Testimony for the Environment Committee
SB 997, An Act Concerning Dog Licensing Fees
Monday, March 11, 2019

Good morning, Chairwoman Cohen and Chairman Demicco, Vice Chairs Kushner and Gresko, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and members of the committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 997, An Act Concerning Dog Licensing Fees.

The Department of Agriculture (DoAg) strongly supports this bill.

Currently, a dog six months or older must be licensed in the Town Clerk's office in the town where the dog resides. Each owner pays the Town Clerk $7.00 annually to license each neutered male or spayed female dog and $12.00 annually for each unneutered male or unspayed female dog.

One dollar from each license fee is designated to the Town Clerk for issuing a tag and a license. The remainder goes to Connecticut’s Animal Population Control Program (APCP) and fund DoAg’s municipal pounds pets program and its low income and feral cat programs, which have benefited more than 200,000 companion pets in Connecticut.

The APCP offers Connecticut residents vouchers when they adopt from municipal pounds. These vouchers can be used to offset sterilization and vaccination costs at participating veterinarian practices.

The goal of the APCP is to reduce the overpopulation of dogs and cats in Connecticut, and to increase the level of immunizations against infectious diseases such as rabies.

Connecticut is one of only a few states to provide a state-administered companion pet sterilization program for municipal pound animals, feral cats, and pets owned by low-income individuals.

Pet overpopulation is a significant burden on the limited resources of municipalities. Assistance provided by the APCP has helped reduce the overpopulation of dogs and cats and has increased the pet immunizations against infectious diseases, positively affecting public health and safety.

A reduction in animal birth rates, coupled with higher immunization levels, decreases the risk of transmission of rabies and other infectious diseases, not only from animal to animal, but also from animals to people.
Additionally, the reduction in animal overpopulation allows municipalities to shift their resources to focus efforts more on enforcement of animal control laws and on educational outreach regarding responsible pet ownership.

This bill would increase the licensing fees from $7.00 to $10.00 for a neutered or spayed dog and from $12.00 to $20.00 for an unneutered or unspayed dog. It would also increase the license tag fee from $1.00 to $2.00.

The APCP Working Group, comprising veterinarians, town clerks, companion pet rescue groups, the Connecticut Humane Society, and State Animal Control Officers, recommended these increases in order to offset municipal costs within municipal pounds and for the administration costs of annual dog tags.

Members also recommended the increases so the APCP could provide funding for more voucher recipients. This bill would allow APCP to receive an addition dollar each issued license for a spayed or neutered dog and two addition dollars for each issued license for an unspayed or unneutered dog.

Finally, the working group recommended funding for additional services, such as testing and other vaccinations when a dog or cat is adopted by a municipal pound.

In 2016, DoAg surveyed program’s participating veterinarian practices, asking how the program could be improved. The two most common responses were to increase the sterilization voucher redemption rates and provide more medical benefits such as parasite testing and blood work.

The sterilization redemption rates have not changed since the program was established in 1992, a concern for both DoAg and the working group. As the cost of sterilizing a cat or dog has risen, veterinarians and APCP recipients-- especially those believe the redemption rates are too low. This has triggered participating veterinarians to withdraw from the program.

The APCP is an exceptional program that reduces pet over-population and increases immunizations while also encouraging Connecticut residents to adopt companion pets from crowded municipal pounds.

These proposed fee increases will provide municipalities with more funding for their pounds and for the administrative costs associated with dog tags.

If you have any further questions, we would be happy to answer them.