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Public Safety and Security Committee

February 10, 2021

Testimony in Support of HB 123
AN ACT INCREASING THE PENALTY FOR THE INTENTIONAL INJURY OF A POLICE ANIMAL
OR DOG IN A VOLUNTEER CANINE SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM

Co-Chairs Horn and Bradley; Vice-Chairs Osten and Paolillo; and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in support of HB 123: An Act Increasing the Penalty for the Intentional Injury of a Police Animal or Dog in a Volunteer Canine Search and Rescue Team.

I was pleased to introduce this bill this session to further the protections afforded to police animals and dogs in volunteer search and rescue teams in the line of duty. The animals that assist our law enforcement personnel serve a myriad of roles to keep the public safe. Within these roles, these animals have abilities beyond their human counterparts that enable them to detect drugs, firearms and explosives. These animals also are adept at locating missing persons and apprehending fleeing suspects in a crime. Dogs in canine search and rescue teams are equally valuable to keeping the community safe. These animals are vulnerable as their primary objective is to locate and rescue those in distress.

In order to serve these roles, police departments and volunteer search and rescue teams across the state invest countless hours of training and resources to prepare these animals to serve our communities and keep us safe. On average, the long-term investment for each police animal is between \$12,000 and \$20,000. These police animals are therefore valuable resources to the communities in which they serve. I urge my colleagues to send the message that Connecticut recognizes the important role of police animals in public safety and there is zero tolerance for those seeking to do them harm.

I thank the committee for its time in raising this proposal and look forward to furthering this important legislation.

Eric Berthel
State Senator, 32nd District