

CHAIRPERSONS: Senator Gary Winfield,
Representative Steven Stafstrom

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Kissel, Lesser, Maher, Miller,
Sampson, Winfield

REPRESENTATIVES: Blumenthal, Callahan, Conley,
Currey, Delany, Dillon,
Doucette, Dubitsky, Fishbein,
Gilchrest, Godfrey, Hall,
Hayes, Howard, Johnson, Khan,
Labriola, O'Dea, Osborne,
Pavalock-D'Amato, Porter,
Quinn, Simms, Stafstrom, Veach,
Wilson

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): All right. Good morning,
everyone. I'd like to call to order the Judiciary
Committee public hearing for March 1st. Mr. Vice
Chairman, if you could read the safety instructions,
please.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
In the interest of safety, I would ask you to note
the location of, and access to the exits in this
hearing room. The two doors through which you
entered the room are the emergency exits, and are
marked with signs.

In the event of an emergency, please walk quickly to
the nearest exit. After exiting the room, go to
your right and proceed to the main stairs, or follow
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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 and stay away from the exit doors
until an all clear announcement is heard.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): All righty. So for those of you who are new to the Judiciary Committee, our process is this. We have a list of about 38 people who are signed up to testify on the bills on our agenda today.

We will go through them in order. Folks are allowed three minutes. It is a strict three minutes. You will hear a bell, and that means your time has expired, and there may be questions from the committee after that.

With that, we will jump right in. First up is Joshua Frazer, who I believe is remote. Is Joshua Frazer with us? All right. If not, we will go to Beverly Kahn.

BEVERLY KHAN: I'm here, remotely.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): All right. Go ahead, ma'am.

BEVERLY KHAN: Happy Women's History Month. Let's celebrate this month by doing the right thing. I'm here to support the bill to exonerate witches. I'm here to tell you the story of my great, to the eighth grandmother, Goodwife Knapp, who was executed by hanging in Fairfield, in 1653.

Let me add another dimension of what happened back then. Goody Knapp was a pawn in a power struggle between Roger Ludlowe, founder of Fairfield, and his political rival, Thomas Staples.

Ludlowe conspired against Goody Knapp, a poor commoner, because he wanted to get her to testify that Goodwife Staples was a witch. And despite significant pressure, Knapp refused to accuse Goodwife Staples, or any others, of witchcraft, and Knapp proclaimed her own innocence until they killed her.

Twelve generations of my family, descendants of Goody Knap, have lived in and contributed to

Fairfield. They fought in the Revolutionary War for the Colony of Connecticut. Family members were leaders of the Greenfield Hill Congregational Church.

They gave the land for the Greenfield Grange. They served as elected officials and educators. Streets in Fairfield bear family names; Jennings, Pease, and of course, Knapp. My kids graduated from Fairfield High, that sits on what was Knapp land.

And yet, while our ancestor was unjustly executed, Fairfield continues to celebrate Roger Ludlowe, her accuser and murderer. Fairfield even named the new high school after him. It's shameful and reminiscent of southern towns that named their school after Confederate generals.

There's been enough unjust accusation, demonization, killing of innocent people, not only 350 years ago, but today as well. Please do the right thing. Exonerate Goody Knapp and all the others, and send a message to the citizens of Connecticut today, that accusation, hatred, and killing, are wrong. Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, ma'am.
Questions from the committee? Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your testimony. I grew up, as many of you here know, in the town of Windsor, and we certainly had our fair share of which situations back in the 1600s.

I would recommend to anyone that's interested in this subject, just per chance, I ended up reading The Witch of Blackbird Pond. It's actually designed for young people. But it takes place, primarily, in the Town of Wethersfield, and it has to do with colonial life around the time of when the charter was hidden in the oak tree.

But also, there's an instance where they storm an elderly woman's home and accuse her of witchcraft. And it really is written well, and about a Connecticut that I definitely implore everyone, young people and adults alike, if you want to get a good angle on what that world was like.

I appreciate your testimony. It's amazing to me that you're aware of this family history that goes back 350 years. You're assuming that she's innocent. I have to believe, innocent of other charges. But you are aware that, at that time, we were under English rule, the United Kingdom, and that we as the State of Connecticut, while we can do this, it really has only symbolic bearing.

And I'm just wondering why it's so important to you. And I really don't think that we can extrapolate from colonial witchcraft trials, to modern day. Although, the crucible and excellent, and that was about the McCarthy hearings, I can understand that analogy. But I just think it's a leap. And if you didn't have a personal relation to this woman, would you really care so passionately about this?

BEVERLY KHAN: Yes. I'm a political scientist, and I understand that we have to give messages to the new generation coming up. We need to support democracy, we need to support justice, and we should avoid discrimination and accusation of innocent people. So yes, your vote is a symbolic vote, but it's an important message for people today.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): Well, again, I'm very personally attached, having grown up in Windsor, the first English settlement in Connecticut. And we had the arsenic and old lace, little old ladies that were poisoning people in Windsor as well. I think that it's a -- I'm concerned about the path that we're taking, if we have to go and redress every single perceived or real wrong that happened in our history.

And this may start in colonial times, then we can march forward and essentially retry and reassess every step along the hundreds and hundreds of years, while we have really pressing issues right now. But I appreciate your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for coming in to testify. Typically, when somebody wants to have a convict exonerated, whether while they're alive or after they're dead, they produce evidence that they were innocent. Do you have any evidence that this person was innocent?

BEVERLY KHAN: Yeah. There's a detailed -- excuse me. Detailed histories of Fairfield. I can get the book. It's on my table. That include transcripts from the file, and background on what was happening in Fairfield, and the atrocities committed by Roger Ludlowe.

And it wasn't only this witch, it was killing of thousands of Pequot Indians. So yeah, the history is clear. The transcripts are there, even the testimony that some people gave at the trial are there. So this isn't like fabricated. There is --

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Mr. Ludlowe is not on trial here, is he?

BEVERLY KHAN: No, he isn't. But I'm telling you that the politics behind this, was a political struggle and Goody Knapp, unfortunately, was caught up in it and unjustly accused and executed.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay. But you're not presenting any evidence of that today, are you?

BEVERLY KHAN: Let me cite the main book. It's a wonderful book written by a history professor from Connecticut State. It's entitled Fairfield, 1683 to 2000, The Biography of a Community, by Thomas

Farnham. And the first chapter, a long one, is all about the Ludlowe years.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Are you asking the Judiciary Committee to all read that book?

BEVERLY KHAN: No. But you asked, "Is there evidence?" Yeah, there is evidence.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay. All right. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Further questions or comments from the committee? Further questions or comments? If not, Dean Kahn, thank you for your testimony, from a former stag. I appreciate you being here with us.

And certainly, I appreciate your testimony on behalf of Goody Knapp. As folks may know, I represent the Black Rock section of Bridgeport, which at one point was part of Fairfield. In fact, where our community center sits in Black Rock, is believed to be the site upon which Goody Knapp was actually executed.

So, although it was then, part of the Town of Fairfield, that is now part of the City of Bridgeport, the actual site. So I appreciate you being with us today. Next up, Patrick Griffin.

PATRICK GRIFFIN: Good morning. Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Fishbein, Representative Porter, and other distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, for the record, I'm Patrick Griffin, Chief State's Attorney, Division of Criminal Justice.

It's my pleasure to speak before you on raised Bill 6787. The Division of Criminal Justice respectfully opposes section one of raised Bill 6787, as written, because in our view, is that it seeks to amend Section 51277C, in a manner that directs the exercise of prosecutorial discretion in violation of

the constitutional doctrine of the separation of powers.

The division does not take a position with respect to Section Two of the bill. To be clear, and I want to be clear, the division is not opposed to the spirit or the intent of Section One of the bill, to the extent that the goal is to eliminate the criminal liability associated with certain cannabis related conduct.

That conduct, however, is presently criminal because it occurred before non-honor, after the effect of an operative date of the legislation decriminalizing such conduct that was enacted with public -- with passage of Public Act 21-2.

The legislature may lawfully accomplish this goal, in our opinion, by exercising its own constitutional authority to retroactively decriminalize the conduct in question. I submit, we cannot, however, lawfully do so by prescribing a criminal penalty for the conduct, and then directing the executive branch officials to exercise their discretion not to prosecute such conduct.

Section One of the bill violates the separation of powers doctrine, because it seeks to regulate the exercise of prosecutorial discretion directly. And in our opinion, thereby assumes the core prosecutorial power of discretion, which lies exclusively in the control of the executive branch.

The legislature, of course, possesses the exclusive power to enact and repeal statutes defining crimes. And the exercise that that power, obviously, impacts prosecutorial discretion by prescribing the universe of crimes, if you will, with respect to what it may be exercised.

Again, the constitutional problem with Section One of the act, is that the candidates related criminal conduct, that it commands prosecutors to either seek

to dismiss, or not to bring, in the first place, are statutorily viable crimes currently.

Because if decriminalizing legislation contained in Public Act 21-2 is prospective in nature, and not retroactive. And therefore, the legislature did not expressly overcome the provisions of our state savings statute. Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Attorney Griffin, let me ask very directly. Are there, currently, pending charges against individuals in the State of Connecticut, for possession of cannabis?

PATRICK GRIFFIN: I would say the answer is yes, directly to that question.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Why?

PATRICK GRIFFIN: Again, Representative, the conduct occurred before the passage of the bill. I will tell you very directly, that I've had conversations with all 13 state's attorneys, that we are in agreement that what is legal today should not be penalized because it occurred prior to the passage of the bill.

My objection and the objection of the Division of Criminal Justice is not pursuing these matters. It's simply, we're asking to change the language of the bill and not direct the Division of Criminal Justice to enact in a certain manner, which, in our opinion, violates the separation of power's doctrine.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Wouldn't the most judicious and fastest way to achieve, I think, what is our mutual goal, would be for the Division of Criminal Justice, just to go in and dismiss all those charges?

PATRICK GRIFFIN: Yes, yes.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. So when will that be accomplished by?

PATRICK GRIFFIN: So to that end, I have a meeting with the state's attorneys this Wednesday. One of the issues that is going to be raised, is to put together a policy for the Division of Criminal Justice to address this issue.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. Well, I guess the JF deadline is not until the end of the month, so hopefully you'll report back to us between now and then, that all the charges have been dismissed. Further questions or comments from the committee? Representative Fishbein.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I concur. I know that there is lack of prosecutors in the state, and I'm concerned that actions are being undertaken to possibly prosecute cases that would be vacated upon conviction, basically.

I understand the policy, and I'm not here to attack the policy of the cannabis legalization. I don't need to go down that road. But I'm just troubled. I mean, I think it was past quite a long time ago, and I don't know why this hasn't been addressed previously.

I look forward to hearing some sort of report by the end of the month, as to what's going to happen. I would recommend that we JF it anyway, 'cause I don't think it gets done to our satisfaction before that deadline.

But I'm totally sympathetic not only to the individuals that are being -- that these charges are holding over their heads, but a lot of people don't understand that sometimes there's a parade of horrors that follows those charges.

Violation of probation, for instance, can attach to a possession charge. Many times in family court, I hear, "Well, he's been arrested for possessing

marijuana and therefore he shouldn't see his children." That parade of horrible should end, given the policy that this state has provided. And I look forward to hearing good stuff in this regard. So thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you,. Representative Fishbein. Further questions or comments?
Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. And welcome, Chief of State Attorney. Question, when you talk about the separation of power issue. I want to know, is it the case that the constitutional challenge regarding separation of powers failed in the several other states that have passed cannabis re-sentencing laws, can you answer that or address that question?

PATRICK GRIFFIN: I don't know if I can. I mean, my comments are directly related to the issue of, as currently configured, there is legally viable charges, whether the will of the legislature is being usurped by the Division of Criminal Justice not taking action on those cases. The plain meaning of the statute, it was prospective, not retroactive, right?

And so all I'm indicating, Representative Porter, is that this body should not direct the Division of Criminal Justice, which are executive branch government officials, to take certain actions which would be in violation of the separation of powers. I am trying to express as clearly as I can, that we recognize this issue, and that we believe that we can address it internally.

REP. PORTER (94TH): So that brings me to, don't we already have re-sentencing laws?

PATRICK GRIFFIN: You do.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Modification?

PATRICK GRIFFIN: Sure.

REP. PORTER (94TH): So how does that compare to what you're stating, as far as the difference, than them already being -- well, it was illegal, is what you're saying, right?

PATRICK GRIFFIN: Yes.

REP. PORTER (94TH): That it wasn't the law.

PATRICK GRIFFIN: Correct.

REP. PORTER (94TH): And now we're saying that we're looking for your office to do this.

PATRICK GRIFFIN: Correct.

REP. PORTER (94TH): So I'm a little confused around the fact that we already do resentence and modification. How would this be any different?

PATRICK GRIFFIN: Well, I think the fundamental issue is that, the charges that are on dockets are viable criminal charges under the current state statute. And the proposed legislation would direct us to exercise our discretion, or order us to exercise our discretion.

That would, in our opinion, violate the separation of powers. What I am saying is, clearly, as I can say, is we do recognize that the intent of the legislature -- I certainly recognize that, and I think I can speak for the 13 states attorneys.

That we will take action on this matter. I will point out that there's some difficulty, for example, where a charge, a cannabis related offense, may be one charge in an information that contains five or six charges, and that that docket or that entire file went into a diversionary program, for example.

So we're going to have to try to identify these cases, and that's one of the issues that we're

wrestling with. I would also point out that when 21a-277b was changed, which was the sale of marijuana.

Under the prior configuration, 21a-277b didn't just involve the sale of marijuana. So when we see that on a docket sheet, it doesn't tell us whether that was marijuana or another offense, if that makes sense.

And so we're going to have to do some reviewing in order to identify those cases. But Representative Stafstrom asked me a direct question, I gave him a direct answer, I do believe that there are charges pending.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay. And the last question through you, Mr. Chair, is, what is your -- what are you suggesting we -- how do we handle the first section of this bill, if you're saying that it shouldn't be your office?

PATRICK GRIFFIN: Well, again, not to be presumptuous, but one way to handle it would be to make the cannabis bill retroactive.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Okay.

PATRICK GRIFFIN: That would take care of the separation powers issue, completely.

REP. PORTER (94TH): That's what I thought you said. Okay.

PATRICK GRIFFIN: Yes.

REP. PORTER (94TH): All right. Thank you. And thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Further questions or comments? Seeing none, Attorney Griffin, thanks very much.

PATRICK GRIFFIN: Thanks you so much.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Next up will be Laurie Maulucci.

LAURIE MAULUCCI: Good morning, Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary. My name is Laurie Maulucci, and I'm President of the Connecticut Federation of Dog Clubs & Responsible Dog Owners, representing the members of the 57 AKC dog clubs in this state, as well as all individual responsible dog owners in Connecticut.

We oppose HB 67 as drafted. We wholeheartedly support the enforcement of strong animal cruelty statutes. Our opposition stems from the proposed definition of sexual contact with an animal.

As written in HB 6714, this definition would unintentionally make common animal reproductive procedures like artificial dissemination, illegal, because it does not specifically exclude bonafide veterinary or animal husbandry purposes.

We request that a clarifying amendment be added to line 71 at C, for this purpose. We also strongly oppose HB 1060. Sorry. SB 1060. We do not support giving animals the same rights and privileges as people, by changing their legal classification from property to legal beings.

Animal protection does not require the granting of legal standing or personhood to animals. Our animals are protected by defining the rights and responsibilities of owners.

Animal owners are legally responsible for providing appropriate care, humane conditions, and safety measures.

Failing to comply with state and local dog laws can result in serious consequences, including the immediate seizure of animals suspected to be neglected or abused. All of this is founded upon the concept of ownership.

Courts already have the authority to call animal experts to educate officials and provide essential information. Animal experts can provide valuable expertise in describing disease and injury, or what might have been done to prevent or alleviate a situation.

Animal experts may also interpret animal behavior and determine whether injuries were intentional, and caused by humans. We suggest that the court's draw upon the expertise of the state veterinarian's office, to assist the courts with recommendations when the wellbeing of an animal is at stake. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Representative Fishbein.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, ma'am. I just want to ask you about 6714.

LAURIE MAULUCCI: Yes.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): And you had said that you were recommending, in line 71, that there is a reference to veterinary or animal husbandry. Is that fair to say?

LAURIE MAULUCCI: That is correct.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): So when I look at line 71, it talks about any transfer or transmission of semen by a person, upon any part of the animal. Not inside of. Is it -- am I to understand that, as part of the lawful acceptable act here, that transmission of semen upon the body is appropriate?

LAURIE MAULUCCI: Well, we wouldn't want to change the ability of veterinarians to perform these routine procedures, and if inadvertently, while that is not the intent of any veterinarian to have semen upon an animal.

We just need it made clear that, transferring semen to an animal, when done by a veterinarian or with appropriate animal husbandry purposes, is not excluded in this definition. It just needs a little bit of clarity.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): Okay.

LAURIE MAULUCCI: The intent, I'm sure was not -- I'm sure the intent was not to prevent veterinarians and animal husbandry experts from reproductive procedures.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): No. In fact, in line 70, the line directly above that, it says, "Without a bonafide veterinary or animal husband repurpose." So, certainly, that's captured there.

And I think the intention of line 71 is to distinguish from that purpose, and deal with upon. However, in parent 15, there is no crime that's listed, right? You got to go further on into the bill to find the actual crime. Do you agree with me there, correct?

LAURIE MAULUCCI: Yes.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): Okay. And that's in section two.

LAURIE MAULUCCI: Okay.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): So once we define a sexual contact with an animal, and once we say that transmitting semen onto the body of an animal is acceptable practice, right? Okay. Let's just get past that.

In order for it to be a crime, the individual must be -- and I'll read, "The person is guilty of sexual assault of an animal when such person knowingly and for the purposes of sexual gratification of the actor or another person, engages in sexual contact with an animal."

So once you define sexual contact with an animal, you have to prove that it was for the purpose of sexual gratification of that individual, or other person. So I think it's already -- the appropriate act is already exempted.

Because if it's a veterinarian who's doing this, or it's for the purpose of animal husbandry, it would be an appropriate defense that sexual gratification is not involved. Do you see that link up?

LAURIE MAULUCCI: I see that. But I see no reason not to further clarify in line 71, that veterinarian practices and animal husbandry practices are appropriate.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): Okay. So --

LAURIE MAULUCCI: Just further clarification.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): Yeah. No, I appreciate it. And that's the reason why we have public hearings on this stuff.

LAURIE MAULUCCI: Yes.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): So you would just add the clause, like in line 70, to line 71. Is that --

LAURIE MAULUCCI: Correct.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): Okay.

LAURIE MAULUCCI: Thank you.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): I thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Further questions or comments from the committee, further questions or comments? Seeing none, thanks for being with us, ma'am.

LAURIE MAULUCCI: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Nilda Almonte. Is Nilda Almonte with us? Okay. How about Jo-Anne Basile?

JO-ANNE BASILE: Good morning. Co-chairs, Senator Winfield and Representative Stafstrom, honorable members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Jo-Anne Basile, the Executive Director of Connecticut Votes for Animals, a grass roots animal advocacy organization dedicated to improving and protecting the lives of animals by championing legislative changes at the assembly.

CVA strongly supports SB 1060 and HB 6714. It's almost seven years to the month that this committee would embark on groundbreaking legislation and enter into uncharted territory, by passing the Court Advocate Program or Desmond's Law, to protect the interest of animals and ultimately make the world a safer place for both animals and humans.

Throughout these seven years, what has become clear, is the need to extend the Court Advocate Program to all animals. There have been cases of wild rabbits shot multiple times with a BB gun, and then tortured to death.

Horses left to starve. Over a hundred goats living in deplorable conditions. A pet rabbit tortured by cutting off its legs while dangling in the hands of a human.

Flocks of geese being intentionally mowed down by a car. These are violent crimes. These are the types of crimes that researchers look at when describing the link between crimes against animals and people.

In extending the law to all animals, we want to make several points clear. SB 1060 will not expand the animals that are covered under Connecticut's cruelty statutes.

Our laws apply to all animals, domestic, farm, and wildlife. The Court Advocate Program remains a permissive program. It does not change the judge's

discretionary authority to appoint advocates. Cruelty cases that come before the courts are sufficiently heinous and never frivolous, or without merit.

In addition, CVA strongly supports HB 6714, a bill that targets three areas of Connecticut's law that are either deficient or needed to combat Connecticut's animal cruelty.

It updates and strengthens Connecticut's sexual assault law concerning animals, and also addresses situations of pornography concerning sexual contact with an animal.

Attached to my testimony are the Connecticut pages from Beast Forum, an online solicitation and meet-up site for those interested in sex with animals.

The descriptions are too graphic to include in this setting, but I urge legislators to read what happens in Connecticut and in the dark web.

The ban also -- the bill also authorizes a ban on possessing animals for those convicted of animal abuse. Possession bans are one way to keep offenders away from potential new victims and reduce the rate of recidivism.

An important element to these bans is to remove access to animals, not only in the home, but also in places of work, or volunteering, such as animal shelter.

In closing, I would like to thank Representative Porter and Representative Fishbein, for their work on HB 6714.

I would also like to dedicate our effort today to state former -- to former state representative, Diana Urban. I know she wanted to be here, but because of extenuating circumstances, was unable to do that. So thank you for your consideration, and I'm happy to take any questions,

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Questions from the committee? Seeing none, thanks for being with us. William.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Mr. Chairman.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Yeah. Okay. Ma'am, can you come back? I'm sorry.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Oh! I'm sorry.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): I didn't see you, Representative Dubitsky, online. Representative.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Oh! Yes.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for coming in. I was one of the people who negotiated the original bill to allow for representatives of dogs and cats.

And it was very, very clear, that anything related to a farm animal would never, ever, ever be included in that. And that's why a lot of us didn't fight that bill very hard, because those representations were made.

Now I know things do change, and people change, and now -- but as I recall, you were involved in that -- in those discussions as well.

Tell me what has changed between when we initially put this law into effect, and now, other than that some animals have been abused, which is already a crime.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Correct.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Tell me what has changed.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Well, I think a couple of things, Represented Dubitsky. And thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to answer you. First of all, the bill that came out of committee, came out as an all animal bill.

You certainly will recall that because you were a member of the Judiciary Committee in 2016. So the committee, at that time, thought that extending -- that having the applicability of a Court Advocate Program to all animals was appropriate.

Yes, there were discussions and negotiations in the House chambers, to limit it to just cats and dogs. And there was a decision, to rather than hold up the process, to let it go forward. Since that time, we've learned a couple of things.

One, we've learned, and you'll hear later on during the -- during today's testimony, about the benefits and value of having a Court Animal Advocate Program.

These are pro-bono professional attorneys who are in the courtroom for the purposes of ensuring that justice is taken, and really, to help the courtroom.

And what we've seen, is that in those cases -- excuse me. With cats and dog cases, there has been a real benefit to having those professionals in the courtroom, and acting in that capacity.

We believe, since the basis of the Court Advocate Program is related to the cruelty statutes, and the cruelty statutes do, in fact, cover all animals, that it was a natural extension to bring it back to its original intent, which was to have a court advocate for all animals.

And our belief is that -- this is not -- there's been some misrepresentation. I've read in some of the testimony, that these are advocates, if you will, going out and trying to rustle up issues.

We are talking about professional attorneys, in courtroom, trying to provide professional guidance in cases where the animal and those people who have harmed that animal, have already been charged with animal cruelty. That is in the law.

That will stay in the law, at least, we certainly hope it will. And it includes farm animals. I'll also say there's not -- what I think we've seen in the last seven years, there are not a lot of cases involving farm animals. I mean, there was a case, actually, that was just announced this morning. I don't know if it's a case. This --

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay. I don't mean to cut you off, but you're --

JO-ANNE BASILE: It's okay.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): I asked you a specific question, and you're monologuing. With regard to farm animals, in particular. So I've got a cow, and I raise that cow for the purpose of killing that cow and eating that cow, and somebody accuses me of abuse, and I get arrested, and my cow gets a lawyer. That lawyer's goal is to prevent that cow from being killed and eaten.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Mr. Dubitsky, excuse me. Let me just stop you there, just for one second.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Ma'am, ma'am.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Yeah.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): He's entitled to finish his question

JO-ANNE BASILE: Okay. I'm sorry.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): There wasn't a question there yet, I don't believe, but --

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): No, there was not yet. So --

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Representative Dubitsky, let's get to a question that's on the bill, and then we'll give her a chance to answer. Thanks.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Yap. That's what I'm trying to do. So in my scenario with this cow, if my cow

is given an attorney, and the attorney's job is to look after the best interest of that cow. Well, the best interest of that cow is for that cow to live out a long life in a nice bucolic pasture, and not be eaten.

That sounds like an extreme conflict of interest, to me, given that that cow was born, raised, and intended to be eaten. So tell me how that attorney is going to do best by that cow, when that cow is destined to be eaten?

JO-ANNE BASILE: Yes. That cow, and in that situation, would not be covered under the state's cruelty statutes. I mean, your concern ought to be with the cruelty statutes, not with the Advocacy Program, number one.

Number two, an advocate in courtroom is not representing the animal. The advocate is in the courtroom to help the courts move through these systems.

Number three, only 18% of the cases that are brought before the courts on animal cruelty, result in a conviction. That is as per the latest report from the Office of Legislative Research.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay. Well, if you believe that farm animals are not covered by animal cruelty statutes, you are mistaken.

JO-ANNE BASILE: No, no, no. I did not say that. I did not say that. I'm sorry. They specifically are. They are, absolutely, are covered by the cruelty statutes. We'd like to keep it that way.

I'm just suggesting that the scenario that you're trying to paint, would not likely arise to the point of a charge of animal cruelty. And if it did, then something was going on other than, "You are preparing that cow for slaughter."

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): All right. Well, I'm not going to rehash my scenario. But the scenario is that, that I was charged with animal cruelty. So I thank you for your comments, thank you for coming in, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

JO-ANNE BASILE: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Thank you, Representatives, and thank you, ma'am, for being with us. Next up will be William Schloat .

WILLIAM SCHLOAT: Good morning, Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary. I am William Schloat, from Avon, Connecticut. I am nine years old, and I am a student at St. Gabriel School in Windsor.

I am here today to ask you to vote yes on HJ number 34, resolution concerning certain witchcraft convictions in colonial Connecticut. I believe that we should help one another, especially, people who are being persecuted.

We should protect people who did not have the power to defend themselves. If I had a time machine, I would travel back to Hartford in the 1600s, to help the people who were being accused of witchcraft.

I would, especially, try to rescue the young children whose mothers were being called witches. Now, I will tell you just about five of the many children who became orphans when powerful people in Connecticut executed their mothers.

Let us take a few minutes to imagine how terrifying it must have been for those children to hear people say that their mothers were witches. In 1648, here in Hartford, a baby boy named Benjamin Newton, was born in jail.

His mother, Mary Johnson, was imprisoned, waiting to be executed for witchcraft. Soon after he was born, baby Benjamin became an orphan when his mother was

taken away to be hanged. The Colony of Connecticut gave newborn Benjamin to Nathaniel Roscoe, the son of the prison keeper.

Nathaniel was paid 15 pounds to take care of baby Benjamin. 15 pounds in 1648, is equal to \$3,000 in today's money. When young Benjamin was old enough to start doing work, he became an indentured servant to the prison keeper son.

When Benjamin was 21 years old, he was finally free from being kept as a servant. In 1663, in Farmington, Connecticut, the four young children of Mary Barnes experienced the destruction of their family life.

The youngest daughter, Hannah Barnes, was six years old when her mother was taken away to Hartford, to be hanged. Just a few weeks later, the father, Thomas Barnes, decided to get married again, this time, the daughter of her neighbor.

When Thomas made this decision, he also agreed to send two of his four grieving children away. He sent his 12 year old daughter, Sarah, and his 11 year old son, Joseph, to work as a servant in the home of someone else.

Sadly, his youngest child, Hannah, died at age seven, less than a year later after her mother was executed. These poor children did not have any control --

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Go ahead. You can finish

WILLIAM SCHLOAT: -- over the frightening and unjust things that were happening to them. As a proud citizen of the State of Connecticut and the United States of America, I hope that in 2023, I have more power than those abused children had in colonial Connecticut. Thank you for listening.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Very well done. Thank, thank you. I won't admonish the audience on

this one. But we technically don't allow clapping or booing, but I think on this one, it's okay. So congratulations. Great job. Thanks for being with us today. Senator Winfield.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): I just wanted to briefly -- I'm sitting here today learning some stuff, and I don't know all that much about witches, but I know there's something magical when our young people come and testify in front of us. So I wanted to thank you for doing that. Have you testified before us before?

WILLIAM SCHLOAT: I don't think so. No.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Well, then it's even more powerful. And to your question and your testimony about, whether you have a different level of power than those young people in the past. Clearly, you do. So thank you very much.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): I suspect someday you might be sitting on this side of the table, but -- so we'll be watching for you, all right?

WILLIAM SCHLOAT: Okay.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Next up will be Sarah Gersten.

SARAH GERSTEN: Thank you, members of the Judiciary Committee, for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 6787. My name is Sarah Gersten, and I am the Executive Director and General Counsel of the Last Prisoner Project, a national nonprofit dedicated to cannabis criminal justice reform.

I am also a resident of West Hartford. I wanted to thank the folks like William, here today, testifying to exonerate past witchcraft crimes. These are crimes that were once believed to be criminal activity, that we now recognize that that was unjust.

That was activity behavior that should have never been criminalized, and it were crimes that were designed to subjugate women.

And I would hope that the members of this committee, if there was someone still incarcerated today in the State of Connecticut, would release anyone who was incarcerated for witchcraft.

While we have a similar situation occurring with cannabis use and production, this is activity that we now believe should no longer be criminalized.

This is activity that we know, both prohibition and the war on drugs, there is a large body of evidence to show that these crimes were designed primarily to subjugate and marginalized communities of color.

But we now have the chance to remedy the fact that there are still tens of thousands of people across the country, and here in Connecticut, incarcerated, facing pending prosecution, or serving terms of supervision, for the exact same activity others are now able to profit off of in the State of Connecticut.

When a state legalizes cannabis, it is acknowledging that public interest has shifted regarding the criminality of cannabis consumption and production.

The magnitude of this shifting perception is clear in the landscape of national legalization, as cannabis is now legal in 21 states, and being contemplated in, virtually, all other states.

Simply repealing prohibition, however, is insufficient, because others are still incarcerated for that exact same activity.

Here in Connecticut, the legal market brought in over \$2 million just in the first week of sales, and the state is poised to earn over \$1 billion in tax revenue over the next five years.

At the same time, we still have individual suffering the most severe consequences of prohibition. While we were thrilled to see that Connecticut has taken great strides to clear cannabis convictions from criminal records, the state has done nothing to reduce or eliminate cannabis related criminal sentences since adopting legalization.

In order to adequately address the past harms of prohibition, it is imperative that the legislature provides avenues for retroactive relief through a state initiated sentence modification process.

Fortunately, that is exactly what HB 6787 establishes. However, there are a number of ways the bill can be improved to ensure a just and fair process.

First of all, as we heard earlier, though the state's attorney's office is looking to an administrative rule to drop pending charges, we must ensure that there's oversight.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Questions or comments from the committee, questions or comments? Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I'm just curious to ask where you were going with the statement you were making regarding the state's attorney?

SARAH GERSTEN: Yes. Both of the provisions or sections in the bill, both dropping pending prosecutions and the sentence modification or reconsideration, there's no oversight or statutory deadlines.

In states where we've seen similar bills passed where they don't have that kind of oversight or deadlines baked into the legislature or into the bill, we've seen thousands of people continue to suffer without relief, with no end in sight, despite these laws having passed.

So it's absolutely imperative that we bake into this law, both oversight, but also, a clear timeframe for the state to act on both sections of this bill.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you for that. So let me ask you, does this bill cover people that would be under supervision on parole, probation?

SARAH GERSTEN: As currently drafted, it does not. And based on the data that we have from other states, this could be the most impactful part of the bill.

There could be hundreds more individuals serving terms of supervision, than those currently incarcerated in DOC for cannabis related activity.

While probation and parole systems were meant to hold people accountable and redirect them back to work back to their community, really, to give people a second chance, instead, they are more often a web of confusing, ineffective rules that keep people trapped in a pipeline back to prison, excluding them from wellness and economic stability.

While on supervision, individuals formally incarcerated for cannabis offenses are not truly free, and must be included in any retroactive relief measures.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. And could you briefly speak to what this looks like in other states, right; other states that have done this?

SARAH GERSTEN: Other states have passed similar laws, so there are numerous examples that we can follow. What's great about the bill as drafted, and again, I thank the committee for drafting the bill so that the process is state initiated.

Individuals don't themselves have to identify, the state has to identify individuals, that also alleviates a burden on the state and the judicial

branch from having hundreds of petitions clogging their docket.

But what's missing is that, currently, for people to be released, they have to go through the hearing and have good cause shown.

Well, what we've seen in other states, and what we would recommend, is that for anyone who has an offense that is now legal or the penalty has been downgraded, they would have a presumption of reconsideration for a downward modification if they can show that that is the case.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Yes. I think that would make good sense. So people under this bill would not automatically be released, is that correct?

SARAH GERSTEN: Exactly. So it would be my recommendation that, again, if someone can show that the crime for which they were originally convicted, the penalty has been downgraded, or, of course, it's been legalized, we should make the process as automatic as possible, or either release an end to their supervision, or, at least, a downward modification.

REP. PORTER (94TH): All right. Thank you so much for your testimony. It's been quite informing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Let me just clarify, because I think there's a little bit of confusion. I mean, most of the cannabis conviction erasure provisions were actually included in last year's bill.

This bill is actually fairly narrow in scope of, there's a perceived gap in that legislation last year, which, just for charges that were pending as of the effective date that were not -- where someone had already been convicted, there was a process for erasure of those crimes, and that erasure provision was already implicated, it was already effected.

All this bill seeks to do, is that gap of someone who had a charge pending, but was not yet convicted as of the effective date. Are you -- am I missing some other piece to this? I'm not sure where you're getting at. Because I feel like we did most of this, last year, what you're asking for.

SARAH GERSTEN: So, actually, what was passed last year and what you're referring to erasure, and yes, the state has done a great job of erasing upwards of 40,000 convictions, that's not what this bill speaks to.

What this bill, as written, seeks to achieve is pending prosecution, so someone -- erasure is for someone who's already served their sentence. The second piece of this bill is to those still incarcerated.

Erasure doesn't account for anyone who's currently incarcerated. It only is a mechanism for relief for someone who's already served their sentence.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): But I think what you're looking at, that's existing law. I mean, that's unchanged to this bill. All it is, is a conforming change.

SARAH GERSTEN: The second piece of this bill gives a pathway for a sentence modification hearing for anyone who's currently incarcerated.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Right. Which, like I said, that's not new language. That's language from the Cannabis Legalization Bill.

SARAH GERSTEN: That bill has not, again, effectuated release for anyone currently incarcerated for cannabis, or individuals on supervision.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. All right. I think there's some confusion there, but anyway. Further

questions or comments from the committee? Seeing none, I appreciate you being with us.

SARAH GERSTEN: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Next up will be Eileen Kopec.

EILLEEN KOPEC: Yes. Hi. Can you hear me okay?

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Yes, ma'am. Go ahead.

EILLEEN KOPEC: Thank you. Greetings to the Judiciary Committee. Thanks for accepting my testimony. I've also made written testimony too. My name is Eileen Kopec, I'm from Groton, Connecticut. I support SB 1060 and HB 6714, regarding animal welfare.

I support HJ 34. I think that it's about time. And thanks, William, from Avon, for speaking on this. I support HB 6734. Please decriminalize small amounts of psilocybin without any penalty, not even the penalties that are listed.

I support HB 6787, regarding cannabis convictions and sentencing modifications. I want to thank everybody who has spoken on this or will speak on this, in support of it. Please move quickly on this issue. Thank you very much.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Questions or comments from the committee? Seeing none, thanks for being with us. Next up will be Representative Garibay.

JANE GARIBAY: Thank you. Thank you to the committee chairs, Representative Stafstrom and Senator Winfield, and members of the Judiciary Committee.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today in support of HJ 34, a resolution concerning

certain witchcraft convictions in colonial Connecticut.

In 2017, my own Town of Windsor exonerated the first witch executed in Connecticut. Since that moment, I have spoken with numerous people both in Connecticut and across the nation, who are descendants of these so-called witches.

As I heard the stories of these trials pass down through generations, I began learning more about the victims and the egregious injustice of their trials. These were not witches.

They were people, women, who were executed for electing to wear certain clothing, or being too assertive.

They were executed because they might inherit property, or because another person, simply, did not like them. Today you will hear from people who represent many others, with stories to tell.

Some may be descendants, some may be from families of the accusers, and some may be people who have read the stories of these horrific injustice.

This is not about witchcraft. This is about women's rights and justice. We need to make it abundantly clear, that the State of Connecticut condemns the injustice, cruelty, and misogyny of these trials and executions.

The resolution does not detract from any other important issues that the legislature is dealing with in this session. Instead, this resolution compliments our work in the General Assembly, by taking another step towards the justice that this government is constantly working towards.

This is a simple and compassionate way of expressing the state's remorse, just saying, "We're sorry this happened to you during a dark period of our

history." Some people may ask, "Why address this now?"

To me, the real question is, why haven't we addressed it sooner? While these executions occurred a long time ago, we continue to fight the misogyny that drove them every day.

What happened to those nine women and two men, could happen today in a world in which injustice and terror take so many forms.

We must learn from our history so that we do not make those same mistakes. In a time when women are confronting misogyny, sexism, discrimination, this resolution has become all the more important.

Let us remember the names and the stories of these 11 people who were executed, and all those who are falsely convicted. I believe this is the time. Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Representative. Questions from the committee? Seeing none, I appreciate your advocacy on this issue.

JANE GARIBAY: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Next up will be Suzanne Vogel-Scibilia.

SUZANNE VOGEL-SCIBILIA: Yes.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Sorry about that.

SUZANNE VOGEL-SCIBILIA: Your representatives of the Connecticut Judiciary Committee, my name is Dr. Suzanne Vogel-Scibilia, I'm a practicing clinical psychiatrist, and I am also the 10th great-grandchild of John Carrington Senior and his wife Joan, of Wethersfield, Connecticut.

Both were indicted on the 20th of February, 1651, of witchcraft, and found guilty and executed on the 6th

of March, 1651. The charge for both was familiarity with Satan, and the works above the course of nature.

A local man at that time, Matthew Grant, stated in his diary that both were hanged. Unfortunately, the records for this trial have disappeared. The indictment of John Carrington did survive because, apparently, it was misfiled and found later.

But the execution of my ancestors is not in question, given the many sources of this information.

An educated guess from the people who have researched this issue, at the state that they were taken from, the prison in the Meeting House Square, which is the Old State House, and after being hanged, their bodies were thrown in an unmarked grave in the prison cemetery.

This represents the only couple executed in Connecticut, during the period of 1647 to 1663. John Carrington Senior also represents only one of two men executed for witchcraft during this period. Prior to 1662, when my ancestors were accused, Connecticut required only a single witness to a witchcraft event.

And this, many times, was what was called spectral evidence, which actually had no form or substance, at the time.

The sentence was also pronounced by the Colonial Governor Hopkins of Connecticut. He had the authority, also, to overrule the findings of the jury, thus having absolute power over the proceedings.

John Senior and Joan Carrington lived just east of Shady Lane in Wethersfield, had an 11 year old son from first marriage, John Jr., after his wife, Mary, had passed.

And his second wife, Joan, who's my direct ancestor, had just delivered their daughter, Rebecca, who was orphaned at a few months of age.

Rebecca grew to adulthood and then continued on to my line. We are asking the many descendants of John and Joan Carrington, who I represent, we're asking for action on your part, a pardon any type of expression of sadness for both John and Joan Carrington and the other people accused of witchcraft convictions in colonial Connecticut.

In the interest of social justice, these were extremely poor people. Their whole estate total less than 24 pounds, which would be approximately \$5,000 in today's things. Their death, besides being horrible for them, was also a hardship to their vulnerable children and grandchildren.

This may seem like an old issue, irrelevant after being buried over centuries, but I have difficulty telling my granddaughters and my grandsons what happened to their ancestors.

Attempts to get redress through Connecticut has not proved successful since 2010. And I want to point out that three other states, Virginia, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts have all taken some steps towards this.

Given the recent deaths of citizens by law enforcement throughout the states, other types of unfair social justice issues, your office healing actions could send a strong statement to all oppressed people who may identify with the senselessness of those difficult times in the 17th century.

I want to thank you for your time and consideration and I have written testimony here that I will present and I'll be glad to help in any way. Thank you very much.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, ma'am. Questions or comments from the committee? Seeing none, appreciate being with us. Tara Cooley. Is Tara Cooley with us remotely? Oh, nope. In-person. All right.

TARA COOLEY: Good morning, honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. This testimony is related to SB 1060. My name's Tara Cooley, and I serve as an instructor and supervisor of law students at the Animal Law Clinic at the University of Connecticut School of Law, and I have since August of 2021. Our clinic is appointed in animal cruelty cases as an advocate under 5486.

As an advocate, I sometimes work with cruelty offenders across the state and where appropriate help to connect them and their animals with needed resources, such as spay and neuter and other medical services, animal care, education, and needed services or tools needed to properly care for their animals.

Before my work in Connecticut, I implemented a Humane Society of the US program called Pets for Life, and a municipal shelter in Nevada.

It's a grassroots outreach program in which volunteers build relationships with pet owners and targeted neighborhoods, and provide free medical food and other resources for life.

Before Pets for Life, the shelter had an annual intake of 50,000 animals, and now has approximately an intake of 22,000 animals annually.

The downside of Pets for Life is that it does not have a far reach, but is instead limited to the community in which it serves.

There is currently only one Pets for Life program here in Connecticut in Stratford. I moved to Connecticut specifically to work under 5486(n). I

recognize the opportunity to reach more animal owners and more animals.

As an advocate under 5486(n), I've worked with animal owners all over Connecticut and help to provide similar resources that are provided through Pets for Life programs, which can help to reduce the suffering of animals and reduce animal cruelty offenses.

Some of our cases are related to a lack of resources or information about how to be a successful pet parent. The clinic currently is developing a Connecticut specific program that will educate participants on animal owner requirements, animal care needs, and informed participants on where and how to access resources.

Currently, my appointment under 5486(n) is limited to cases involving dogs and cats, which limits my access to individuals who own or care for other animals who may need support, education, and resources to ensure proper care of their animals. I support and request that you pass SB 1060. Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Questions or comments from the committee? If not, thanks. Andrea Martin.

ANDREA MARTIN: Good morning, honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. This testimony is related to SB 1060. My name is Andrea Martin, and I'm a second year law student at the University of Connecticut School of Law. I have worked under 5486 (n) since August, 2022 when I began in the Animal Law Clinic.

I've been involved with 12 cases in which UConn Law was an advocate. 5486(n) allows me to perform work that is meaningful to me while actively participating in our legal system. It is because of this advocacy role that I sit before you today to urge you to pass SB 1060.

Serving as an advocate has given me the opportunity to take great responsibility for the cases that I'm assigned. I have learned how to engage with judges, prosecutors, and defense counsel during court proceedings.

Additionally, I regularly communicate with police officers, animal owners, and animal control officers to understand cruelty offenses and how the community overall was affected by any given incident.

5486(n) currently allows advocates to connect with the community and to advocate in the interest of justice limited in part for dogs and cats. Perhaps this designation made sense at the time that the original bill was passed.

Nobody could foresee the success of the advocacy program, but now that success is evident, it is time to expand the advocates reach and advocacy permissions.

Animal cruelty will continue to occur and offenders will continue to be charged if the cruelty statute's permitted.

In no way would the expansion of this law disadvantage those who have already been charged by allowing advocates to continue doing the work we do, but on a larger scale.

In fact, the expansion of 5486(n) to encompass all animals would allow student advocates like me the opportunity to experience handling more complex cases likely involving more animals per case.

Opening this door will expand the experiences we have as students and give us the opportunity to continue learning how to be advocates and even the most factually and emotionally challenging scenarios.

By keeping this law as is access to justice as capped to a narrow category of animals, dogs, and

cats. How are we advocating in the interest of justice if not for all animals? I request that you pass SB 1060. Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Questions or comments from the committee? Seeing none, thanks for being with us. Chandra Campanelli.

CHANDRA CAMPANELLI: Good morning, members of the judiciary. My name is Chandra Campanelli. I am a registered nurse. I practice under the Holistic Scope and Standard, so as a holistic registered nurse, as well as an integrative nurse coach.

My testimony today comes through the lens of a nurse as well as a citizen in support of HB 6734, decriminalizing possession of small amounts of psilocybin.

I'll start by saying that for something to be deemed criminal, there should be established evidence that it causes harm.

In the case of psilocybin propaganda that led to criminalization disregarded the evidence which contrarily showed it to be safe, and in many cases, therapeutic.

Nevertheless, the fear mongering was incredibly effective. In the 12,000 years of consumption by humans, there has never been a recorded lethal dose, which is estimated to be approximately 10 kilos of dried mushroom fruiting bodies.

A study of adverse reactions to psilocybin published in the Journal of Psycho-Pharmacology out of Oxford, states that out of 9,233 past users of psilocybin only 19 reported to the emergency room.

Those visits were primarily youth having used mixed substances and reporting anxiety. These symptoms were short-lived and self-resolving, meaning no medical intervention was necessary.

This finding is endorsed by Dr. Roland Griffith, the Director of Johns Hopkins Center for Psychedelic Research, who states there has never been a single study participant who has required emergency care, and even those who experience anxiety or challenges ultimately endorse the experience of having been very meaningful.

Now, I'm a holistic nurse, and I work at bedside, and an integrative nurse coach. At the bedside, when patients find out that I'm a holistic nurse, they're significantly more open with me than they are with my colleagues or peers.

Over the past four years, I have seen a significant increase in the reported use of psilocybin, and every single one of those patients endorses improved wellness as a result.

On the same note, when I ask them if they've spoken to their providers, they look at me as though I have four heads. Obviously, they do not. It comes with a stigma of criminalization.

Again, we have regular people living regular lives, being judged as criminals for something that not only does not provoke harm, but also improves the quality of life.

The current research environment surrounding psilocybin has demonstrated efficacy in treating depression, anxiety, smoking cessation, obsessive compulsive disorder, and addiction.

It shows promise in many more areas, including anorexia, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and even benefits for the walking well, the walking well, meaning people who do not have deep diagnoses. And these people are showing increases in health-related behaviors and activities.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you.

CHANDRA CAMPANELLI: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Appreciate your testimony. Seeing no questions from the committee, we appreciate your expertise and sharing it with us on this important bill.

CHANDRA CAMPANELLI: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Holly Fontaine.

HOLLY FONTAINE: Good morning. My name is Holly Fontain. I am a retired head nurse for the state of Connecticut, and I reside in Vernon. I am a proud active member of Desmond's Army, and I am in favor of Bill SB 1060. Desmond's Law went into action in October of 2016.

Since then, we have witnessed the incredible strength in attacking animal cruelty crimes for dogs and cats, as it is currently written.

This law, the first of its kind in the nation, is a staple for other states around the country to follow and has set the tone and advocate in the court is the only way for animals to have a voice. It is undeniable that animal cruelty is an entrance crime to violence for our most vulnerable.

Our current law is lacking the ability to include all animals. Desmond's Army documents all cruelty cases, and we are witnessing an increase in cruelty cases that involve animals other than dogs and cats. The time is now to amend this law and include all animals.

In doing so, you are not only protecting animals, but you are also protecting the people of Connecticut. I'd like to share some cases as we attend.

A graphic case currently ongoing since 2019 in Rockville Superior Court in Vernon, 34 times on the docket, the police pulled over what they thought was an impaired driver, but as they approached the car, there were chunks of white fur and blood everywhere.

He cut the hind legs off the rabbit scissors still in hand, a horrible premeditated act of dismembering the rabbit while driving.

Police rushed the rabbit to a veterinarian hospital, but the rabbit had to be euthanized. The judge was unable to appoint an advocate under the current law. This case is ongoing, and he is free walking the streets of Connecticut.

Milford Superior Court. Early Christmas morning while on a drunken rampage, he killed 20 pet chickens by brutally smashing their heads and ripping off their heads with his bare hands. The case received reaction from around the country.

Milford PD stated that the crime was a heinous act and sheer cruelty to a defenseless animal. And again, the judge unable to appoint an advocate under that law.

In Meriden Superior Court, a man trapped a possum in a cage, doused it with gasoline and lit it on fire and watched while the helpless animal burned.

Police had to shoot it twice to end its suffering. The judge unable to appoint an advocate, his record expunge, and there is no way of tracking this if it should occur again.

In closing, any animal involved in a cruelty case should have their voice heard by an advocate in the courtroom.

Let's again, make Connecticut a leader in being the voice for all animals and vote in favor of Bill SB 1060. Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, ma'am. Appreciate being with us today. Representative Borer.

REPRESENTATIVE BORER: Hello, Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Vice Chair Representative

Quinn, our ranking members, and all the members of the Judicial Committee. I'm here. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of Bill 6714, an act concerning cruelty to animals.

I'm going to spare everyone the horrible examples of animal cruelty because I think the speaker did an excellent job before me, and I want to focus on the aspects of 6714.

We read about animal abuse, we see it, we are disgusted by it, but we need to act on it, and we cannot turn our heads.

We need to address these disturbing, violent acts, not only for the obvious moral issue, but for the strong link between animal cruelty as a precursor to future violent crimes against persons, and the link that animal cruelty has to family violence.

I want to point out here that the FBI a few years ago established a division specifically to address animal abuse because of its strong link to violence against persons as well. Here in Connecticut, we have fallen behind and we haven't updated our laws in quite a while.

So this bill updates three aspects. It better defines bestiality and creates crime around pornographic materials created and disseminated related to bestiality.

It requires veterinarians to report suspected abuse with an immunity clause for the veterinarians, and it provides a possession ban, long overdue for those who have been convicted of animal cruelty from owning, working, or volunteering with animals.

Taking each issue really quickly, bestiality in Connecticut state's statutes did not have an updated, clear, thorough definition, and there was no language around the creation or distribution of pornographic materials on the internet or elsewhere, which unfortunately exists.

This will make it clear that that is also a crime. Veterinarian reporting is key for a number of reasons.

For those of you who've been on this committee for a while you know that in domestic violence situations, there can be coercive control. And coercive control very often includes abuse of the victim's pet, and often in front of the victim.

In fact, 71% of domestic violence victims report that their pet was threatened, abused, or killed in front of them. And in Connecticut here we have many horrible examples.

Often, the victim of domestic violence is the one that will bring that pet into the veterinarian for healing. And the veterinarian is in a position to identify and see a pattern to identify abuse.

The veterinarian is also in a position to identify, to see a pattern of neglect. If they see multiple animals coming in from a boarder, a breeder, or a person that has several animals there in the position to identify, there is an issue. And I want to point out again, that the veterinarian has immunity in this part of the bill.

And finally, a very important component of this bill is the possession ban. The recurrence rate is extremely high for someone who has been an abuser in the past to reoffend and engage in additional animal abuse crimes.

We know that almost 80% of animal cruelty charges are dismissed or nulled, so by the time there is a conviction, it's a significant, significant crime that a person should no longer be around animals volunteering, working, or possession, or having a pet.

Finally, I want to take the opportunity to thank Representative Fishbein for his gracious time and effort to working on this bill with me. He has

provided a lot of great constructive input to get us to the point where I think this can be very impactful. And I also want to take the opportunity to thank the chairs for hearing our animal bills today.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Representative Dubitsky.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Representative, for coming in to testify about this. With regard to, was it 6714?

REPRESENTATIVE BORER: Yes.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): In section six, it mandates that it makes veterinarians mandatory reporters. Now the same issue was before the Environment Committee and also had a public hearing a couple of weeks ago. Do you know how it is that the same thing is before two different committees?

REPRESENTATIVE BORER: I cannot explain when the attorneys send bills to two different committees. I think probably someone, another legislator might have introduced that, and it was sent to the Environment Committee.

And because in this bill we're asking veterinarians to report a crime, I included it in this judicial bill. But if there's an opportunity to combine them -- I haven't watched the environment testimony on that Veterinarian Reporting Bill.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Okay. Well, I encourage you to, 'cause the -- a representative from the Connecticut Veterinary Association, I probably have that name wrong, but it's the association that is -- that all the Connecticut veterinarians belonged to.

He testified that if an abuser is deciding whether or not to bring a injured animal to the vet, knowing that the vet would be a mandatory reporter, would

essentially make that decision that they're not going to bring it to the vet, that they're just going to either kill it or let it suffer with the injuries.

It doesn't sound like a good statute to me. Why would we want that? Why would we want to make it so to discourage abusers from bringing injured animals to the vet?

REPRESENTATIVE BORER: Well, I appreciate that because I understand your concern is not to have the vet -- the animal further harmed or killed for resistance to bring it to the veterinarian.

But I think I don't know if you heard in my testimony that very often in the domestic violence situation, it's the victim that will bring the pet forward to get healed.

And also the veterinarian is in a position to identify a pattern of neglect by an organization, a border breeder, maybe somebody who has 20 animals that is not taking care of them to identify that as well and flag it.

As far as, when it comes to a situation such as animal dog fighting, which we know is horrible, unfortunately the dog that loses, and I'm just using this as an example, that dog is put down.

And the dog that is a winner, and I hate to use these terms, but that is what it is, the dog that is the winner is often killed as well because they are maimed.

So I don't think in a dog fighting situation that those that are engaging in dog fighting are not going to bring the dogs forward. Because I think most often, from what I saw in the FBI site, those dogs are killed.

And I'm happy to meet with those Veterinarian Association members that spoke in the Environment

committee to better understand how we can have veterinarians be mandatory reporters because they're in the best position to identify the abuse, but still protect the pet.

REP. DUBITSKY (47TH): Well, although they may be in the best position to identify the abuse, they discouraging people from bringing injured animals to get treatment, just doesn't sound like something that is helpful in this situation. But I thank you for your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

REPRESENTATIVE BORER: Thank you, Representative. I appreciate your input.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Further questions or comments? Representative Quinn.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good to see you, Representative Borer. Earlier this morning, we heard testimony from the president of the Connecticut Federation of Dog Clubs.

And there was a concern raised by her that perhaps breeders who were using artificial insemination or natural breeding might be inadvertently swept up in this law.

And she was concerned that some language change may be appropriate. Is it your intention with this proposed statutory changes to not allow dog breeders to continue to breed animals?

REPRESENTATIVE BORER: Thank you, Representative. I was listening to that testimony in my office, and I think Representative Fishbein responded pretty well. There's a section within this bill that I think makes that clear.

But if for some reason folks don't think that's clear enough, certainly we can take that back and look at that language. But I think that -- I think the language was pretty clear, but maybe obviously not clear enough.

REP. QUINN (82ND): Okay. All right. Thank you.

REPRESENTATIVE BORER: Okay. Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Belt and suspenders, as they say, right Representatives? Belt and suspenders. Further questions or comments from the committee? Seeing none, I appreciate being with us and appreciate your output.

REPRESENTATIVE BORER: Thank for your time.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Susan Bailey.

SUSAN BAILEY: Good morning, Senator Gary Winfield, Representative Steven Stafstrom and members of the Joint Committee on judiciary. I am Susan Bailey from Hartford, Connecticut.

Two years ago, a DNA relative informed me of my relation to Alice or Alice, Young of Windsor, the first accused witch executed in the English colonies.

The employment of a professional genealogists confirmed I am the ninth great-granddaughter of Alice. I'm here to ask you to vote yes on HJ Resolution 34. Alice was hanged on May 26th, 1647 in Hartford, quite possibly near where the old State House stands today.

I have passed by that very sight innumerable times throughout my life, but until very recently was blind to the fact that it was the location of a relative's violent public murder.

My elation at discovering my deep Connecticut roots was immediately tempered with sorrow by the realization of Alice's untimely and cruel death.

Alice's daughter, also Alice, was a child at the time of her mother's murder. I have two daughters myself, and I can't imagine the terror and anguish both Alice's experienced at their separation.

I think people today can empathize with the situation no matter that it occurred 375 years ago. Alice was a person just as we are now. She was a victim of bigotry, misogyny, and ignorance, just as so many marginalized groups are victims of the same prejudices today.

Alice junior had many children and hundreds of progeny in intervening years. Her living relatives, as well as those of other accused and hanged witches may, through the passage of HJ resolution 34, find comfort in having their relatives names cleared.

The passage of this bill is also a necessary act of reckoning that in some way attempts to correct historical injustices.

If nothing else, it is a gesture of healing. Thank you for allowing me to speak before you, and thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Appreciate being with us today. Next up will be Tony Emilio.

TONY EMILIO: Good pronunciation. Can you hear me okay?

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): We can go ahead, sir.

TONY EMILIO: Okay. My name's Tony Emilio and I'm from Hartford, Connecticut, born and raised. And I wanted to speak to you today about a couple of raised bills 1060 and 1069.

Just a couple of comments on Bill 1060, if I may. I don't know whether the committee, it just a question has spoken to the Connecticut Animal Control officers, because I feel that the concerns raised I'd be interested, I'm not even sure a lot of them know that this is ongoing pursuit.

It would be interesting to hear what they have to say and what input they could give to you. So I just offer that.

And I guess if you're going to give legal representation to,, everybody loves animals. Nobody wants to see them injured or hurt. It does lead to people who abuse animals tend to abuse people. No one wants to see that happen.

But I think if you're going to give some legal counsel to an animal, then the state ought to equally provide legal counsel, free legal counsel to the people who have had their animals taken away.

We've had a number of cases of animals taken from people who had limited means. And I'm not sure, you know, some situations are totally valid, some were not.

And there is -- it's costly and a lot of those people can't afford to fight particularly a free legal assistance to an animal that they may have had as a puppy and may be an elderly person who have loved their whole life to have its tripped away from them. So I offer that.

I would like to talk on my time here at two on Bill 1069. I have been -- had a professional life but I've also had a passion for animals my whole life. I have had particularly had dogs. I've raised dogs for more than 35 years.

It has been an unbelievable rewarding experience for me and for people who have gotten animal dogs from us, I am very concerned. Two things. One, if someone were to come -- if someone were to come to the door to my house,

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): If you could wrap up your testimony, your time has expired.

TONY EMILIO: Oh, it has? Oh, spoke too long. You got to be careful about allowing people in to see particularly puppies.

And I would tell you that I would be aghast and would be against letting somebody into my house to see puppies at a young age.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Thank you.

TONY EMILIO: It's harmful to them, anyway.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Thank you very much. Comments or questions from members of the committee? Comments or question? Seeing none. Thank you very much for joining us this morning.

TONY EMILIO: You're welcome.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Next, we'll hear from Norman Plude. Good morning. You may testify when you sit down.

NORMAN PLUDE: Good morning, members of Judiciary Committee. My name is Norman Plude. I live in Seymour, Connecticut, and I'm also a drug war veteran.

I'm in favor of Raised Bill 6787, an act concerning the prosecution of cannabis related cases and modifications of sentences for cannabis-related offenses.

Little bit of history. In 2016, I was arrested for cultivation as a medical cannabis patient. Through the years, well, let's go 2017, I helped cultivate hemp for the state of Connecticut at UConn still while facing 60 years to life.

2018, I had to move to Oregon. Again, my medication wasn't available anywhere in the state of Connecticut, even through the dispensaries as I used raw cannabis.

2019, I came back to the state of Connecticut. I worked with the Republican caucus to help write some of the hemp laws in Connecticut. I became one of your hemp farmers, one of the first ones in 2018 and 2019.

I cultivated two acres, then we had COVID. So we sat there for two years all while waiting my trial to come up. We're going on to seven years now coming up to 2023.

Last February I accepted a plea of greater than two ounces, less than four. At the time I accepted that plea, it was February first last year, or February 23rd, 2022. So it appears in section one of this bill here that there's still kind of a gray area.

Now, I accepted a plea from the time marijuana became legal in Connecticut in July 1st, 2021. I accepted my plea in 2022.

But yet this section, Subsection B of Section one says that pending cases, those cases are to be dropped. Again, this doesn't, you know, my case would've been dropped if this was out.

There's no provision for expungement. So if I'm accepting a plea that's after legalization but people that come after me are getting their cases dropped, and I'm not alone, there's a number of medical patients in the state that are going through this same process.

So we would like something added in there so it's not just pending cases, it's already the cases that have been tried and convicted after the July 1st, 2021 date, regardless if they're waiting for trial.

And this comes down to the fact that we had COVID in the middle there that was kind of putting a stop on all pending cases.

Pretty much that's all that I can see as far as that bill that I would need changed to go ahead and take

care of that little sliver of people that are still left out.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Thank you, Mr. Plude. Comment, question from members of the committee, comment or question? If not, thank you for joining us. I would say again, I've seen you in the past.

NORMAN PLUDE: Last few years, at least six.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): And as you know, none of these bills are done until they actually passed. So thank you very much for joining us. Annie Hornish.

ANNIE HORNISH: Thank you. Co-chair Winfield, Co-chair Stafstrom Vice-Chair Flexor, Vice-Chair Quinn, Ranking Member Kissel, Ranking Member Fishbein, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Annie Hornish, and I'm here on behalf of the Connecticut based supporters of the Humane Society of the United States, the largest animal protection organization in the country in support of two bills before you today.

The first bill is 6714, an act concerning cruelty to animals. We support this bill and we ask that you consider one amendment on page four, line 77 to 78 along with sexual gratification. We ask that this should include "abuse or financial gain."

And the reasoning for the amendment is that sex workers often perform sexual acts on animals for money, not their personal gratification.

It can also be driven by anger and a desire to punish the animal or to punish a spouse or child by forcing them to watch the animal be sexually abused.

Our conversations with prosecutors around the country have revealed many disturbing cases that could not be charged because of the limited intent or mens rea included in many of the older laws. Most of the recently passed or modernized and

updated laws now include this language to close that loophole.

Bestiality is a violent assault by a sexual -- dangerous sexual predator in a crime often associated with other felony level crimes. In my written testimony, I cite many studies attesting to this point.

The second bill we're here for is we also support Senate Bill 1060. The court advocate for animals. Changing dog and cat to animal will better align with our animal cruelty statutes which apply to all animals and will help to facilitate animal cruelty prosecutions by ensuring appropriate representation for the victims. Thank you for your time and consideration and for your support of these bills.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Thank you. Are there questions or comments from members of the committee? Questions or comments? Seeing none. Thank you for joining us again this morning.

ANNIE HORNISH: Thank you very much.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Next, we will hear from Katherine Hermes. Good morning, and you may testify.

KATHERINE HERMES: Thank you, Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary for allowing me to speak before the committee today.

I will address the important matter of Connecticut's acknowledgement of its wrongful convictions and accusations against women and men in the 17th century for the crime of witchcraft addresses house joint resolution number 34.

My name is Katherine Hermes, former professor of history at CCSU and now publisher of the magazine, Connecticut Explored.

I'm going to address just one aspect of why the assembly should pass this resolution, and that's the question of legal fairness and substantive justice over formalism.

Many people will say about a resolution like this, that times were different back then, and that this resolution is an attempt to apply today's values to the past. This is wrongheaded.

The resolution before you is about the present and what steps we have to do to undo wrongs from the past. We aren't trying to change the history. We're trying to apply a remedy now to the damage done in the past.

The legal procedures and protections available to people in colonial Connecticut in the 17th century were vastly different than they are today.

This was perhaps most detrimental to people accused of witchcraft because much of the evidence presented in court was based on supernatural phenomena that were difficult to challenge.

In criminal cases in 17th century Connecticut, there was no right to an attorney. Those accused of witchcraft had no legal counsel to address the charges, interview witnesses, or challenge legal rulings.

The right against self-incrimination was not recognized, and the accused were often questioned for long periods without rest or sustenance.

A number of them were servants. Most were female, and several of the women were widows or were unmarried. Without counsel from anyone, they often said things that were used against them or were coerced into confessing.

Even if the accused were convicted, under the laws of the time in which formal procedures were

correctly applied, and I don't always concede that, we know now that justice was not served.

Today, if someone is wrongfully convicted, there are procedures that allow them to appeal their judgment. Convicted witches were often executed within a week of the verdict.

Those accused of witchcraft in Connecticut were accused of a crime tainted with misogyny and a belief that women were especially susceptible to persuasion by the devil.

Today, we asked the Connecticut General Assembly to declare that those colonial courts in the 17th century made errors that had profound consequences for the families whose mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters, and sometimes fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons were unjustly accused and sometimes killed.

We ask that their good names be restored. We ask for Connecticut to take a stand for justice. Thank you.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Thank you. Comments or questions from members of the committee? Comments or questions? Just a question for you about -- your name, Hermes?

KATHERINE HERMES: Yes.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): I've been pronouncing it wrong for a long time. I will never do that again.

KATHERINE HERMES: That's okay.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Thank you very much for joining us today.

KATHERINE HERMES: Thank you.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Next, we have Linda Pleva. Linda, yes. Good morning and you may testify.

LINDA PLEVA: Good morning, Co-chairs Winfield and Stafstrom, vice Chairs, Ranking Members, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of Senate Bill 1060, an act concerning the appointment of an advocate in proceedings concerning the welfare or custody of animals.

My name is Linda Pleva. I am the Vice President of Desmond's Army Animal Law Advocates, and also the community Engagement Coordinator for Connecticut Votes for Animals, and I care about all animals.

As a member of Desmond's Army, I attend many court proceedings of people who are charged with cruelty to animals.

Members of Desmond's Army attend approximately 45 to 55 animal abuse cases in Connecticut every month. Many of these involve the abuse of animals that are not cats or dogs.

I believe that all animals feel pain and suffering. A horse feels the same pain from starvation and neglect as a dog would feel. A rabbit hurts as deeply as a cat would from having its limbs severed with scissors. A goat would feel and suffer the same pain as a dog would if it were kicked repeatedly in the ribs.

This should not be about the type of animal being abused, but rather about the abuse itself inflicted on them by humans.

I have been in the courtroom and have watched judges struggle with the dilemma of wanting to, but not being able to appoint an advocate in a case involving cruelty to an animal that is not a dog or a cat.

I have been in the courtrooms during an advocate's statement describing the abuse of an animal at the hands of his abuser. I have heard the absolute silence of the gallery as they listened to the horrors.

I have seen the tears in their eyes during the statement, and I have heard the anger in their voices afterwards. People care about animals.

It is important to identify through thorough, complete, and fair prosecutions people who abuse animals. As we know, there is a direct link between animal abuse and other forms of violence, domestic violence, child abuse, and elder abuse.

In fact, many mass shooters, school shooters, and serial killers have a history of abusing animals. Animal cruelty is considered a gateway crime and a red flag to potential future violent behavior. It is not limited to only dogs and cats, and therefore, all animal victims of abuse should be entitled to the benefit of an advocate.

Allowing our judges to appoint an advocate on animal cruelty cases, no matter the type of animal, is a much needed step in protecting them, and in turn, protecting people. Thank you.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Thank you. Perfect timing. Are there comments or questions from members of the committee? Comments or questions? Seeing none. Ms. Pleva, thank you for joining us this morning. Jessica Rubin.

JESSICA RUBIN: Good morning, honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Jessica Rubin. I am the Associate Dean for Experiential Education at UConn Law School. I'm also the Director of our Animal Law Clinic and a clinical professor of law.

I'm here to support HB 6714 and SB 1060 for the following reasons. First, requiring veterinary reporting of suspected cruelty is a good way to stop

it early without adverse consequences to vets because of immunity and anonymity provided under the bill.

States, including Massachusetts, Maine, and New York already require vet reporting, and Connecticut should as well. Second, clarification of bestiality is needed to reconcile two inconsistent statutory definitions.

However, line 65 of the proposed 1060 needs to be amended so that it uses the definition of animal from 22108 A, rather than 22327.

This is important because there's a raised bill before the Environment Committee SB 1069, that if past would narrow the definition of animal under 22327 to exclude monkeys and certain types of pets from protection against sexual assault. Our animal cruelty statute uses the definition of animal from 2908 A, and so should SB 6714.

Third. Banning possession after a cruelty conviction is a fair way to reduce the risk of recidivism. Connecticut is an outlier, one of only 11 states that doesn't require or explicitly permit post-conviction possession bans for cruelty offenders.

Such bans are not seen as unconstitutional, where they're not disproportionate where needed to prevent future abuse, and because states can regulate property in order to protect public interest.

Finally, I'm here to support SB 1060 because the court advocate program created under 5486(n) should be available in all cruelty cases, not just those involving dogs and cats. The advocate program has been successful.

At UConn, our clinic has handled 108 cases since 2016 when the law was first enacted. Our appointments in 2021 and 2022 account for nine and

11% respectively of the state's annual cruelty cases.

In addition to these numbers, private attorneys volunteer to take on additional cases of advocates. In my opinion, our courts, our ACOs with whom we collaborate, our students, animal victims, and even some defendants have benefited from the program through creative case resolutions, extra-legal research, and extra factual investigation that advocates supply at no cost to anybody.

These same benefits should be available in all animal cruelty cases. Importantly, expanding 5486(n) under the proposed bill, does not expand the animals covered or the acts prescribed under our cruelty statute. May I finish? I have one--

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): You can wrap it up.

JESSICA RUBIN: Okay. The bill simply ensures that when a case is brought, an advocate may be appointed regardless of the animal's victim species. Since our cruelty statute doesn't distinguish among species, the advocate program should not either.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Thank you. Questions, comments from members of the committee. Questions, comments? Seeing none. Thank you very much for joining us this morning.

JESSICA RUBIN: Thank you.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Jason Ortiz.

JASON ORTIZ: Hello, and thank you, Representative and Chair Stafstrom and Senator and Chair Winfield, and ranking member Senator Kissel for the time to take to hear my support of HB 6787. And my name is Jason Ortiz.

I currently serve as the Executive Director of Students for Sensible Drug Policy. We are a 501(c)(3) organization that fights to encourage all

young people to become active in their communities and address the drug policies that are impacting their lives and their families.

And I was actually one of those folks that was arrested in high school as a student. I was 16 years old. This was the year 2000 in Norwich, Connecticut.

And I was thrown out of school, thrown into the criminal justice system for possession of less than a gram of cannabis.

At the time I was able to narrowly avoid incarceration after spending tens of thousands of dollars on legal fees, but I was able to eventually go to college because organizations like Students for Sensible Drug Policy and other advocates changed the Higher Education Acts, Federal Aid Elimination penalty that would've denied me Pell Grants in order to go to college.

But thanks to the work of advocates, progressive state representatives and senators, that law was changed. I was able to go to the University of Connecticut graduate finance SDP as a student and eventually become its executive director.

And so the change of a small law, small change can radically change somebody's life. I was able to become an advocate because folks changed small tweaks to the law.

HB 6787 is in a similar situation where y'all have the opportunity here to radically improve people's lives by giving them the access to freedom, prosperity, and opportunity as a full member of society.

When we decided to legalize cannabis, we wanted to make sure that all of those that were most impacted were going to benefit not just from the business side of it, but from all of the community benefits of being a full member of society.

Right now, we don't know exactly how many people are currently incarcerated for cannabis are on parole or probation.

We've asked numerous state agencies for that number, been unable to get a really specific response, and this bill pushes that conversation forward to make sure that we're at least talking about folks that are currently being prosecuted.

But we do need to expand it towards parole, any type of supervision, folks that are currently incarcerated.

To this day, we have not done anything to actually release those currently incarcerated for cannabis crimes, while we have passed numerous laws to help the business side of things grow.

And so that outstanding issue and that outstanding injustice can be corrected. We can correct it together here today.

And so I do support HB 6787. I would like it to be stronger and actually apply to more different pieces, but I do want to make it clear that it is unclear how many people are currently incarcerated or on probation or parole for cannabis crimes.

That is an injustice and something that we could correct by just asking the executive branch and various officials to give us a clear answer on that. We were able to find out that there was roughly 40,000 expungement that were touted as something that happened.

If we were able to find that number of 40,000, I think it is very possible to find out the folks that are currently incarcerated or on probation or parole, get the names, contact their families and say, "We're working to get your families out."

So hopefully, the rest of our community, all the state representatives here today, can join us in

that fight to make sure that no one is left incarcerated for cannabis crimes and making sure that everyone that is on probation and parole is able to live a full and free life.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Thank you. Comments, questions from members of the committee? Comments or questions? If not, Jason, thank you for joining us again. Many years you've been coming before us.

JASON ORTIZ: 23 years.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): I'm aware. Luther Weeks, another returner

LUTHER WEEKS: Chairs and members of the committee, my name is Luther Weeks in Glastonbury testifying for myself and secular Connecticut in favor of HJ 34. My full name is Luther Gaylord Weeks.

Unlike many of those testifying today, I am a descendant of at least one of the most likely perpetrators of these crimes. Deacon William Gaylord, a founder of Windsor and of Connecticut, who served for 40 sessions in the General Court, which was the predecessor of the General Assembly.

My relationships with my ancestors is complex. Many have done much good, yet also things for which there is no reason to be proud. This is one of those heinous crimes that can never be fully corrected or toned for. Their Bible said, "You shall not suffer a which to live."

They were convinced that witches were real, consorted with Satan causing them serious harm, including death. It was a fearful period enhanced by arguments between two closely related religious sects.

This bill is the least we can do, joining all the other perpetrator states that have done the same earlier. Most of us are associated with these crimes in some way. Most less than I. Appreciation

go to Windsor and its original church, both leading the way with exoneration several years ago.

I have been a resident of Glastonbury for 46 years and many years before that of Bristol. Those towns and many others in Connecticut have no better heritage than a town's named where these individuals were accused, convicted and murdered.

In those days, Glastonbury was a part of Wethersfield, and Bristol was a part of Farmington. So the despicable heritage is spread far and wide beyond the town's name and indeed through the general court to all of Connecticut.

Please pass this bill. This is the least we can do to acknowledge these false accusation, charges, and murder.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Thank you. Mr. Weeks. Comments or question? Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): Thank you very much, Chairman Winfield. Nice to see you. So apparently you're a descendant of one of the perpetrators of one of the hangings, is that what --

LUTHER WEEKS: 'Cause nobody knows, but a very likely perpetrator would be a deacon of the church in Windsor at the time. Perpetrator in the sense that he probably was part of running the proceedings, which were unavailable rush today.

Also being a member of the General Court, I believe in Hartford, they approved the convictions and then hung the witches down in Hartford.

So presumably, he was a likely perpetrator of this book. One of Windsor says that. But that is a historical fiction. It also said his wife may well have been one of the witnesses to these ridiculous charges with no basis.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): When you say the first church, and as a guy who grew up in Windsor, do you mean the congregational?

LUTHER WEEKS: Yeah, I mean the con -- the first one was there. My understanding originally, there was very little difference between that church and the government.

But they took a leadership role in having this similar thing done in Windsor unanimously by the town council there. You can see a video of that online.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): And yeah, I'm very -- I've been to a wedding in that church. I'm very familiar with it. I've been in the graveyard. There's a lot of mothers buried back there. And folks born even in the 1500s over in England.

You heard my concern, I believe she was a dean from Fairfield University, the first speaker that this took place when we weren't United States of America far before the revolution, while we were part of the United Kingdom.

So a whole different country. Windsor was different as far as it's boundary lines, Windsor Locks, South Windsor, East Windsor.

But once we go down this path, and I'm sympathetic, like I said, Witch of Blackbird Pond's sort of is a nice rendition or a fictional story as to how people could like rise up and target the oddball or the person who's not really part of the cool people in the community, or however we want to describe it.

But once we go down that path, where does it end? Because, I'm sure you're familiar with, Arsenic and Old Lace is based upon two creepy little old ladies that were -- where Arthur Drugs used to be in the center of town, and they were given arsenic to people coming through town.

I think it was like the '20s, I mean, essentially serial killers. And we're not going to exonerate them, but there's all sorts of injustices out there.

And so what fascinates you about this? Do you see this as a first step or do you think it's just a good thing to do as a state?

LUTHER WEEKS: I don't see any steps beyond this. But if we find similar crimes like those that have may be done to African-Americans starting in 1619 and certainly in Connecticut after that, we should exonerate as well. I thought about that question today after hearing it.

We take proud things about what people did back then, the fundamental orders and a lot of other things. If we're going to celebrate the positive things, then we ought to acknowledge these other things.

I don't think Massachusetts has been destroyed since they passed a similar bill and the other states that have passed similar bills.

This is not taking a lot of time outside of these hearings. I don't suspect it'll take more than a couple more hours of the whole legislator's time to get this thing passed through the Senate and House. This is the least we can do. Or maybe we should take that sign down in Glastonbury that says it was existed in 1693.

Maybe we should say it started in 1776 or 1781, I don't know. And similarly. So if we're going to celebrate the positive things that Connecticut has done back then, then we ought to acknowledge this thing. I think it's the least we can do.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): I appreciate your answer. I'm very sympathetic to the plight of those who were made scapegoats for whatever problems were occurring in colonial times. And actually my son and I were

just chatting when the power went out the other day, that it had to be scary.

We get so dependent upon electricity and lights and just to live without -- I'm not even going to say the conveniences, the things that we rely upon for survival. It was a different world back then, but I appreciate you coming to speak on this bill. Thank you very much.

LUTHER WEEKS: I'll just say viruses, they believed in viruses were caused by witches. We're a lot smarter than that today.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): I'm not so sure about that. Anyhow, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR WINSFIELD (10TH): Thank you, Senator Kissel. Comment or question from other members of the committee? Senator Maher.

SENATOR MAHER (26TH): Thank you, Chairman. So when I was in college, I took a course not in Massachusetts, on Massachusetts witches, on the Salem Witch Trials.

And what I learned from that course in history was that it was all about property and whether or not who owned what property and who could get what property by calling someone a witch.

I'm just curious, was that the same situation in Connecticut? We speak about people maybe were persecuted because they were odd or whatever reason, or not part of the mainstream. But in my experience from that course, many years ago, it was all about ownership, money and property. I'm curious what your understanding is on Connecticut.

LUTHER WEEKS: Sure, and I've studied what some of the other speakers are gonna talk about, but my understanding is there were two sects from England. The my boun -- my ancestor and his group that bounded Windsor came from the west country of

England, and they had a certain religion, the newcomers quote which were the ones largely prosecuted in Windsor, were from a different sect that started out closer to London.

And it just came down there a little later. And you know, partially it was religious arguments, just like the same arguments between John Winthrop and John Winthrop Jr., or between the founder of Rhode Island and the governor of Massachusetts. Very little religious differences we'd think of as little religious differences were partially behind it, but it was the newcomers, the poor people that, you know, wanted their, you know, wanted some land, but they were looked down upon the wrong side of the tracks or maybe the wrong side of the little river. No, that was the Farmington, I guess.

SENATOR MAHER (26TH): Thank you so much.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you. Comments or questions from other members of the Committee? Comments or questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much for joining us again, Luther Weeks.

LUTHER WEEKS: Thank you.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Next, we have Paul Larson. Paul Larson.

PAUL LARSON: Yes. Hello.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): There you go.

PAUL LARSON: First off thank you for holding this hearing today and giving me the opportunity to testify as president of the Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, and as a person who is raised here in Woodstock, Connecticut on my family's dairy farm, I would like to stand in opposition to Senate Bill 1060, which would allow for the expansion to all animals, the legal advocacy representation that is currently afforded dogs and cats.

Connecticut's farmers have a vested interest in the care and welfare of their animals. The animals on their farms. And go to great lengths to provide adequate, in adequate industry standard levels of housing, nutrition, and veterinary care, so their animals thrive and are productive in their farming operation. In those rare instances where a farm animal was found to have been neglected in some way, there already exists an appropriate remedy through our Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Regulation and Inspection.

These dedicated state employees are familiar with typical farming standards and levels of care, and can make decisions based on the science of animal husbandry in the best interest of the animal in question, it is unreasonable to think that a law student or even most experienced attorneys would have the background and knowledge to fully understand the complexities of production agriculture today. I have two significant concerns with this proposal.

As president of an organization representing farmers in our state, I fear that under the conditions this bill seeks to create, a farmer could be faced with a task of defending him or herself against claims of animal abuse or neglect, brought by animal welfare advocates who feel that nationally or even internationally accepted standards of animal care in production agriculture are simply not enough, or that the animal in question is somehow suffering.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture staff are the most appropriate individuals to provide advice in these situations in the best interest of both the animal and society as a whole. My second concern is that this proposal to allow for legal advocacy to an animal is one step away from granting personhood to animals, which would have far-reaching negative consequences for production agriculture. And I believe society as a whole.

I've had the privilege to visit many of the farms in our state and can honestly say that each and every farmer I've ever met not only accepts the responsibility to properly care for their animals, but they demonstrate commitment that goes way beyond, above and beyond standard care. I can recall numerous times when my father would be up all night to tend to a cow in labor or to watch over one of our farm animals that needed his care.

Connecticut Farm Bureau strongly believes that all animals should be given adequate care and treated humanely. And as I stated, we have the mechanism already in place to make sure that happens and to appropriately deal with instances when intervention is needed. I urge you to vote against Senate Bill 1060 as it is written. Thank you very much for the opportunity, and I'd be happy to answer any questions or provide clarification.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you. Mr. Larson comment or question for members of the Committee, comment or question? If not, thank you very much for joining us today.

PAUL LARSON: You're most welcome. Take care.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Joan Nichols.

JOAN NICHOLS: Hi good afternoon. Chairman Winfield and Stafstrom, vice Chairs Flexer and Quinn, and members of the Judiciary Commission Committee. My name is Joan Nichols. I'm the Executive Director for Connecticut Farm Bureau Association. I'll make my comments brief as our president Paul Larson articulated many of our concerns.

We are concerned that expanding legal representation to farm animals and livestock could have the unintended consequence of pulling Connecticut farmers into the court system by animal advocates who disagree with sound science-based and humane animal husbandry practices.

Connecticut livestock farmers have access to top veterinary care, ample forage and water and access, and up-to-date information through Yukon Extension and our own department of Connecticut Department of Agriculture, our farmers care very deeply about their animals and their welfare. Yet despite efforts by the best of farmers, livestock production practices and husbandry is often misunderstood by the uninformed.

The FBA strongly believes that all animals should be treated humanely and with compassion, which is what our farmers practice every day of their lives. On behalf of Connecticut farmers and our livestock producers, we urge you to defeat Senate Bill 1060 and I'm happy to answer any questions. Thank you so much for your time.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you very much. Comment on question from members of the Committee, comment or question, seeing none. Thank you very much for joining us this afternoon.

JOAN NICHOLS: Thank you.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Stacy Ober.

STACEY OBER: Ober, thank you Chairman, members of the Committee, the Judiciary Committee. My name is Stacy Ober and I am the New England Regional Manager for the American Kennel Club. With more than 5,000 clubs across the country and 56 in Connecticut, AKC is recognized and trusted as an expert in canine health training, breeding and responsible dog ownership.

I'm here today because AKC is opposed to Senate Bill 1060, allowing appointment of legal advocates to animals. It would create ambiguity surrounding the current legal status of animals and the enforcement of protections afforded by Connecticut's Animal Welfare laws. Everyone agrees animal cruelty is a

deplorable act. Enforcement of strong animal cruelty statutes is a key to safeguarding our beloved animals.

And although it sounds benevolent, Senate Bill 1060 is not necessary because the courts do have authority to appoint an attorney and they are referred to as a special master in animal cruelty cases. Michael Vick's Dogfighting court conviction is one example. Words matter and courts appoint legal advocates to protect children and people who are unable to manage their own affairs but have legal rights.

Connecticut has an Office of the Child Advocate, but child advocates do not have the right to directly participate in the judicial proceedings against a criminal defendant. So creating a Connecticut list of animal advocates in the Department of Agriculture is inappropriate. Animals do not have constitutional or legal rights despite animal rights activist desire and actions to establish them.

An example of this is a 2022 decision in the Oregon appellate case Justice v Vercher brought by the Animal Legal Defense Fund on behalf of a cruelly treated and forfeited horse seeking monetary damages including attorney fees. The court held, the court has -- the horse, has no legal standing and rejected ADLF's case an appeal to the Oregon Supreme Court is expected.

Testimony submitted to submitted to you today claims that states are looking to model Connecticut's legal advocates for dogs and cats. And yes, legislation's been filed by animal rights activists in other states, but it has been consistently rejected In New Jersey, Florida, California, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Nevada, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island.

Maine did adopt similar provisions shortly after Connecticut. But to the best of my knowledge, it's not been implemented. Courts also already have the

authority to call animal experts to educate and provide essential information describing disease and injury. What could have been done to prevent or alleviate a situation, interpreting animal behavior, identifying and interpreting evidence that may link an incident to a scene or a suspect and determining whether injuries were intentional and caused by humans.

Our recommendation is that you substitute the text for Senate Bill 1060 and explicitly authorize the state veterinarian to make recommendations to criminal courts before which the possession or wellbeing of an animal is at issue. Thank you for your consideration.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you. Really good comment. Comments or question from members of the Committee, comment or question from members of the Committee, seeing none, thank you very much for joining us this afternoon.

STACEY OBER: Thank you.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Beth Caruso. Good afternoon, you may testify.

BETH CARUSO: Good afternoon, esteemed Chair, Stafstrom and Winfield and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Beth Caruso of Windsor, Connecticut. I support House Joint Resolution 34. Having done extensive research in writing about the Connecticut witch trials, I must speak on behalf of the victims of those trials.

Numerous citizens became targets of unjust witchcraft, accusations and were indicted, convicted and hanged for strange events that were beyond their control. Most of their contemporaries believed that they had a pact with the devil and intended to do harm to their communities.

Alice Young, a mother of a single child, was the first condemned as a witch when an epidemic took the lives of children. Four of them, her next door neighbors, Lydia Gilbert, was accused of the bewitching a gun three years after it discharged and killed Henry Styles. Both women were hanged as witches. There were many others who died and suffered.

Although convicted, Elizabeth Seager, a Hartford resident and Katherine Harrison, a rare female landowner were saved from death by Governor John Winthrop, Jr. Unlike most people of his time, the esteemed alchemical physician saw that accused were not witches. He not only refused to carry out convictions, he helped to change the rules of those convictions so that justice might prevail. Before Winthrop, seven people died for witchcraft crimes.

After he became governor, witch hunting slowed and deaths stopped until he left to secure Connecticut's charter in England. While away, four more people died under the watch of during the Hartford Witch panic under the watch of Major John Mason. In the end, Winthrop saved many lives years before the infamous Salem Witch trials.

If Governor Winthrop, your predecessor in Connecticut governance could recognize the accused victim's innocence in the 1600's, why shouldn't you also acknowledge it by exonerating them and continuing Winthrop's legacy? And if we proudly claim Winthrop as one of our own in Connecticut history, why should we not embrace these victims as part of our history too and recognize the wrongs done to them for their descendants in the present as well as for ourselves? Thank you very much.

SENATOR WINFIELD (10TH): Thank you. Comment or question? Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): Thank you very much, Chairman Winfield. And I also do represent portion of

Windsor, even though I had -- as well as having grown up there. You said you had done some writings. I'd love it if you could just let my staff know, Kate McEvoy is my CREC legislative aide, John.Kissel@cga.ct.gov.

Any kind of writings that you reference, especially as those pertain to Windsor, I would love to read them. So, and if you don't have them like able to email, you know, if there's references to books that I could access, even if I have to go online I'd love to get all that information.

BETH CARUSO: Sure.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): I find it very interesting.

BETH CARUSO: I'm more than happy to do that. Recently, if Dr. Hermes, if you don't mind standing up, Dr. Hermes and I wrote a research article for Connecticut History Review, and I'm very happy to give you that journal article.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): Great. Appreciate it. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Further questions or comments? Seeing none. Thanks for being us, ma'am.

BETH CARUSO: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Tony Griego.

TONY GRIEGO: Good afternoon, members of the Committee on Judiciary. My name is Anthony Griego. I am a retired sergeant from the New Haven Police Department with almost 32 years of service and also an honorably discharged veteran of the United States Army, 1961 to 1964. I also am one of the co-founders of our Connecticut Witch Memorial Facebook page, whose goal is to educate the general public about our Connecticut Colony Witch Hunts.

Connecticut was the first colony to start hanging people for witchcraft in 1647. A crime that disappeared from Connecticut law books by 1750, 9 women and two men, husbands, were hanged for this crime. 23 more suffered through witch trials whose guilty verdict could end in a hanging. Several children became orphans with the loss of a parent or both.

Today, in our very modern world, such trials and executions are still taking place in other countries. Today we can follow other New England states that have made amends for colonial witch hunts. We can also send a clear message that witch hunts are wrong and always were. Knowing that we have made amends for errors of the past is a step towards teaching a younger generation how we have learned to be a better nation. We ask that you vote in favor of Resolution Number 34. Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, sir. Questions or comments from the Committee? If not, thanks for your service. And thanks for being with today. Next up will be Josiah Schlee.

JOSIAH SCHLEE: Good afternoon, members of the Judicial Committee. My name is Josiah Schlee. I'm a medical cannabis patient from Simsbury, Connecticut. I'm here to personally voice my opposition against bill number 34 proposed because we have people in prison for cannabis still right now that we need to focus on, not issues from 200 years ago.

Those people's lives are being affected right now. I have some concerns about 6787. There's language in the bill to apply it to the pre legalization date for justice for anyone previous to utilization. The definitions for what the court actually has to do when they say you have to look at this is very unclear.

And there's also a five year wait that I have a problem with in 6787. If your reduction is denied. I don't see why a five-year wait is necessary. That's extremely long. I would also like to voice support for Bill 6734. I believe that no one should be in jail for obtaining plants or fungi. And I do have an issue with a part of 6734 at around 56 or 54. It speaks of mandatory one-year imprisonment. If cultivating, I think we should not be dealing with mandatory minimum sentences anymore.

That makes no sense. And I think some language taken from the witchcraft bill actually applies very well to exonerating cannabis prisoners right now. And the language from that is from line 24 and 28, be it further resolved that those are indicted, forced to flee, banished, or even acquitted continue to live with the reputations destroyed and their family names tarnished have their reputations restored and no longer have disgraced attached to their names now.

Being a good standing in Connecticut, that's what I would like to see further. All cannabis offenders past and present from pre-legalization as well, that really needs to be addressed. And I appreciate you listening to me and thank you for your time. Open the questions or -

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Are there questions from the Committee? If not, thanks for being with us today.

JOSIAH SCHLEE: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Patty Reilly.

PATTY REILLY: Yes. Hi. I've been waiting.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Come on down.

PATTY REILLY: All right.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): This is right.

PATTY REILLY: 1299. How close am I now? [Laughter]

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): This is not late. Come back Monday.

PATTY REILLY: [laughter]. Hello and good morning to all the members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Patty Reilly and I'm a resident of Connecticut and have been since birth. I'm here before you to support S.B 1060, and H.B 6714. I'm also the owner of a rescue horse named Ocho, who I met at Ray of Light Farm in East Haddam when he was a year and a half old.

And I had never owned a horse and I quite frankly had never even ridden a horse. I was very green and he was green. And what I've learned in the horse world now is that green plus green equals black and blue. So I worked with him and visited him almost every day. And finally when he turned six, I purchased Ocho.

And that was the beginning of a journey that I could never have planned on in my life. I probably would've never even been aware of these bills up until summer of 2022. I became a witness to the horse abuse case and my horse a victim of the abuse and the current animal abuse case M09MCR220244214-s involving a trainer using abusive training techniques in Portland, Connecticut.

This trainer currently has 20 counts of animal cruelty charges against her, and her bail was set at a hundred thousand dollars. This isn't the usual case. In the process of these proceedings, there was an attempt to provide an advocate for the horses that were identified as abused, including my own horse Ocho.

The judge denied the appointment of the advocate for these horses based upon the current riding of

Desmond's law. It was not denied for any other reason. The judge, I'm sorry. The judge denied the appointment for these horses based upon I'm sorry, I just missed up. Currently the writing of Desmond Law does not -- only includes dogs and cats and does not specifically identify any other animals.

I would repeat that the judge denied the appointment of an advocate for these abused horses based upon the current riding of this Desmond's law. Yes. this means that this is really important to me because it's personal. I was surprised and disappointed to learn that horses are not offered the same protection as cats and dogs, and that they have no one to advocate for them in court.

Except for me. I'm not a lawyer. My life has never brought me into court proceedings like this. So I feel having an advocate in the proceedings would've eased my mind that someone was looking out for my horse Ocho, as well as all the other horses. It's important that Desmond's lobby updated to include all the animals at the judge's discretion. That's very important in there.

I'm afraid that being too specific as the law currently stands, does not allow the courts to use the tools that are no cost to them to aid them in making fair decisions in all cases, the simplest definition of an animal is a living thing that can move and eat and react to the world.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Just finish the sentence if you want.

PATTY REILLY: Okay. I'll finish the sentence. [Laughter]. In most people's minds when you say animal, it means all living beings except humans. A lion is a wild animal. While a dog is a domestic animal, they are still animals as defined by humans.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Thank you very much.

PATTY REILLY: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Questions or comments?
Senator Kissel?

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): Just briefly, you had mentioned that you had met Ocho, at the Ray of Light Farm and I actually was with a group of volunteers and we worked there for a day and it was like really wonderful place and [crosstalk 02:23:54] So you're not casting any aspersions on them at all?

PATTY REILLY: Absolutely not. They gave me a wonderful horse and I've worked there and volunteered there for many years.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): Yeah. So I wanted to give 'em a good positive shout out despite the troubles you had.

PATTY REILLY: They're awesome. And everyone should visit that place. It's very peaceful.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): I agree. It's awesome. And they have this some sort of horse-mule combination that I'm not sure.

PATTY REILLY: Yeah, yeah. And they do the veterans program as well.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): There you go. So thank you for coming and taking the time.

PATTY REILLY: Thank you taking the time to listen to me.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Further questions or comments from the Committee, further questions or comment. If not, thanks very

PATTY REILLY: Much. Thank you very much.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. Catherine Carmon.

CATHERINE CARMON: Good morning. Representative Steven Stafstrom and members of the Joint Committee on judiciary. I'm Catherine Carmon from Windsor, Connecticut, and I'm here to ask you to vote yes on the Resolution concerning certain witchcraft convictions in colonial Connecticut. It has been 375 years since Alice Young, the first woman accused of being a witch in America was killed.

It has been 375 years since her families, along with so many others, fight for justice began for 375 years. Our state has failed to fix its faults. They refused to recognize their mistake of condemning these people to death. And by doing so, they withhold the closure, the peace, these people and their families deserve. Today, I'm sitting in front of you as a 14-year old girl, as a resident of Windsor, but most importantly, as a civilian demanding the long overdue formal recognition of the reality of these victim's characters.

They were not witches; they just didn't conform to the beliefs of the time. When I was first approached speak in front of you and I was informed of Ms. Young's and Ms. Gilbert's stories, I was shocked to discover that these women still have not been exonerated. Then I thought of the constant pattern of our country's arrogance to women throughout history.

Misogyny is in our country's blood. It runs through the veins of our most supreme leaders through the walls of our capitol. It is not too late to change that. By acknowledging your predecessors' wrongdoings, although you will not be able to rewrite history, you will be able to make a new ending, one you should be proud of. You will relieve these families of the pain they have suffered with. You'll serve justice to those who have yearned for it for so long.

To think this case does not apply to civilians today is to completely disregard the people still being accused of witchcraft throughout the world. To assume this case does not affect your country today is to completely overlook your youth and those in front of you. We are demanding change because we care so much.

Our educations, our knowledge and our time is being dedicated to clearing the names of the more than 45 people who are wrongfully persecuted and accused of witchcraft. We've committed ourselves to their families' pursuit of peace to knowing their loved ones suffering is over. To knowing that we've officially acknowledged their innocence.

We are meeting on the first day of Women's History Month. This is our history. This is our struggle. We are asking to be taken seriously and we are fighting for the ones who weren't. We are asking to say Goodwife Bailey, Nicholas Bailey, Elizabeth Godman, Elizabeth Garlic, an unknown person in Saybrook, Margaret Jennings, Nicholas Jennings, Judith Garlett, Andrew Sanford, William Ayers, Judith Ayers, James Wakeley, Katherine Harrison, William Graves, Elizabeth Clawson, Hugh Croatia, Mary Desporo, Mary Harvey, Hannah Harvey, Mary Staples, Winifred Benham, Winifred Benham Jr., Elizabeth Seger. Rebecca Greensmith. Nathaniel Greensmith, Mary Sanford, Lydia Gilbert. Goodwife Knapp, Goodwife Bassett. John Carrington, Joan Carrington, Mary Johnson and Alice Young. Exonerated.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Well done. Questions or comment. Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): Well, thank you Catherine for taking the time. First of all, you know that I represent portion of Windsor. Do you live in Rainbow or [inaudible]?

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): [Laughter].

CATHERINE CARMON: No.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): No. [Laughter]. Okay. Had to look back for the answer to that.

CATHERINE CARMON: Yeah.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): And are you going to Sage Park or Windsor High.

CATHERINE CARMON: I'm at East Catholic in Manchester right now.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): Okay. And are you related to John Carmen, the Carmen family?

CATHERINE CARMON: He's mine, yes.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): He's your what?

CATHERINE CARMON: My grandfather.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): Yeah. Right. So I've known your grandfather for years and years and years. Great family. And I appreciate your testimony. Your, and actually you had some men's names in there as well as someone who's visited Salem any number of times. 1692. And there was one man that was killed in the witch trials up there. And he wasn't hung. He was actually had a board put on him and then stones, and he was very defiant.

And so whenever they asked, do you wanna admit that you're a witch? He said, no more weight. And so he was like challenging them to put these giant boulders. I can't imagine that kind of torture. And the horrific part about this is if you admitted that you were a witch, sort of like the medieval times, throw someone into the water, if they sink, they're innocent. If they float, they're guilty. There's no way to win that one.

So whoever dreamed that up was definitely against the accused. But in so many, at least in Salem, and I'm guessing in Connecticut, that if you admitted you were a witch, you wouldn't be put to death. And so it really was a power grab. And, but I do have those concerns. But you make me proud as someone who grew up in Windsor and you're following along the line of participating, and I can see a future state Rep or senator in you.

And of course you know that if you go back before your grandfather, that there were members of the legislature there as well, very high ranking members of the legislature. So thank you for coming to testify. I appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair, Steven Stafstrom.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Are there questions or comments from the Committee? From anybody who's not from Windsor? Representative Fishbein.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I haven't spoken on this topic at all, and thank you for coming here today. I just, you know, the issue that's before us has to do with these specific individuals. But in your presentation, you seem to discount the existence of witchcraft.

Is that your position or I just bring it up because, you know, the perception, there was a period of my life where I studied occult. Okay? Various aspects of, and you know, certainly we have individuals who believe that they are practicing witchcraft, you know, through you know sense or perhaps items, they believe and others that are acceptance of healing powers believe it to be witchcraft of some sort, right? So are you acknowledge, you're acknowledging that that does occur? Cuz I, you sort of went outside of the realm of -

CATHERINE CARMON: I'm saying witchcraft may have existed, but these women, these people were not witches and there's no real evidence to back it up.

For instance, Miss Lydia Gilbert, she was accused of witchcraft three years after the event of which occurred. So three years later, she was accused of witchcraft.

She was not present on the green when a gun was misfired, and she was blamed for it, and she was accused of being a witch. Then three years later, and then she was killed for being a witch when there was no credible evidence to back it up then. So why then, and why now? It's because people accused her of being a witch. She was not a witch. Witchcraft may have existed, but it, she was not one, and she did not participate in witchcraft.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Okay. I understand the distinction and I believe Benham was the last one to be convicted. And Benham, who's from Wallingford where, where I'm from you know, I think it's in one aspect, it's a quaint, well, although tragic ending, it's part of our history, right?

So, you know, when somebody says, well, that's where the Benham's lived or something like that, or Benham was buried you know, that comes with the history, but I just, you know, you think it's so innocuous, but it's sort of a -- it's a due process issue, right? You know, were those people properly given notice in the ability to perhaps prove their innocence?

And I'm all about that, right? But as we stand here today, sit here today many, many years later the question is what do we do going forward? So I thank you for the exchange and, you know, thank you for coming here today.

CATHERINE CARMON: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Further questions or comments? If not, no. Oh, well, okay. All right. We got a whole list done here. All right. Senator Mark.

SENATOR MAHER (26TH): Sorry. Thank you, Chairman. Appreciate. so part of your testimony, if I get it correctly, is that you are speaking about the rights of women and the fact that in that particular time in Connecticut, as in some instances in Connecticut, now women had no rights. Is that accurate?

CATHERINE CARMON: Yes.

SENATOR MAHER (26TH): Okay. Just wanted to make that point. Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Representative Porter.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. And the good senator just made the comment or question that I have for you. But I also wanna add to that, but I just want to thank you for your advocacy. You make me really proud, and your testimony today is a testament to women's month. What a way to start March.

CATHERINE CARMON: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): So just thank you. I know it takes a lot of courage to get up here and sit before us and do what you did, and you did it exceptionally well, and I just wanted to let you know.

CATHERINE CARMON: Thank you.

REP. PORTER (94TH): Thank you. Mom should be proud. Dad, too.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Represent Porter, and certainly I concur. Congrats. Thanks for being with us. Alex Tsarkov, be next. Oh, Representative Johnson.

REP. JOHNSON (143RD): Thank you colleague Maher. Thank you Chair. Appreciate it. Just my good colleagues, Porter and Maher also we're all of like

mind on this, and I think that you are our future, not just our present. And so when I think today on being on women's history, our history is alive and well, as you pointed out, and as we've just discussed here.

Women were not seen as having any legal rights at this time, and I thank you for raising that point, that really important point. And so we need to listen to our future. And so thank you for being that future as a future state Rep. or state senator. I appreciate it too.

CATHERINE CARMON: Thank you.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Further questions or comments before I jump the gun? Again, further questions or comments? If not now we will go to Alex Tsarkov.

ALEX TSARKOV: Good afternoon Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Fishbein and members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify before you today. For the record I am Alex Tsarkov. I'm the Executive Director of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission.

The commission is a permanent criminal justice body consisting of stakeholders in the Connecticut's criminal justice system. Our membership includes judges, the chief state's attorney, the Chief public defender, appointees from each caucus of the General Assembly, as well as others vitally engaged in the criminal justice system. I'm here to testify in support of two bills today H.B. No. 6714 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.

And S.B. No. 1060 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE APPOINTMENT OF AN ADVOCATE IN PROCEEDINGS CONCERNING THE WELFARE OR CUSTODY OF ANIMALS. With regard to House Bill 6714, I'm only speaking to sections one through three that redefined the crime of sexual

contact with the animal. These changes in unnecessary because the current statute that prohibits sexual contact with the animal found in sexual assault in the fourth degree simply does not work given the definitional statute of sexual contact.

The definition of sexual contact requires contact with a person, and the definition of a person does not include an animal. This was found to be the case in at least one superior court case in 2020, where the state had charged the defendant with sexual assault in the fourth degree, and the charges were dismissed because the statute was unenforceable.

The second bill, Senate bill 1060 builds on public Act 16-30, commonly known as Desmond's Law. That was passed in 2016. That public act established the court's ability to appoint an advocate in criminal case. Cases involving cruelty and negligence to cats and dogs. This act allows the court to appoint an advocate upon the court's own initiative or upon request of a party.

This proposal simply expands the court's ability to appoint advocates for all animals, not just cats and dogs. You have our written testimony we have suggested substitute language, and I'd be glad to take any questions.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Questions or comments for Mr. Tsarkov questions or comments? If not, Alex I want to thank you and thank the Sentencing Commission as always for all your hard work and bringing -- help bringing these proposals forward to us. Thank you. Next up will be Robin Cannamela.

ROBIN CANNAMELA: [laughter]. I learned how to walk today. Good afternoon. Honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I am Robin Cannamela, president of Desmond's Army Animal Law Advocates. We are

501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that seeks to better the lives of animals through educating on the connection between domestic and social violence and animal cruelty.

One of the things we do is attend animal cruelty cases in court throughout Connecticut. I'm addressing H.B. 6714 and briefly addressing S.B. 1060 Desmond's Law. We were in court attending the Hoetzel sentencing that Mr. Tsarkov mentioned in his written testimony. I will never forget when Judge Danaher turned directly to us in the audience and stated, I cannot charge. Section 53A-73a, sexual assault on an animal because the law is undefined.

He said to us, you need to get this law changed. Hoetzel was also charged with two counts of second degree sexual assault on minors. Another case we attended was State of Connecticut versus DeMaio. In 2018, DeMaio had been sexually assaulting family animals since his juvenile. The family attempted to keep the dogs locked away from him. DeMaio was also charged with fourth degree sexual assault on an animal, and at that point, he was also charged with animal cruelty.

He was released on probation, where within one year proceeded to rob an ATM and steal a cart gunpoint because the fourth degree sexual assault was dropped. These are just two instances of additional assault and violence perpetrated on humans, connecting the dots between violence against people and violence against animals.

Connecticut is still only one of 15 states that consider sexual assault on an animal a misdemeanor. And inadequately defined it that it would seem defining this law's common sense. It's time. Connecticut had the intestinal fortitude to have this uncomfortable conversation and address this law appropriately within H.B. 6714. May I just finish?

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Like one sentence?

ROBIN CANNAMELA: A brief comment on the expansion of Desmond's Law, S.B. 1060 is to very importantly remember that the law is only used at the judge's discretion.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you.

ROBIN CANNAMELA: Thank you very much.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Questions or comments from the Committee? Questions or comments from the Committee? Seeing none. Thanks being with us. Thank you, Sarah Jack.

SARAH B. JACK: Good afternoon. Senator Winfield and Representative Stafstrom and members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary. I am Sarah Jack. I am a descendant of Accused Witch, Winifred Benham of Wallingford. I am a co-founder of the Connecticut Witch Trial Exoneration project and co-hosts of the podcast. Thou Shall Not Sufferer, The Witch Trial podcast.

I'm here to ask you to vote yes on 34 Resolution, concerning certain witchcraft convictions in colonial Connecticut. My ancestor, Winford Benham was one of over 45 people accused of witchcraft crimes in Connecticut in 1697. She and her daughter Winifred Benham, Jr. Were the last two arrested and indicted. Despite their innocence, their unduly tarnished reputations forced them to leave their community and uproot to New York.

Researching the Connecticut Witch trial history informed me of her innocence, and that she needed a voice today to address the life changing and devastating historical wrong she experienced. There's complete certainty that she was not guilty of supernatural crime. She was an ordinary woman, a wife, and a mother who fell victim to a rational witchcraft fear that was prevalent in the colonies

during those times and is still prevalent in many places in the world today.

Your yes votes, is powerful because it recognizes her innocence. And signifies that vulnerable community members should not be treated unjustly due to perceived differences. It is time to write these wrongs and exonerate those who were executed and acknowledge those who suffered other severe consequences of witchcraft accusations. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Questions or comments from the Committee? Representative Callahan.

REP. CALLAHAN (108TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks for coming in to testify today. I just wanted to ask you, since you're a direct descendant, has this ever affected you in a negative way? For instance job application, applying for housing, things like that. Has it ever come up? I'm just curious.

SARAH B. JACK: What does that have to do with her? I'm just curious.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Since it's a relative of yours, I'm wondering if anyone ever brings it up. I'm just curious.

BETH CARUSO: I don't put that on my resume.

REP. CALLAHAN (108TH): Well, no,

SARAH B. JACK: But I do talk about it on my podcast.

REP. CALLAHAN (108TH): Okay. I mean, you put it out there that's, I'm just wondering if it ever affects your life in a negative way, is my question.

SARAH B. JACK: Witch hunting? Does it affect my life in a negative way? Because -

REP. CALLAHAN (108TH): I'm saying if you're a direct descendant, does it affect your life in a negative way? Having been a direct descendant?

SARAH B. JACK: Yeah.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): okay. That was my question. Thank you for coming in.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Further questions or comments from the Committee. Senator Kissel.

SENATOR KISSEL (7TH): Thank you very much, Chairman Stafstrom. I appreciate you taking the time to come and testify. And I just find it really amazing that we have so many groups. It's not even just individuals but groups that have formed organizations regarding this issue.

I just wanna relate, since you're here. I visit Salem, Massachusetts almost every year. And the year of 9/11, there's this thing called Cry Innocence that's put on by Salem State University. And it's a whole interpretive drama with the audience. And then at the end, you determine if the person's a witch. And uniformly we all vote no. But the year after 9/11, just like it was about a few, like weeks afterwards, we voted yes.

So sometimes the feeling within a community creates maybe not a mass hysteria, but a feel, feeling of deep unease that can lead to really unjust results. And I appreciate your testimony. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Representative Fishbein.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So Representative Callahan asked a question and there was an answer, and I just, I didn't wanna leave it

out there hanging. He asked you if you have been negatively impacted as a result of this lineal history, and you answered in the affirmative. So how have you been negatively impacted?

SARAH B. JACK: Well, I think it disappoints me and my research on Winifred led me to this place today, In the last nine months, we created the exoneration project working with state Representative Jane Garibay, and we created our podcast. We've been talking to lots of history experts, but also current advocates in the other nations where these hunts are still killing women and children.

And that does affect me in a way that spurs me to learn more, to ask the world community, to learn more about what is witch hunting, why does it happen? How do we stop it?

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): So I'm trying to figure out the negative aspect. So, you creating a podcast is a negative is what you're saying? Where's the negative? Because I just -- you were asked a question.

SARAH B. JACK: You I have not been accused of being a witch. Okay. But Winifred was, and her mother was also so, and her daughter Winifred Jr. So that's three generations of women that were accused of being a witch.

REP. FISHBEIN (90TH): Well, I think I'm getting the answer to the -- I just, you answered the question in the affirmative. It just laid out there. You weren't asked how you were negatively impacted. I've had the opportunity to ask the question. I got the answer. So thank you. Thank you. Mr. Chairman.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Further questions or comments from the Committee? Further questions or comments? If not, thanks Lance. Olivia Rinkes.

OLIVIA RINKES: Thank you and good morning and thank you to the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to comment. My name is Olivia Rinkes from the town of North Southington. I'm also a student at the University of Connecticut. I'm here today as a resident and of Connecticut and concerned citizen and also as a supporter of cannabis, both medicinal and recreational and strong support of H.B. No. 6787 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROSECUTION OF CANNABIS-RELATED CASES AND MODIFICATION OF SENTENCES FOR CANNABIS-RELATED OFFENSES.

Honestly, any argument that cannabis related offenses that were charges that were alike issued prior to legalization of cannabis are viable charges, is simply engaging in semantics. The fact that anyone would pursue or uphold the continued prosecution of these charges simply because it was on the book's illegal at the time of arrest really speaks the destabilizing and punitive methods of the criminal justice system.

The intention of legalizing cannabis was to recognize and undo the damages to predominantly black and brown communities that have occurred because of the criminalization of cannabis and the subsequent stigmatization of individuals who use or are perceived to use cannabis. The fear-based persecution has had and continues to have debilitating effects on the families and communities of individuals whose lives were disrupted because of cannabis charges.

Petty drug charges, such as cannabis possession are victimless crimes that leave the individual charged with permanent barriers to accessing employment, shelter, education, and other important resources. I strongly support Connecticut legislators stepping in and directing the division of Criminal Justice to cease prosecution of pending charges and to review and acquit the sentences of individuals convicted of cannabis related offenses.

I believe the immediate dismissal of charges and convictions of individuals impacted by the unnecessary criminalization of cannabis should absolutely be a priority for legislators. Before any continued discussion of how to profit off of the cannabis industry, there are many ways this bill could go further to fully ensure the needs of impacted individuals can be addressed.

I recommend the state review and acquit the sentences of not only individuals who are currently incarcerated, but also individuals currently on parole or probation. I also believe the review and acquittal charges should be extended to the people charged with cannabis related offenses prior to legalization.

I thank the legislators for taking steps to address this issue, and I would like to also comment that I'm in strong support of H.B. No. 6734 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE DECRIMINALIZATION OF POSSESSION OF SMALL AMOUNTS OF PSILOCYBIN. And any further actions taken to decriminalize charges of use or possession of substances that are victimless crimes.

Rather than continue to fear monger and criminalize the use of substances resources should be put towards utilizing these substances safely, providing help to people who are struggling to overcome substance issues and understanding them medical or the therapeutic care possibilities. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you, Ms. Rinkes. Good to see you as always see you. No questions from the Committee. I'm sure we'll see you again soon. Christina Capitan.

CHRISTINA CAPITAN: Good afternoon, honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. Senator Winfield, Representative Porter who had stepped away. Senator Kissel and Representative Fishbein.

It's great to see you again. My name is Christina Capitan. I'm a res and I'm a resident of East Windsor, Connecticut. I am here today in strong support of H.B. 6787 with consideration of the amendments that were suggested in the previous testimony by Jason Ortiz from Students for Sensible Drug Policy. I'm a representative of the Connecticut CannaWarriors, which is a local grassroots cannabis advocacy organization.

We have been working for years alongside of the wonderful alongside some of the wonderful members of this Committee as well as other local drug and prison reform advocates and organizations such as Students for Sensible Drug Policy to fight for cannabis law reform that would help uplift the communities, families, and individuals that were most hurt by the war on drugs for generations.

And up until now, I do feel that our state has fell short on really making the effort of addressing the damage that's been done by the War on Drugs, despite the state's significant windfall from not only recreational adult use cannabis, but from medicinal cannabis almost for a decade. CT CannaWarriors strive to protect cannabis culture and the legacy of this plant, and to show respect to the individuals who risk their lives to keep this plant alive.

We stand today in support of sentence modifications for those who cannot be here with us today. The many who have died in prison waiting with exorbitant bonds for possessing or selling cannabis, the many who are currently silenced suffering sitting in prison were currently fighting cannabis charges here in Connecticut. It has been a long time for our state to do whatever we could.

It has been a long time, and it is time for our state to do whatever we can to try to write the wrongs of cannabis prohibition here. I'm very grateful, but not surprised that this Committee has

put forth such a forward thinking bill that would positively affect so many lives. Thank you all.

I encourage you to continue moving in this direction and as quickly as possible because at this very moment, as the state of Connecticut rakes in billions of dollars off the legal sale of cannabis, there is very real and very loved people still sitting in prison or fighting cases for participating in the same type of activities as of those who are currently profiting off cannabis in the state legally, myself and many of my friends have been subject to violations of our rights and our invasions of our privacy over cannabis crimes, and we've caused no harm.

We have been hunted, harassed, and incarcerated as non-violent individuals who chose cannabis. We were taunted, targeted ostracized, and we had our doors kicked in by law enforcement. They have taken away people's children and tore many families apart. There's no amount of money and honestly no amount of reform that can go back and truly right the wrongs of the war on drugs. But this bill is certainly a step in the right direction.

I encourage you to pass H.B. 6787 with the as before mentioned amendments without delay and help us to set our people free. People who choose cannabis are not criminals today in Connecticut, and we never really were. We kept this plan alive to help people heal, and the existence and patient count of our current medical program proves that people who faced persecution were performing a critical and essential community service in the state before legalization happened. And they should not be punished, but celebrated and respected. We must recognize that today and act accordingly. I thank you for your time.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): Thank you. Questions or comments from the committee? Questions or comments? Seeing none, appreciate you being with us.

CHRISTINA CAPITAN: Thank you very much.

REP. STAFSTROM (129TH): That concludes our list of folks for today. So I am going to declare this public hearing closed and we will be back in action on Friday. See you all then.