn’t be coming around as much anymore?

CHARLES MUNN: Well I think the spray is going to be pretty effective. When I asked the Simsbury Control Officer Mark about that well he said, “We don’t use the spray because it can blow back” unless you have a gasmask on. Well he didn’t have an answer for that even though it’s pretty obvious right. So we’ve used the bear spray in South America and if it blows back it does hurt your eyes a lot. Even like 20 minutes later it will hurt your eyes a lot so the bear, it hurts the bears a lot. It doesn’t do any damage to them or hurts them a lot so that should be tested a lot more specifically.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): But I wonder if we believe that we ever get to a point where the bears stop coming around because the learned that humans are dangerous because of these aversive conditioning.

CHARLES MUNN: They don’t have to think we’re dangerous they just have to find that it is unpleasant to be near the house. It’s not exactly the same thing.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Do you think that will work for long-term or do you think it is something that we have to continue to do?

CHARLES MUNN: Well no one has talked about medic options. You could inject stuff into food that you leave lying around and it makes them sick and just like the last thing you ate before you got sick you don’t want to eat that. It will work with the bears too.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Will it make other animals sick as well.

CHARLES MUNN: Oh you’d have to monitor it preferable but it would make other animals sick if they came to eat it but presumably you’re talking about a place that has bear problems not a place that has a lot of problems with. Of course, I’m not sure would want raccoons next to the house either but what other animal are we worried about, your dog?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Any animal. I would presume there are other animals, other wildlife around where black bears are living.

CHARLES MUNN: Well if you’re gonna use a medic techniques by putting a little bit of something that makes the animal vomit and make it feel terrible you’re gonna have to be monitoring there. But of course if you have thousands of people coming to see bears every day, I’ve already calculated a couple of thousand people a day could be watching bears. Normally not more than 100 people per day per site because you can’t have more than 50 people taking good pictures. No if you start walking with bears that is very exciting and that would be more like my other model of cougar tourism where we walk with the
cougars and this is in National Geographic Magazine this December so I’m not making it up. My guest photographer for guest photos were in an article in the December issue of National Geographic and I’d be happy to share it with you if you want so if you walk with the mountain lions it’s pretty exciting. It’s the only large cat in the world you can actually walk with. You could do the same thing with the bears. You could walk with the bears a slight distance. It would be a modified maybe a little bit more cautious technique than the old biologist in Minnesota used where he actually walks with the bear like two feet away and changes his radio collar without having to anesthetize it. People don’t know much about the guy’s work because he seems a little crazy but in fact if you look carefully what he does it’s all science based, it’s interesting. Do you know about that guy? It’s amazing.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I don’t.

CHARLES MUNN: He’s on TV a lot, he’s mostly sneered at by biologists who like to knock bears out and put collars on them and pretend they are really, really dangerous which they can be.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Well I have yet to see a bear myself unfortunately. But.

CHARLES MUNN: Well we’re gonna solve that problem All the legislators are invited to come to the Bear Experience in April/May with the TV cameras also.


REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you, Madam Chair. And doctor I do remember you quite well from last year.
You really made an impression on me. And so I’m kind of looking for a report card because it’s approximately 12 months since you were last here and you had these great, grandiose plans about how, you know, you were gonna handle all of this and so could you bring us up to date as to what you’ve done here in our good State?

CHARLES MUNN: Well sure, I have two landowners each of which have about 50 acres. They both agreed to work with me. I chose these properties because they looked prima facia to be interesting because a lot of forests nearby but there are private properties and it took a long while, it took several months to reach agreement with landowners about exactly what the commercial terms would be. And so that was a slight delay. Then I had to have the lawyers get involved and make sure that all, so basically we didn’t start really testing this until September but by October we had some bears under behavioral management. By November we had seven different bears so that is almost one percent of all the bears in the state supposedly and then we know exactly which day they went to hibernate one by one because we were following them every single day. So yes, we’re ready to go commercial in April/May I predict unless you start hunting the bears in which case I’ll get so scared I won’t even be able to test this. I’ll be interested to see the reaction of the other states nearby who will insist that hunting bears is the best thing to do that is the only thing to do. As you all start to, you know, create hundreds and thousands of jobs at some point they are goin to be embarrassed. As long as they don’t change then you guys will have a bear monopoly on the East coast.
REP. WILSON (53RD): So this is ready to go for?

CHARLES MUNN: Oh, yeah it’s ready to go for this year.

REP. WILSON (53RD): In 2019 you’re gonna be making money?

CHARLES MUNN: I hope so, yeah cause I want to be able to pay bear officers to go and solve the problems like Michelle’s obviously with some of her blessing of authorities because they can’t be like vigilante bear engineers as it were but, you know we do this for the ranches in Brazil. I have my own team that goes out and measures when the cow is killed by a jaguar so I don’t have the ranches sticking me with every dead cow that was killed by other things like stuck in the mud and the jaguar killed it. So I have my own team that goes out and finds the dead cows and measure them and knows how much they cost and I pay the rancher. I am able to make enough money by jaguar tourism that I can pay a significant amount, $100,000 dollars to one ranch from losing 300 head of cattle every year to the jaguars.

REP. WILSON (53RD): So are you.

CHARLES MUNN: In the extreme case but it’s not that different theoretically.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Are you ready to disclose where in Connecticut this [Cross-talking].

CHARLES MUNN: Well I chose the Barkhamsted Reservoir because it seemed to have the greatest amount of forest compared to houses. But since I’ve been reading more about this I realize that a lot of areas that have a fair density of houses have a fair
number of bears so it could be obviously if I could get the closest bears I could get to New York would be better.

REP. WILSON (53RD): New York City?

CHARLES MUNN: That would be best. So I’m looking at a little further south and southern part of Litchfield. I’m interested in bears further south because that’s what I learned over the years in building 30 lodges in the Amazon Rain Forest half of them went bankrupt because they were too far out. I’m a professional field biologist. I thought spending days getting to an interesting place was worthwhile but most people won’t do that. So I gave up with that idea. So I realize access, it’s all about access. So right now if you want to see black bear you can go the Great Smokey Mountains which is kind of fairly far away. You can go to Shenandoah National Park and not see them very well even though that’s more than half the reason people go there according to the biologist of the park himself. Each bear in Shenandoah National Park is worth $1.2 million dollars in tourism revenue during its lifetime and I think each bear in Litchfield will be worth several million in it’s lifetime.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Well thank you very much and we’ll stay tuned in for your next report. Thank you, doctor.

CHARLES MUNN: You can come out and see it in real time.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Any other questions? Yes, Representative Gucker.
REP. GUCKER (138TH): Just one question, I just want to know if you do children’s parties? Cause this has been the most entertaining I’ve seen all night and I want to thank you for coming in and enlivening up our long day.

CHARLES MUNN: Absolutely. The question is out of 100 children how many want to see a teddy bear, 105?

REP. GUCKER (138TH): At least. I just want to see you get the pictures of the teddy bears on her lawn furniture with the kids watching with balloons.

CHARLES MUNN: I don’t want them on the lawn furniture because that is ugly. I want to project an image of wildness, you know.

REP. GUCKER (138TH): Well thank you very much for your testimony. Thank you for making my night.

CHARLES MUNN: We had ocelots, we’re live, worldwide. We were one of 13 sites in the world where ocelots were live, worldwide broadcast to 180 countries on National Geographic’s Earth Live. That was difficult.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, sir for your testimony. Okay, Vincent Ringrose. Welcome. Thank you for sticking around.

VINCENT RINGROSE: Yes, yes. My printed testimony which you all will get a chance, it’s not that lengthy was all based on Bill 5390 which at one point earlier in the week was the one that was apparently going to be talked about instead of the other two. The one about starting with a lottery but.
Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee I wish to testify on these Bills about the bear hunting. I am a recently retired.

Oh, Dr. Vincent Ringrose from Kensington, Connecticut. I am a recently retired pediatrician who has been involved in legislative matters, an outdoor sportsman for half a century. I first testified here about 1970. In those days I was primarily talking about fishing things and water things, minimum stream flow, fish populations, regulations, hatchery things but more recently and this last time I talked was two years ago on the Sunday bow-hunting for deer. And I talked as a pediatrician only interested in what Lyme Disease was doing to the children in my pediatric practice. An I emphasized that everyday there were several deer tick cases, removing the deer tick this was the bite. It was all about that. And of course the tell-tail red bullseye of the Lyme Disease. One little boy had Lyme Disease three times one summer.

Well anyways I talked about that and I testified on the need and thank heaven the Sunday deer hunting was passed, not to reduce the deer population by a lot but some because every less tick, we’re better off with Lyme Disease.

Human safety is my only concern in heartily endorsing bear hunting. Depending on who you talk to and what kind of numbers you use 700 bears at the end of 2017 but a bear kill on the road went from 36 in 2017 to this past year it went to 61, up 70 percent. Something is going on here. Now here’s the thing, we stated that the population grew by 70 percent, if you use road kills and home break-ins doubled. Mother bears are seen with three and four
cubs and talking to my friend, the chief bear biologist in Pennsylvania he says we’ve got 2,400 already but no, we’ve got 2,000 by the end of this year which would be the start of your next hunting season.

The more bears the more human interface is a guarantee. Even more of a guarantee is a human mauling of worse. The black bears inherent caution regarding humans is completely gone when they have been conditioned to be unafraid of people. The patio in Greenwich, the Senator from Canton have the big bear take a sun bath in his backyard hammock ever afternoon a couple of summers back, they are not afraid. Hunting will change that and it will change it within a few years as mother bears who keep their cubs for two years normally and teach them everything necessary, mother bears teach their cubs that humans are really dangerous not good for photoshoots but they get to know they are really dangerous.

I offer you a personal perspective that few in this room today can match. Since 1962 for 57 consecutive years I’ve have fished extensively for trout throughout the season in the Poconos Mountains in Eastern Pennsylvania along four miles of a wooded stream. The Pocono’s have always had plenty of black bears and they are extremely afraid of humans. Countless personal encounters have always produced a hasty exit by the bears regardless of size. My fellow club members, it’s part of I belong to a club The Henryville Fly Fishers they have the same experience. That is what we want in Connecticut as safe as we can make it.
I recently spoke at length with Mark Ternent the chief biologist from Pennsylvania, 25 years a black bear biologist about their program and he told me how they run it, no lottery, they have a nice standard hunting license cause they have a lot of deer, a million deer nearly and 650,00 hunting licenses but if you want to hunt bear you have to buy another license of equal cost, doubling your cost and you need this permit.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Doctor could I just have you summarize. The timer went off.

VINCENT RINGROSE: Bears are deep in our positive emotions, the count we’re talking about the teddy bears, countless preschoolers would come to my office with stuffed bears for security sake. Human safety demands that I do, I’ve researched the 25 fatal North American mauling’s 1997-2017 involving humans five months to 93 years. Several were kids. The five-monther in New York State, six years old, 11 years old, 14 year old and then that 22-year-old in New Jersey. By the way New Jersey is a nightmare for bear management. You don’t want to know the details. I can tell you where you can find them. I will point this out, bear hunting may once again be defeated by overwhelming emotional bias, if so, those who have voted to defeat it are going to have a very tough time looking in the mirror when the first human mauling or worse occurs. And I enclose a summary sheet about Pennsylvania.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you so much Dr. Ringrose. Any questions from the Committee? I don’t see any, thank you very much for your testimony. Nancy Wray. Okay, moving on there are no testimonies for HB-5304 so we’ll move on to our
final Bill of the evening, House Bill 6014 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE OF LEGHOLD AND BODY-CRUSHING TRAPS. First up is Rich Daniotti.

RICH DANIOTTI: My name is Rich Daniotti and I’m the President of the Connecticut Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators Association. I am one of the founders and current President of this association. We are a non-profit trade association representing approximately 40-50 licensed businesses in this state.

I am a state licensed and nationally certified Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator. I have owned and operated Wildlife Control Services in West Hartford for about 32 years.

Speaking on behalf of the Connecticut NWCO Association we appreciate your consideration of our views that strongly oppose H.B. 6014

As Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators our customer base is varied. We service individuals such as yourselves. Actually, Representative Demicco had been a customer of mine, do you remember, back in the 90s, late 90s. I don’t know what we did for ya I think it was just a service call. I remember you on the list. Our industry services many commercial entities such as property management and real estate companies. Also, many larger corporations and companies as well as hospitals, Bradley International Airport and many other State Agencies. My company has also worked in this Legislative Office Building as well, removing squirrels from the parking garage.

Before I get started outlining our issues, my only regret today is that I can’t convey 32 years of
knowledge in 3 minutes. I wish I could take every one of you on the committee to work with me for a day and show you what we actually do on a daily basis and give you the chance to interact with our customers, who are your constituents. I actually took my representative, 20 years ago, Mike Cardin out for a half a day and he was pretty impressed with what we did. He talked with my customers and still talks about it today whenever I see him.

The passage of this bill eliminating the use of these tools for our industry would be a disservice to our customers and to the residents of the state. They rely on us to provide them with the most practical and cost-effective solutions to their problem with the most practical and effective tools available.

One thing I would like to ask the Committee, I see the proposed language, there is an exemption for rat and mouse traps. Last time I checked squirrels and beavers were classified as rodents also, do they not have the capability of spreading disease and causing damage the same as rats and mice or are they just cuter and more viable to the cause.

A good percentage of our services come into play when animals get into structures. Has anyone on this Committee seen what a gray squirrel, flying squirrel, flying squirrel or raccoon infestation looks like on the inside of an attic? Picture this in your attic. Flying squirrels and raccoons have latrines, meaning they defecate in the same spots all the time thus creating piles of urine and feces that soak into the wood structure.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Sir, if you could just summarize. Thank you.

RICH DANIOTTI: I’ll get into the Zoonoses. What I would do is go to the CDC website, look up Zoonoses, these are diseases that are transmittable from wild or domestic animals to humans. There are over 150 of them.

Why should the general public be subjected to restrictions placed upon them by organizations with a self-serving agenda. I’ve yet to see these organizations come up with any viable alternative for these restrictive policies. It is all very nice and well to say exclude em all or do the one solution in every circumstance, it doesn’t work. So, I’m sorry I ran out of time. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. If there’s any questions I’d be more than happy to answer them, I could sit up here all night.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Any questions for Mr. Daniotti? Yes, Representative Demiccio.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Through you, Madam Chair. Mr. Daniotti I want to commend you for your good memory and I am just curious we heard testimony earlier, maybe about an hour ago or so that some states, several states and maybe even some nations have done away with some of these devices. If that is true and I don’t know that it is, but if that is true how do they manage to control nuisance wildlife and why can’t we do it.

RICH DANIOTTI: In Europe the governments do this, it is not private trappers, they are government trappers. In this country a lot of the states have outlawed these things, you go to New Jersey,
Florida, some of the other states, I’m exactly familiar with which states are which they allow snares, okay. Snares can catch a beaver. Snares can catch a cayote. Snares are outlawed here, foothold traps get outlawed, Conibears get outlawed, you can be overrun with beaver. You are not going to be controlling coyotes. You cannot catch them in caged traps effectively. I don’t care what somebody says, they’ve done studies on this, a guy doing a study. In the amount of animals that have to be captured or nuisance control you’re not gonna do this. I’ve heard this for years. It is just not feasible, okay? There is a lot of problems out there with these animals. Just squirrels and raccoons in structures, to be able to kill trap ‘em it’s needed sometimes. We can exclude em, we can put a one-way door up there, you can let ‘em out and they’ll got out and they’re sittin right there on top of the one-way door and if the squirrel wants to chew back in the house, he is going to chew back in. Right now we’re getting ready to have young, grey squirrels young, what do you do, tell the people because if you exclude the gray squirrel and there’s babies inside that animal will get back into that house and it will do a lot of property damage. If that animal can get back in the house, it will get back in the house. Coons are the same thing. You exclude a coon, if there’s babies inside hopefully you can find ‘em. If you can’t find em what do you do to the people, tell them they have to wait till the raring season is over and they are old enough to move and they can go out on their own. Then you still put the one-way doors up, the mother’s out, the babies are inside, they may be able to move and get out but maybe they don’t come out and the mother
rips back into the house before they come out. I mean there’s so many variables in this industry that you can’t just say, you’ve got to get rid of these tools and everything is gonna be.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): So your point is we’ve already done away with some tools, if we do away with these other tools then we have no tools left that are effective.

RICH DANOTTI: No.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): All right. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for your testifying tonight at this later hour, actually this morning. Good morning. Just I have neighbors that use humane traps for example for rodents or for other sort of what called pests and then they drop them off unharmed in a nature preserve or in the marshland.

RICH DANOTTI: Raccoon, skunk and fox are vector species for rabies in this state. They cannot be relocated. If they are removed from the property they have to be destroyed, that is state law. We can ask the customer if we take the raccoon.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): My point is that I am basically talking about a humane trap. That’s what I’m saying. So if you want to catch something you don’t have to catch it while harming it necessarily.

RICH DANOTTI: It depends.
REP. MICHEL (146TH): You think the opposite. You think that if we remove the harmful way of trapping that you have nothing left?

RICH DANOTTI: Well if you go in an attic all right and there’s raccoons in the attic there’s a couple of things that could happen. By virtue of sticking your head in that attic that raccoon is out of there that night. She doesn’t like it and we work in some big houses. She might not do that, she might take her young where you know where her young are because you can here ‘em, stick you head in the attic, she moves them way down the other end of the house into someplace where you can’t fine the babies. Okay, now what do you do? These people want ‘em out. Honest to god there are so many variables and these are the options we give our customers.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Right, but I also think, I don’t it by heart but I think it is intended for, it’s mostly intended for we’re talking about coyotes, all sorts out like outside trapping, right?

RICH DANOTTI: [Cross-talking] trapping squirrels and raccoons, in structures, on structures. They are put on structures. You are not catching on targets, they are legally set that way, they are up in the air, you are not catching anything but the target animal. I’ve been in business 32 years.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Are you saying that there is no way to trap these animals without harming them?

RICH DANOTTI: You might, I was just going to tell you, you put a coon trap in an attic, a livetrap the coons are so wary they won’t go near it. They will stay in the attic so some may move because you went
in the attic, some may not they move the babies to the other side.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): So just to make it short because it is the morning, is there no other way than harming them in order to catch them?

RICH DANOTTI: No, I didn’t say that. You could put a livetrap in there and you might catch it. And these are the options we give our customers and we explain all that to them. But we need the tools to do it every different way.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Representative Dubitsky.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to be clear, I understand there may be a way of catching an animal in a box trap in some circumstance but once you’ve done that I thought I asked the DEEP what can be legally done with that animal once it’s caught and so if say to you I don’t want that on my property anymore, I want it gone, what are the options in the case of a raccoon. Through you Madam Chair.

RICH DANOTTI: Raccoons have to be euthanized. You take it off site and it has to be euthanized, that’s state law. Under a year we can’t give them to rehabbers and they can’t be relocated. A lot of times you don’t catch the mother with the young. It’s tiny.

SENATOR MINER (30TH): Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Representative Dubitsky.
REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for coming in. I know you were here all day and as are we all, since it is after midnight, I just appreciate it if you tried to say, you could talk all night, I’d appreciate if you didn’t [Laughter]. So you heard DEEP testimony that these traps are used with regard to wildlife management. You also I’m sure heard the animal rights activists testify that it is absolutely wrong that DEEP was lying and that they are used only for recreation to randomly kill animals. Can you tell us what these traps are used for?

RICH DANOTTI: We’re not in the business. Oh, I’m sorry, we are not in the business of wildlife management. We are in the business of pest control. It is subset of pest control. We do thousands of jobs a year in my company alone not to mention all the other companies that are in this state. There’s 300 something licensed NWCOs in this state. They are doing all this work across the state. Not everybody is doing it fulltime, there are part-timers, people that don’t really do anything. But the businesses that are doing it, we’re busy and.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): How would you characterize the difference between pest control and wildlife management.

RICH DANOTTI: Well wildlife management is what the DEEP is tasked to do looking out for the entire population of the animals. We are dealing with peoples houses, and homes and businesses and structures. We’re not there to manage and catch three out of four of ‘em because we have to leave some for seed. So we’ve to get em all out.
REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So is it your understanding that the traps are also used for wildlife management in addition to pest control?

RICH DANOTTI: Oh yea, yes. By all means, yes. They are also used for research. They caught bald eagles with this things for bald eagle research for foothold traps, gray wolves reintroduction, otter reintroduction.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): That segues into my next and hopefully final question. There was also testimony about how horrific these things are, how they chop off limbs and bust, you know and kill animals. Can you explain concisely what a modern padded foothold trap is and if you could just contrast it with what the old leghold traps used to be?

RICH DANOTTI: Yeah like they were saying the old foothold traps they didn’t have jaws, rubber jaws on ‘em, they didn’t have separations between the jaws when they closed. These traps when they are set, they are swiveled and they have springs on ‘em so they are double and triple swiveled so when an animal gets caught, no matter which way he turns he is not going to hurt a wrist, an elbow, or shoulder because he can turn and spin in this thing. If they are set properly and that’s the way they are when they are set for capture for reintroduction of animals, catch gray wolves to relocate ‘em they got to catch the animal and release it unharmed. So people that know how to set them and use them they can be set very effectively. The stories you hear about these animals in these traps, the owls that are caught and all these other animals they are illegally set traps. People are just throwing them out there because they are not trapping for sport
and for fur, they are not doing nuisance work or if they are they are not doing it by law and this has been over, and over and over in this testimony that this state is one of the highest regulated states in the country. So you can’t stupid out of the equation.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): There was also testimony about household pets being caught in the, I can’t remember the name.

RICH DANOTTI: Conibear?

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Conibear traps, where my understanding is you can only set those underwater, is that right?

RICH DANOTTI: Yeah, there is a variation, we can use ’em on buildings but they are set above the buildings. We do the training for the state the NWCO Course, the Nuisance Wildlife Course and it is stressed, you know, 100 percent you do not set these things on the ground. So they are set above buildings, the only thing you’re gonna catch is the target animal. If somebody sets these things on the ground you have the possibility of catching anything that’s gonna stick it’s head or whatever in there.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): They are all legal right?

RICH DANOTTI: Yeah or they have to be set in a burrow of a wild animal, okay down inside the burrow of the wild animal, they can be legally set within 100 feet of a permanent structure and that’s to allow people on farms or whatever to deal with the wildlife they have on their farm. It’s just not a good idea to do it and we don’t stress it.
REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): All right, thank you very much and I appreciate you not speaking all night.

RICH DANOTTI: I would just like to ask the Committee one question, why are mouse and rat traps exempt?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Representative.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Because they get into peoples houses and there is an interest in protecting the public health, but the beaver are not in people’s houses, the coyotes are not in peoples houses. That’s the reason.

RICH DANOTTI: Okay, are there any public health issues with beaver?

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): The beaver, the issue with beaver is that they create a dam, and they flood the neighborhood and the water goes over the road and then the municipalities are upset. But you can use a beaver baffler or beaver deceiver to lower the water level without necessarily having to kill the beaver.

RICH DANOTTI: Have you ever heard of giardiasis, beaver fever.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Hikers get it too.

RICH DANOTTI:Yep, anybody can get it but if it’s in the water all you have to do is touch it to your mouth.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): But you can do that now if you’re a hiker, if you drink out of a stream.

RICH DANOTTI: Right, I’m saying these are concerns.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): We teach our kids not to drink out of streams.
RICH DANOTTI: But they can contaminate public water supplies, well. I mean Massachusetts banned these traps, they had a massive problem with the beaver, it’s documented.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Anyway that is the reason certain things are in there and certain things aren’t.

RICH DANOTTI: Like I said.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, thank you.

RICH DANOTTI: The amount of the diseases, go to the CDC website, look under zoonosis and read all the diseases. Mouse and rat traps are exempt from this because they are vermin and nobody wants to pick a fight with the pest control industry.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Okay, thank you. Thank you for your testimony, sir.

TOM LOGAN: Okay, I submitted testimony online so you do have it, it is quite lengthy but I’m gonna stick to the three minutes and hopefully you’ll have some questions.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on HB 6014 and I respectfully oppose this Bill. I am Thomas Logan, Stratford, Connecticut.

If you take away these tools, you will significantly hinder the state’s ability to manage wildlife in a sustainable fashion, it will put humans and pets at risk and cause more damage to property. As our state continues to become more and more urbanized with sprawl and the development of once sustainable habitat, wildlife becomes more and more comfortable with human interaction. With that the animals have
more negative impacts on Connecticut residents. Beavers will flood septic systems and put roadways at danger of washing out. Coyotes will have more conflicts with pets and humans. Moles, yes mole traps will be banned and will cause more well-manicured lawns which will force property owners to use more pesticides which would contaminate the ground waters.

With the banning of these devices moles will not be able to be controlled using the current practice of trapping. That only leaves a property owner the option of living with an unsightly lawn or using pesticides to treat the problem.

I’m going to skip over beaver cause there’s gonna be a lot of people that cover beaver stuff.

Coyotes are managed using foothold traps. The animal rights extremist always state that these traps are banned in this many states and countries, so looking at the history of where these are banned in the US a logical person can look at all the media attention would see that coyote attacks are on the rise in these states that the traps are banned in. For example there was a study done in 2017 in California where the traps are banned. They actually recommend that trapping of the nuisance coyotes be removed using traps, padded foot traps. They are utilizing government employees using tax payer dollars to solve this problem. With a trapping program or nuisance management program the property owner is paying or inviting trappers in to do this for nothing. So why would you make a town employed people or state employed people manage wildlife problems for coyotes.
If you look over at Connecticut’s neighbor Rhode Island which must be like a sanctuary for coyotes that immigrate there from Connecticut since they are not safe in Connecticut, has been having an increasing problem with coyotes. Residents are have their companion animals snatched right from the leashes as they are walking them. The residents are arming themselves with bats and clubs to fend off the offending coyotes.

I’m done. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you for your testimony. Any questions? Yes, Representative Kennedy.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you. Thank you Mr. Logan for staying here into the wee hours. So a quick question, so if I had skunks in like a crawl space in my home, can I call a you?

TOM LOGAN: Yes.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): So you would be considered a small business owner, I’m sorry. Through you, Madam Chair.

TOM LOGAN: Yes, I’m a small business owner. I don’t have any employees at this point. I service about 500 people or 500 properties a year in Fairfield County and some parts of New Haven County.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): So if this Bill were to pass, how would it impact your business, as a small business owner?

TOM LOGAN: Well I don’t think it would impact me as much. I mean, it would really impact your constituents and everybody else’s constituents.
because what it does it takes a tool away from me. So if you were to say, well let’s take carpenters. Let’s say you can’t use pneumatic nail guns because they are dangerous, you can shot one and it hits somebody else and kills somebody, so if you were to say you can only build houses with hammers or maybe even rocks, you know, it’s gonna cost you more to have that house built. So it’s gonna cost the client more to service your raccoons, skunks, squirrel problem without these tools.

REP. KENNEDY (119TH): Thank you, Mr. Logan and thank you, Madam Chair.


AILI MC KEEN: I didn’t stay here all day. Good morning Distinguished Co-Chairs Senator Cohen and Representative Demicco, and Environment Committee Members. My name is Aili McKeen, I live in Wallingford, Connecticut.

I’m offering testimony today in opposition to HB 6014, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE OF LEGHOLD AND BODY-CRUSHING TRAPS.

According to the North American Model for Wildlife Conservation, wildlife is held in the public trust (as water should be), managed by the State, by science-driven Best Practices. Under current law, the Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection issues regulations governing the management of wildlife species, using guidance from trained wildlife biologists in her
employ. Wildlife management is a delicate science, it’s a careful balancing act and failure to do it correctly not just results in nature’s cruel cycles of boons and busts in populations, depletion of habitat resources, and unchecked spread of disease, but, in the case of some furbearers, it results in flooded roads, property damage, and killed or maimed livestock and pets.

In my opinion, legislating away the tools that wildlife managers use specifically foot hold and body gripping traps, which is also the proper term, while not fully understanding the impact is, is not the right or smart thing to do.

There are several technical problems with the proposed Bill, which would take a lot of time to cover. Commissioner Dykes, Bureau Chief Jacobson have already offered excellent testimony. In two weeks, we will have an educational display in the concourse where we can demonstrate the use of traps and talk about ethics and I encourage you all to come by. I have put my hand in a foot hold trap many times, I’ve never broken a bone. I’ve actually never broken a bone in my whole body, knock on wood, ever. Can’t say it doesn’t hurt a little bit but it is not like gonna cause me to chew my arm off if it’s on there for a few hours.

So I encourage you to all come by and engage in conversation with experienced trappers. This Bill will have far reaching unintended consequences and will tie the capable hands of the Wildlife Division of our State Agency. I encourage you to not pass it.

Since I have a couple of minutes left, I’ll throw in an opinion about a few other things. I support both
the bear hunting Bill and the bear hazing study thing. I support all the hemp Bills and the ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR BIKEWAYS PATHS, RECREATIONAL TRAILS AND GREENWAYS. We used to participate in a program called Recreational Trails from the Federal Highway’s Administration and we opted out about four years ago and that brought in just under a million dollars, it was just around $900,000 -- was just under a million dollars very year which was money we got back from gas tax we paid to the Federal Highways and we opted out of that and I was wondering why we don’t use it anymore being free money.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I don’t have the answer to that question just because I don’t have the history. Anybody have any questions for Ms. McKeen. Yes, Representative Mushinsky.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Because Aili is my constituent and I am fascinated by her bear aversion dog, could you just tell us how getting a dog is going to help with this situation?

AILI MC KEEN: I’m getting a puppy from a reputable breeder in Wisconsin who I have been talking to for a couple of years. He has five dogs and I had to wait two years for a liter of puppies to get a dog and right now it’s six weeks old. So it is gonna be a couple of years before I can use it to actually repel bears. But in Washington they use Karelian Bear Dogs to help haze the bears when they release them from traps. They shoot them with rubber bullets and have the dogs chase them off usually in a pair and that helps encourage the bears to stay away from people. It is quite an amusing thing to watch. You can get a YouTube video of them doing
it, it wasn’t Northwood Law but it was one of those shows on Animal Planet and so Animal Planet has it on their YouTube Channel. It is actually a heritage breed from Finland and my family is Finnish so I got interested in these dogs and I tracked down three breeders in the United States and one in Canada and I talked to all of them and I chose and that’s where I’m getting my dog from. So it’s gonna be a little while but they’re “bad ass” and they are not afraid of bears. Hopefully they are very bear aggressive.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Thank you, Representative. I am aware that you were getting your dog and on your advice I checked out some of those videos and I think they are very interesting. I did ask DEEP about bear dogs this morning and there is something to be said about perhaps getting an animal control officer the same way we might have a canine, it’s just a different type of canine perhaps in Richfield or Hartford County. It would be interesting if something like that would work.

AILI MC KEEN: Part of our problem is that we don’t really have a large enough wilderness area to release problem bears into. We have dumped them into some of the larger areas in Litchfield County and that has not panned out well over history as we know. There’s still some areas we could probably put some problems bears down in like Pashaw Area near Voluntown. No I’m sorry we can’t do it in Madison. The photo safari idea, if we put ‘em down in Fairfield County might be very interesting because the PhD earlier would like to get closer to New York, I would entertain that. But we don’t really have an area where we can rally release bears to. We have a really high people population density
and although physically we can support habitat wise, we can support far more bears actually than the 800 or so that are in this state now. There is a social carrying point as well as an ecological carrying point. We’ve got room with the ecological carrying point but we don’t have that much room with the social carrying point. You heard over and over and over again with hunting, hunters, tappers, trapping and traps that the word tools was used. Hunters and trappers are the tool of wildlife managers. WE have hunting and trapper as a privilege not a right and we do this at the behest of our excellent team of men and women who have master’s and Doctorates in wildlife management that they control. They set the where, the when, the how and the who of and the how many of everything to do with out hunting and trapping regulations. You know, the way we have bag limits on deer, bag limits on squirrels, bag limits on ducks that’s all set without wildlife managers and to have somebody not believe the science because they disagree with it is really disappointing. I mean I tell people over and over again, we believe climate scientists why don’t we believe our wildlife biologists?

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you. Can I ask you also just because you are reminding me, I’m just sitting there, I know you are an archer and I know somebody earlier had testified that they believed using archery as a means or using bow and arrow as a means of hunting bear would be cruel.

AILA MC KEEN: Actually archery is very, very humane. The way a bullet kills is that it creates a, you asked for it, okay. The way a bullet kills, it creates, it kills by shock. So it creates a
temporary cavity in the body that it hits and then that collapses again and I caused a lot of damage and I imagine it is very painful. I’ve never been shot but when you kill with an arrow we shoot a broadhead which is basically at least two, my broadheads are three of four x four blades, razor blades, at least 7/8ths inch in diameter that slice through and they cut blood vessels. So if you’ve every cut yourself with a really sharp knife and not noticed until you had blood all over your counter, that is kind of like what it is. So the arrow will go through the animal, preferably through your both lungs, it hits a lot of blood vessel and the animal desanguinates and it is very quick, with a very good hit the animal will expire in under a minute often and sometimes they don’t even run, they don’t really realize they have been hit. So it is very humane. It is because I’m a good shot because I practice and I don’t take risk shots and this is something that we teach. We’ve got a really good safety record in the State of Connecticut because we have an excellent hunter education program and when people are worried about hiking in the woods on Sundays and they don’t want to be around and they think it’s dangerous, it is a perception that I would love to dispel because we have very safe hunters in Connecticut. We haven’t had, the last fatality of a person in a hunting situation, I hate to even say it was hunting because it was a poacher who was unlicensed hunting poaching after dark shot a jogger and he was drunk at the time. So it was a poacher. You know it was a terrible incident, it was the same year that Officer [Inaudible-13:53:26] died so it is quite a long time ago. I think that’s been about 12 years. Most of our injuries now, our hunting
related injuries are fall and we are working on fixing that too. So and it should be told that most common accidents in the whole wide—everything is actually falls. People fall a lot and injure themselves even not hunting.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, I appreciate your testimony. Anybody have any questions? No. Thank you so much Aili. Mark Veilleux.

MARK VEILLEUX: I didn’t have a beard when I came here [Boisterous laughter]. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairman and members of the Committee for letting me speak here today. I am opposed to House Bill because this Bill has noting to do with being humane. It has everything to do with crushing personal freedoms under the Jack Boots of Collectivism.

Personal freedoms like being able to protect my property, my livestock, my pets, my family. Now this Bill isn’t going to effect everybody. You’ll still be able to use body crushing traps on your local wildlife, rats and mice. Apparently hazing doesn’t work in the city. For you country folk, well you’re gonna have to live with your local wildlife moose, bears, bobcats, beavers, coyotes, raccoons, rabies, parvo, mange, distemper, Lyme Disease.

Now if this Bill was about being humane it wouldn’t eliminate our most humane trap, a trap whose inventor received a Certificate Of Merit Award for its creation. His name was Frank Conibear and that award and a cash prize was from the American Humane Association.
But I’m not here because I’m worried about body crushing traps, I’m here because I am worried about freedom crushing Bills. Now you can take away the traps, it would be a mistake but you will never, never legislate away a need for wildlife management and trapping. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Sir for your testimony. Any questions from the Committee? Okay, thank you. Mike Maston.

MIKE MASTON: How ya doing, good evening or good morning. My name is Mike Maston and I am currently the manger at Action Wildlife. If you’re familiar, we’re a non-profit animal park in Goshen, Connecticut. I am here to share with you why I feel that this is mistake to ban footholds and body grip traps.

Over the last four years, Action Wildlife has been inundated with coyote attacks on many of our animals. I wrote here over 150, I believe it is even more, but it sounds crazy but over 150 of our animals have been killed and eaten within their enclosures over this time span. Coyotes are notorious for being one of the most difficult animals to trap due in part to their intelligence and wariness in human scent. This is why regular box traps cannot be used to catch them. I have tried many methods to rid the park of these predators but all of them have only worked temporarily and could not be counted on as long-term.

I have tried lights, which they call predator lights which are red lights that you put at the height of an animal, in about 30 of our pens. They worked for a little while then they stopped. I put scarecrows
with lights that come on at night inside the pens and when the wind moved, the lights would come on and actually we used props from Halloween, witches and stuff like that we put on the fence so when the coyotes went by it made sounds and scared them. We used electric fence. I used rocks to hold down the bottoms of the fences. I had a coyote, unbelievable has climbed at six and half foot fence to get into a pen and they have killed all our animals and eat them in the pen.

I have pictures here, very I don’t know if anybody want to see them but they are very gruesome and what I have been experiencing. We had a heard of fallow deer probably 45 deer, I am down to five males, all the females got eaten. Our last five females were in a pen with electric fence around them and the snow and ice got on it, the circuit breaker went off and they got into the pen and killed all five fallow deer, pulled out the fetuses, left the fawns and ate five deer in one night.

So we did have a trapper which is one of the best trappers I would say in the state on coyotes come in and help and we removed quite a number and in the last six months after we removed quite a number of these animals, we stopped it. We have emus killed, geese, you name it.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Could I just ask you to summarize, sir?

MIKE MASTON: Well I just want to say that I oppose this Bill because we need this tool and if anybody would like to see these pictures, these are all a stack of all the dead animals that I have to pick up and it is not because we didn’t try, we tried,
everything we could think of to protect these animals. Thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Mr. Maston. Any questions from the Committee? Yes, Representative Wilson.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you, Madam Chair and thank you for coming. And for the benefit of those in the room who may not be familiar with Action Wildlife, would I be correct in describing Action Wildlife as similar to the infamous Catskill Game Farm?

MIKE MASTON: Yes, but we give our animals a lot more room and the one complaint we get at the park is that we can’t find an animal what we tell everybody is the park is for the animals and not so much humans so you have to seek them out. So we give them quite a big area.

REP. WILSON (53RD): So the reason for my question was more so that folks could understand that this is kind of an exotic animal game park that folks can come to and drive their vehicles through and/or get out and look at the display areas and so forth and so can you share the approximate cost to replace some of these animals that have been killed?

MIKE MASTON: We can’t replace a deer species because we can’t bring them back into the state. So what we have, we have to stay with. If we could find that animal in this state we can purchase it. So I mean we’ve lost ten of thousands of dollars on these animals. We lost one animal that was probably worth about $7,000 - $8,000 dollars.
REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions. Okay, thank you. Frederick Becker, followed by Fred Becker, Sr. And I’ll just mention again because I do see a lot of folks on the list either with the same last name or perhaps knowing one another if there is anybody that wants to share their time, you are more than welcome to come up together.

FREDERICK BECKER. Thank you Madam Chair, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Frederick J. Becker and am the President of Connecticut Trappers Association Inc. In this state there are, I submitted written testimony, via email and I’m just gonna kind of summarize what I’ve got in front of me here.

I’ve been a nuisance beaver trapper for the State of Connecticut sanctioned by the Commissioner of DEEP for 40 years handling everybody’s problems on a complaint by complaint basis, issued numerous permits through DEEP to handle these permits, these cases. Municipalities and you are going to hear it by everybody behind me that we are all opposed to House Bill 6014.

Beavers will dam up streams and ponds and brooks and whatever and create their own habitat which is a great thing for a beaver. When you can’t flush your toilet or drink your water out of your well because beaver inundate your well system or whatever, obviously methods need to be taken into consideration to remove that beaver and Best Management Practices our scientific study that was
done in conjunction with other state and wildlife agencies to come up tools again, the word tools, that trappers use to humanely manage wildlife species. It is not just beavers, it not just coyotes, its muskrats, raccoons, skunk, possum everything you can think of and otter. Those tools that we use bot the foothold trap and the Conibear trap are essential tools to the operation of any trapper in the best humane possible way according to science, not myth, not feelings, pure science as to the method that we do.

I did submit to Senator Miner a DVD regarding Best Management Practices and I would urge everyone to watch that video and if anybody needs more, I have more. Thank you for your time.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, sir. Any questions? Okay thank you for your time. Fred Becker, Sr. Welcome.

FRED BECKER, SR. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on House Bill 6014. I am opposed to it.

A little history, I’ve been a volunteer nuisance beaver trapper for 40 years along with my son, Freddy. I have been a Connecticut State volunteer trapping instructor for 30 years to a master’s degree in Trapping. Talking about the beaver you know you could put those beaver baffles in and sometimes you can eliminate the water problem but what you’ve got to remember is the beaver still has to eat and he eats bark. Bark comes from trees so he still has to chew trees down to eat. So you will still have a very lot of property damage if you don’t use Conibear traps to trap these beaver. And
all the traps that we use, with the exception of the coyote trap are all set underwater. They have to be completely under the surface of the water so you are not going to catch any cats or dogs or anything swimming underwater.

I’ve been trapping for over 60 years and I feel I’m kind of an authority on trapping in Connecticut. I can answer, I think I can answer any question you have to give me about trapping. I guess that’s all I have to say.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Mr. Becker. Any questions from the Committee? Okay, thank you so much for your time. Matthew Mulche, no. Herb Sobanski. You made it.

HERB SOBANSKI: Good morning Members of the Environment Committee. My name is Herb Sobanski Jr. and I live in Enfield, Connecticut. I am a licensed trapper, second generation trapper actually. I’ve been trapping just about all my life. I am also a certified instructor for the State of Connecticut for trapping instruction and President of the Connecticut Fur Harvesters Association. We are a non-profit association and are members are licensed fur trappers. We harvest the fur of the animals that we harvest.

Fur is a renewable resource. It is green and I notice that you’re introduction, your first session a lot of you talked about “green” and renewable resources and fur is green.

So there are no leghold or body crushing traps. Body crushing traps are probably the mouse traps you’re talking about. What we use are Conibear traps. They are body gripping traps and they are set
underwater, they grip the animal, they don’t crush it. So I just want to make sure that term of body gripping traps was basically inaccurate and caused severe miscommunications.

A lot was talked about, but I want to focus on Massachusetts which you’re not talking about. Massachusetts in 1996 banned these traps. So as witnessed in Massachusetts legislation such as this will increase property damage, block culverts, and flood roads. In addition to increasing the public health risk of diseases such as mange, rabies, and giardia. We should learn from their experience and not compromise our wildlife and citizen’s health and well-being.

In 1996, when Question 1 was passed in Massachusetts, the beaver population was estimated to only be approximately 24,000 and the coyote population was of no real significance, 1996. Much to the voter’s dismay, animal related incidents steadily grew, causing by booming populations of furbearers and nuisance animals, their populations are no longer able to be efficiently managed.

In 1999 the town water supply for the town of Sterling, Massachusetts became contaminated due to flooding of the Stillwater River and this was due, since the 1996 ban on traps, beaver built 17 dams along the Stillwater River four miles downstream.

In 2001, the beaver population was estimated at over 70,000 beavers and That is an increase of almost 200 percent. A pair of beaver could create close to 600 beavers in 10 years, one pair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Would you mind summarizing, sir? Thank you.
HERB SOBANSKI: In 2005 over 45 percent of raccoons tested positive for rabies due to population mismanagement. Skunks, 37 percent also tested positive for rabies. Only nine coyotes could be caught in box traps no way denting their growing numbers.

In 2005 a poll carried out by Mass Wildlife determined that at least 70 percent of voters, who had voted for question 1, were now regretting their decision. As stewards of Connecticut’s natural resources we need to take responsibility for the management of our eco system and banning the use of foothold and Conibear traps would have a devastating impact on our wildlife, present a public health risk and cost potentially millions of dollars. In 2009, when Senate Bill 994 was attempted to do the same thing, OFA came back with the $500,000 dollar per year cost if you were to ban those traps. That was in 2009. That Bill never made it anywhere, 2012.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): I have to ask you to wrap up, sir. Thank you.

HERB SOBANSKI: The cruelest thing we could possibly do to our wildlife is not manage it.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, I appreciate that. Any questions from the Committee? Yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you. Did Massachusetts ever repeal the ban?

HERB SOBANSKI: No they did not, in fact in, I believe in the year 2000 they had to proactively react and create a new adjustment to that Bill to allow a 10-day permit of the Conibear traps to the
Public Health System, through the Board of Health to be able to manage the beaver problem so they had to, after four years, readjust and reintroduce the Conibear for a special permit 10 day. What also happened in Massachusetts is the increase for the fee for hire trappers, the pack agents. With the free trappers the one thing that is not talked about is organizations such as myself we trap for free. We don’t charge a fee, we harvest these animals, some are eaten as well to. So what we do for free and if you were to remove these traps, what would the cost be to the State of Connecticut to be able to do that with hire professionals.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Well with the hired professionals do the hired professionals use these traps?

HERB SOBANSKI: I’m sorry?

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Do the hired professionals use these traps?

HERB SOBANSKI: In Massachusetts?

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Yeah.

HERB SOBANSKI: By special 10-day permit, the Conibear trap.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, so they are essentially they banned them but now they have to hire people to?

HERB SOBANSKI: Get a special permit through the Board of Health in order to trap the beaver with Conibear. And they also recommend using the suitcase trap which is not feasible in Connecticut. If you were to use the suitcase trap say now, the
ponds are frozen, you would have to wait until the ponds are thawed out and you would be probably forfeiting baby beaver at that point. Catching beaver which you can’t relocate in the State of Connecticut, they would have to be dispatched you would end up effecting and orphaning young beaver and a carpet to be thrown out with no use.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you. Through you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Okay, thank you so much, sir. Okay William Henry Lee. Welcome. You’ve been a champion all day here. Can probably this late hour better than I can.

WILLIAM HENRY LEE: My name is William Henry Lee and I am from Cromwell, Connecticut and I am in opposition of HB-6014. I am a member of the CTA and I have been a member for two to three years now and I even won Junior Trapper of the Year.

I just wanted to say first how someone said PVC pipes can like help with taking out beaver in nonharmful way but beaver will notice the decrease in their water level and they will go up and down as many times as it takes until they find the source of it and they will instantly just block up the hole.

I would also like to state foot traps for coyotes are probably the most effective way at getting them because cage traps are not very effective because coyotes aren’t there dumb canine, they know what they are doing so when they see the big cage around them they instantly just leave and won’t even set off the trap.
SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Anything else. Well congratulations on being Junior Trapper of the Year. How old are you.

WILLIAM LEE: Twelve.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Twelve, how well you did a great job testifying and a good job hanging in here with us today, so thank you for that. Any questions from the Committee? Yes, Representative Wilson.

REP. WILSON (53RD): So I would like to hear how you became a trapper.

WILLIAM LEE: My dad did it so he started off on his first year and he took me one time and I really enjoyed it so he kept on taking me and now I am a CTA member.

REP. WILSON (53RD): And so as a young person just learning how to do this, tell us how you adjusted to the dispatch parting of the job.

WILLIAM LEE: Dispatching wasn’t that hard for me because I knew it was wildlife management and it had to be done to keep the population where it is instead of having the populations increase significantly. We’re helping the population stay at bay.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you very much for your answers and thanks, Madam Chair.


ROBERT LEE: Madam Chair and Environment Committee thank you very much for having the opportunity to
speak tonight. I am very much in opposition to HB-6014. I am a licensed fur trapper, been trapping for quite a while. I’m a volunteer beaver trapper as well for the State like most of my cohorts we help the State, we help municipalities, private land owners.

We get called in typically after there is a big beaver problem okay. The tools that we use are the foothold trap and the body gripping trap. We take care of the problem, we take out the nuisance beaver for the people on an ongoing basis we will come back and do management for the people. So if the beaver come back like say a beaver comes back or whatever we come back and we manage them. So we keep them at a population level so that they don’t get to the point where they are going to dam up and put water over the roads anymore or anything like that.

As far as the beaver baffle, the concept great humane whatever okay but the problem is it keeps that colony there so now it is an incubator for populations to keep expanding. Every year the two year old’s get kicked out of the lodge and they have to go somewhere else and find a new place to setup. They setup there and now there is another problem there so all it is, is kicking the can down the road which we do quite a bit. That is that aspect of it.

As far as the coyotes, the foothold is the only meaningful way to trap them. Cage traps are just not effective to the point were we can manage the population at all. The foot traps do work, absolutely work. The rubber padded are very highly regulated in this State. I’ve heard bycatch, I’ve heard that term throw around a bit. Bycatch bobcats. We catch bobcats, we let them go unharmed
as per DEEP regulations. There is no damage whatsoever to these bobcats. That is the only bycatch we ever get is bobcat. And as far as setting, knowing what we are gonna set and what we’re gonna catch we set it specifically for that animal for that target species. We know what lure to use, we can’t use exposed bait so the whole concept of raptors or birds getting caught is nonexistent, it doesn’t happen. We cannot set unexposed bait so that eliminates that. We use scent and coyotes come in and that’s how we get the coyotes.

So that is essentially it, it is a management tool and I would just urge the Committee to listen to the State Agency that manages the wildlife for the State, the DEEP and their wildlife biologists, they are professionals, they don’t use anecdotal evidence they use scientific fact and we follow those regulations to a tee. We are the management tool for them.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Mr. Lee. Any questions from the Committee? No. Thank you. Thanks for your time. Donald Dandusky, not here. Tom Hart. You know 1:00 a.m. you get excited when we skip a couple of people. Tip Garritt.

TIP GARRITT: I think I’m still here. My name is Tip Garritt and I am from Columbia, Connecticut. And I have been a trapper, fur trapper for 70 years. I started trapping before Conibear was invented.

You have heard a lot of good information and I am going to try to just quickly go through my testimony and eliminate those things which have been mentioned before.
DEEP gave a good testimony earlier today, this morning I guess and DEEP does have some of the strictest trapping regulations in the whole United States and they adhere to Best Management Practices which you’ve heard before. I want to talk a little bit about that, I’m losing my voice because of the hour I guess. These Practice were developed by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, all the Fish and Wildlife Agencies in the United States and most of the provinces in Canada. These traps were evaluated using standards developed by the International Organization of Standardization and all traps were evaluated using five performance criteria.

One, animal welfare, efficiency, selectivity, practicality and safety. During this evaluation detopsies were performed on captured animals by wildlife veterinarians from the University of Georgia, University of Wyoming and Wildlife Health Associates. Since the inception of this program in 1997, 600 trap types have been evaluated. Traps for 23 species of furbearers have been developed at an investment of over $40 million dollars. So this is no small thing and for each one of these 23 species a booklet on what traps to use and how to use them, 23 pages per booklet for 23 species, this one is for beaver and this one if for trapping coyotes in the Eastern United States.

So to sum up the good one work in Best Management Practices, DEEP is presently conducting a three-year bobcat ecology study covering the whole State of Connecticut and one of the major tools they’ve used are these foot hold traps recommended by this agency, federal agency. And the study is for three
years and this started in 2017, 143 bobcats have been caught and released back to the wild unharmed, 100 of those bobcats have GPS collars so they can learn more about the habits of bobcats. To me that is a very significant study, using this very tools that are being prohibited by 6014.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): If I could just ask you to summarize.

TIP GARRITT: Yes, I will summarize. You heard gentleman talk about the Massachusetts situation and just as he said, licensed trappers and special trappers had to be called in to trap. I talked with a wildlife biologist from Massachusetts on Wednesday and I said how did that work out, his answer was beaver are everywhere. Also with coyotes, they have no trap to take care of coyotes especially in Eastern Connecticut and they have to tell people, people are complaining about coyotes that we can’t set a trap and we can’t use a gun within 500 feet of a building so they tell these people in Eastern Mass they can’t help them at all with coyote problems. I think that pretty much sums it up. I also wish to support House Bill 586 bear hunting in Connecticut. Like Rich Danotti said I could sit here all night and talk to about trapping.


DANNY MARINO: My name is Danny Marino, I’m from West Cornwall, Connecticut. I am a licensed fur trapper and nuisance wildlife control operator.
I’ve been trapping for about seven years. I am here to urge you to oppose SB 6014.

I got into trapping about seven or eight years ago in response to a nuisance beaver problem I was having at my house and the road that I live on. The town paid thousands of dollars in a beaver baffling device and it lasted for about six months before the beavers figured out they could go under the road build a dam underneath the road and get around the device. So basically thousands of dollars spent to do nothing.

I started trapping and the problem has been very limited since then. As a nuisance wildlife control operator I have helped dozens of private land owners, multiple towns and villages in Litchfield County area and the State Department of Transportation on many occasions to help with beaver problems, coyote problems and a number of other furbearer issues.

I think without Conibear or body gripping traps of the foothold traps the effective tools that we have will be extremely limited. Any number of nuisance complaints in the State will increase at a drastic rate. I’m not gonna sit here and talk about the same stuff that we’ve gone over about beavers and coyotes but I do think that without these traps Connecticut is going to faced with a similar situation that Massachusetts and other states that have been limited with the traps that they can use.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you for your testimony and thank you for your patience. Anybody on the Committee have a question? No, okay. Thank you, appreciate it. So next Evan Blatt, is Evan here?

NATHAN SPERRY: Thank you guys for all this. Hello, my name is Nathan Sperry. I am writing this letter regarding House Bill 6014 AN ACT PROHIBITING BODY GRIPPING TRAPS AND LEGHOLD TRAPS.

I have been an avid outdoorsman since I was 14 years old. I am now 27 and still enjoy my time in the woods as I did back then. I am a fisherman, hunter and trapper. When I was 14 through 18 years of age, going through high school, Communing With nature was a very positive outlet for me. I had watched many of my peers go down the wrong path in life due to typical substance and alcohol abuse. Because of my privilege to be out in the woods harvesting game that I took the right path and stayed away from the other nonsense in life. If it wasn’t for the woods I may have easily went down the same path as some of my peers. Instead of drinking and doing drugs, I was out shooting my longbow, fishing and trapping. That’s what I loved back then. That’s what I still love today.

I still choose the woods over anything else. We as trappers also love animals. We are Conservationist’s and believe in limits of game harvested. I oppose this Bill 6014 because I also sell fur for residual income. I also eat the meat of game I have harvested by both hunting and trapping. I make bone knives, soap, and other tools from game I have harvested. I always use the all of the animal I harvest. When I have a child one day I would like to introduce him or her to the outdoors and be able to share and experience the same joy I have had in the woods all of these years.
By banning hunting fishing or trapping or the tools we use to do it, please realize that you may be robbing a young man or woman of a very healthy and positive lifestyle and please find it in your heart to realize that communing with nature is not a lifestyle that should be banned. Thank you for reading this. With regards, Nathan.

I also wanted to touch on one thing that nobody else has yet and that is mange. When you think of trapping or traps in general you are thinking of the trap itself and how it could be inhumane. I would ask you if freezing to death or allowing an animal to freeze to death inhumane? I would think you all would say yes. If you trap a strip of farms and you trap it for the first year and you catch a lot of coyote on that farm, lets say a dozen of ‘em have mange. They have no hair, they are naked. They freeze to death throughout the winter. Now if you trap these farms you catch a couple good ones but these coyotes with mange spread it to other coyotes, very common. Your first year trapping you can catch a lot of coyotes with mange, trap the same farm next year say you caught a dozen the first year, next year it goes down to eight, next year it does down to six and then next year down to two and now all of a sudden you have created a healthy population of animals. Now you have removed mange from a large area, so now these coyotes are spreading mange to other coyotes and basically nobody, so far, touched that.

We are a necessary part of our eco system. Everything that we do has a positive effect on our wildlife and we give back more that we take, all of us. I also wanted to say that all of us here are
animal lovers, we all have cats and dogs and pets like everybody else. None of us like to hurt an animal. Everything that we do is about being humane. So as far as the leghold trap and stuff like that, when you hear these anti’s or activists talking about leghold trap a lot of the older stuff there is minute difference in traps that those old traps, I could bring here em show you, they think that’s still legal and they’re not. If there was anything that we felt was really harmful to an animal, bone braking, crushing all this other stuff, we would never use it, even if it was legal, we wouldn’t use it. I just wanted to be clear on that. So yeah, I just want to let you guys know that there is not an ill bone in any of our bodies, I mean we do this because we love to do it, we love animals and yeah, I would love to answer any questions if anybody has one. I also just wanted to say really quickly that yes, if you go online and you look up trapping you’re gonna see slob trappers, you’re gonna see slob hunters, you’re definitely gonna do it. If you look up any anti-stuff you’re gonna see slob anti’s as well. I don’t want you, if you guys are not every educated on this topic to not just go online and watch the first couple videos you see and jump to a conclusion, you know, we’re not, we’re not that crowd. We are all very ethical and responsible people.

REP. DEMICCO (21ST): Thank you, Nathan and thank you for your passion and your patience. I think Representative Mushinsky has a question for you.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Yeah, I was talking to Aili out in the corridor and we were talking about the egregious cases that is one of the reasons why the
Bill comes up for example we had a horned owl, great horned owl caught in a trap in Wallingford, had to be taken to the vet and I don’t think it was able to be saved. We’ve had, I’ve had constituents who had their cats caught and in both those cases the trap was set improperly, probably by a landowner who is allowed to trap on their land and they don’t have the same training you have. They may not set the trap correctly and they catch nontarget animals. So Aili was suggesting maybe what we should do is have, not to take away the landowners right to put a trap on their property but say, if you are going to put a trap on your property you are going to have to take the trapping instructions. What do you think about that idea?

NATHAN SPERRY: Absolutely. I love that. That’s the way it is, that’s the law. Even if you are a landowner you can’t set a trap unless you have a trapping license on your own property.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): But apparently they are not trained cause they are doing it incorrectly.

NATHAN SPERRY: Right absolutely. I also want to say like on a leghold trap, like a padded jaw leghold trap there has to be a certain amount of pressure the animal puts on the pan in order to fire it off. The homeowners cat could walk across it, step on it and not fire the trap, that is the way it is supposed to work, we don’t want to catch cats. We want that coyote.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): But a great horned owl doesn’t weight very much, they are mostly feathers and if the great horned owl triggered the trap than obviously the person set it wrong.
NATHAN SPERRY: Correct because if I had set it the owl would never had triggered the trap and the owl wouldn’t have landed there because there would have been no bait for the owl to see. In Connecticut you can’t have any visible bait, your bait has to be covered by leaves, moss, stick, dirt, in a hole. A bird cannot be able to see that. I love that, it’s a beautiful thing. We don’t want to catch birds. We don’t want to catch any nontarget species. I’ve never caught a songbird. I’ve never had an accident like that.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Well I’m not worried about you, I’m worried about these people that are out there trapping who really don’t know what the heck they’re doing.

NATHAN SPERRY: Well yeah they shouldn’t be doing that anyway. They are already committing a violation.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): So they are already required to take your course.

NATHAN SPERRY: Yeah, absolutely.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Okay.

NATHAN SPERRY: And as far as like bycatch goes, I don’t know if anybody knows what a Conibear trap actually is. Would anybody here say a mousetrap is inhumane?

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Well, it’s quick.

NATHAN SPERRY: It’s quick, right. Conibear the same thing. They don’t step on it, it’s a square and they have to swim through it. That is the challenge of what we do, you have to be able the land and have
a very trained eye to know where these animals are actually gonna swim and you have to get a very large animal, beaver are 55 pounds, to swim through a very small hole and it’s a trade. It’s a skill and they’re set straight up and down, nothing can step on it. They have to swim through it. They are set underwater sometimes, most of the time three to four feet deep and trapping season is in winter and you set these things underwater and a lot of times the ice freezes over the top. Now your trap is underwater, frozen over, there is zero percent of any bycatch, you’re set for beaver you’re gonna catch beaver, you’re gonna catch water animals. That’s it, you’ll never catch a dog, you’ll never catch anything. Also our legholds all have to be underwater, our rules are extremely strict in this state and it really does limit the accident, the accidents, you know.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Thank you.


TROY KAISER: Good morning, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak and I would just like to say, Ditto. I am also opposed to HB-6014.

I have been making a living in this State for over 20 years as a nuisance wildlife trapper and I currently do all the beaver trapping for the Town of Litchfield and several towns in that area. You’ve heard a lot of testimony, great testimony, and I’m not gonna keep boring you at this wee hour with the same stuff. I would like to tell you a quick story
cause I still think a lot of you don’t get what we use these tools for.

So, I has a recent job that I was thinking about that I thought I would share with you real quick. A 78-year-old lady, still living on her own in her own house, ranch style house inundated with squirrels. So she had asked me when I started the job, what are you gonna do with the animals and I said the weather is pretty decent at this point, so I am going to try to box trap them and take them somewhere else. I did that for ten days. With a number of different baits and caught nothing. So I decided to go to the next level which is called a colony trap which tactically mounts over the hole they have already created through the vent on the house. That’s a great trap if you catch the animal inside the house. I did not. So they proceeded to chew a new hole underneath the colony trap through the house. At this point I set what we’re calling a body grip trap on the house, set up to catch nothing but the animal who is trying to get in and out of that house and quickly rectify her problem. Thank you for listening to me and I urge you to oppose this Bill.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Mr. Kiser for your testimony. Any questions? Yes, Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks for coming in and thanks for putting up with this for, till this late hour. Something that hasn’t been addressed and you’ve been doing this for a longtime, could you tell me what kind of taxes are paid on these traps.
TROY KISER: We pay the same sales tax on anything we buy as everybody else pays.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): So it’s just the regular sales tax, is there some type of excise tax or extra tax to go to conservation?

TROY KISER: There is a certain amount of money every year that goes to, that a lot of the companies put back into the State, yes.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay, thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Yes, Representative Wilson.

REP. WILSON (53RD): Thank you, Madam Chair. And I just wanted to say to Troy thank you very much for coming up here today as a constituent to testify and spending the whole day here with us and as Senator Miner says we can have a race back to Litchfield when this is all over so, thank you very much and have a good morning.


KEVIN BJARNASON: For the record, my name is Kevin Bjarnason. I am a resident of Durham. I am a wildlife rehabilitator in training and I am the Vice-President of the Environmental Club at Middlesex Community College. I am here to show support for HB 6014.

My whole life I’ve been taught love and respect the wildlife and nature in our state. I’ve grown up hiking in the woods and have grown up watching my grandmother take care of wildlife as a wildlife
At Middlesex in my classes I was shocked to learn how many wildlife injuries and deaths were directly caused by human interactions with the environment and how many of those deaths are preventable. Each year, millions of animals are caught in traps and thousands in Connecticut. Among those are hundreds of pet and accidental catches and often those are left to die alone from their wounds from starvation or dehydration.

When the animal steps on the trap it releases steel jaws to slam on a leg or a paw of an animal and injuries can be caused just from that impact or from the animal struggling to get free. You’ve heard that a lot tonight. You’ve heard testimonies on both sides saying that it’s humane or it’s inhumane. But what you haven’t heard is frequently animals will break their teeth on the steel of the trap trying to gnaw it free. And while people opposed to this Bill will say that the padded traps of Best Management Practices for these traps prevent unnecessary cruelty the truth is that these padded traps are just a thin strip of rubber on an otherwise steel trap which can still cause fractures on impact or cut off circulation to the trapped limb. There is no modification to a steel jaw that can prevent it from being cruel.

I also just wanted to touch on a comment that I’d heard about rabies and the numbers behind those claims. Animals are only tested for rabies if there is a suspicion that they were rabid so those numbers are inflated compared to the regular population because the animal has to be killed in order to test it. So you don’t test an otherwise healthy animal for rabies.
We heard the testimony about Best Management Practices but even Best Management Practices aren’t necessarily great. Thanks so much for your time and I urge you to support this Bill and I’ll take any questions.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, perfect. Thank you for your testimony. Yes Representative Michel.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for your testimony. Do you have any comments on the language of the Bill?

KEVIN BJARNASON: Yeah, actually included with my testimony I have proposed a couple of, some new language for the Bill.

REP. MICHEL (146TH): Okay, so I guess we can look at it in the system. Okay thank you very much.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Representative Mushinsky.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): You are studying wildlife rehabilitation. Do you know anything about the Best Management Practices of the folks that advertise themselves as humane removal services?

KEVIN BJARNASON: I know that, I mean while people work in their best interests and I’m not gonna accuse anybody sitting in this committee room of anything other than caring for the environment or they wouldn’t be here until one in the morning. I do think that the Best Management Practices that have been proposed by the AFWA are, I mean those practices were created by a nongovernmental body, people have said it is a government agency but it is quasigovernmental at best and it is a group of trappers mostly who push for Management Practices
that promote the use of traps instead of other less cruel options for relocation.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Well to clarify my question, are the folks that you alternative methods of animal removal the humane group, the humane removal people that advertise themselves as such, do they use a different set of management practices?

KEVIN BJARNASON: I believe they do, most of the humane wildlife management officials or trapper will use a cage trap instead of the Conibear trap which while it is effective when it fires correctly, will often break the wrong part of the spine and instead of killing an animal it will paralyze it and the animal will drown or suffocate instead of being killed quickly and humanely.

REP. MUCHINSKY (85TH): Okay, thank you.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions? Okay, thank you for your testimony. David Lersch.

DAVID LERSCH. Madam Chair, Distinguished Committee I am David Lersch from Waterford, Connecticut and I am also the Connecticut State Chairman for Delta Waterfowls Connecticut Chapter.

In fact just this past weekend we held an annual fundraiser banquet. We grossed $20,000 dollars which is going back into conservation for waterfowl and other migratory birds. Twenty-five percent of that money is going to stay in Connecticut where we can help the water control structures, each hunters safety and also improve waterfowl nesting in the form of penthouses and wood duck boxes, just some of the things that we do back for the environment.
I am also a trapper. I grew up on a farm in Pennsylvania. I went to college for environmental science in particular environmental science. I’m on the Town of Waterford’s Conservation Wetland’s Commission and also President of the Waterford Land Trust. The only reason I tell you that is because I have a love for the outdoors, I have a love for the environment and for conservation and I do believe in wildlife management. I am a trapper and I love to trap because I enjoy doing it. I don’t make a lot of money at it. I do it as just kind of a hobby.

Now if you ever thought about if this Bill were to be implemented, by the way, I opposed House Bill 6414, if you ever thought about that we have been trapping for years and removing a certain number of various species of predators and other animals from the environment to bring a balance if you will. What happens if all of a sudden you decide we can no longer use foothold traps, foothold and also Conibears which I think are the most significant tools. I’ve trapped in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois and Pennsylvania. I’ve been trapping for 50 years and I will tell you these tools are very effective and we use them in a very humane way.

What happens if we don’t do it? Well let’s think about what we’re doing, what’s that gonna do to the rest of the species that now are going to be subject to these predators like for instance waterfowl. Delta Waterfowl will tell you, and you can read, there’s plenty of research on the effect of predator management on survivability of duck nests and nesting success. Pardon me, it’s getting a little late my brain is fuzzy here. But there is plenty of scientific proof to show up in the upper Midwest
where this work was done of course in a variety of different weather conditions, that they can increase the fledglings success from that egg to that bird in the sky by incredible numbers by removing predators and also helping to, well through henhouses and other type devices to protect the nests. But predators prowl the ground nesting birds in the springtime in particular and they wreak havoc on them. I notice my time is up but would be happy to answer any questions.

SENATOR COHEN (12TH): Thank you Mr. Lersch. Any questions from the Committee? No. Thank you for your testimony. So I believe that is our last testimony of the evening. Is there anybody here that did not get a chance to testify that had hoped to do so. No. So with that, at 1:34 a.m. I hope you all have a lovely Saturday and a safe ride home and I thank my esteemed colleagues on the Committee for sticking in, hanging in there. Have a good night.