

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

PA 16-96

HB5147

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Transcripts from the Joint Standing Committee Public Hearing(s) and/or Senate and House of Representatives Proceedings

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**CONNECTICUT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE**

**PROCEEDINGS
2016**

**VOL. 59
PART 9
2751 – 3097**

/je
SENATE

341
May 4, 2016

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

On Calendar page 24, Calendar 553, House Bill 5306 -
-

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, sir, so ordered.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

On Calendar page 29, Calendar 578, House Bill 5417 -
-

(HB 5147)

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

On Calendar page 29, Calendar 579, House Bill 5629 -
-

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

On Calendar page 31 Calendar 593, House Bill 5411 --

THE CHAIR:

Seeing no objection, so ordered, sir.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

On Agenda 1, Calendar 594, House Bill 5051--

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SENATE

May 4, 2016

THE CHAIR:

All right. Mr. Clerk, will call the Consent Calendar. The machines will be open.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER:

(Inaudible comment.)

THE CHAIR:

Okay. Just get going. It's getting there. It's getting there. You've got to call for a vote. Okay. She's pulling it up, she's pulling it up.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Madam President, if the Clerk can just read the bill numbers and not the titles, that would be great.

THE CHAIR:

That's right. Okay.

THE CLERK:

House Bill 5470, House Bill [inaudible], 5423,
[inaudible], 5593, 5360, 5311, 5359, 5366, 5317,
5329, [inaudible], 5438, 5637, 5520, 5553, 5510,
5420, 5540, 5484, 5306, 5289, 5639, 5147, 5411,
5055, [inaudible], 5479, 5138, 5189.

(HB5356) (HB5629)

(HB5433) (HB5291)

(HB5601) (HB5051)

(HB5638) (HB5556)

(HB5261) (HB5596)

(HB5259) (HB5444)

THE CHAIR:

Okay.

(Applause.)

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SENATE

May 4, 2016

The machine is open.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Madam President, I need to add one more. Calendar 513, page 19, Calendar 513, House bill 5553.

THE CHAIR:

It's already on Consent, sir. May I open the machines to vote.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Madam President.

THE CHAIR:

Yes?

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

I need to, does the Clerk have agendas 6 and 7?

THE CHAIR:

Yes, sir.

THE CLERK:

The Clerk has Senate Agenda 6 and 7. They have been printed and on Senators' desks and dated Wednesday, May 4, 2016.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Madam President, I move that all items on Senate Agendas 6 and 7, dated Wednesday, May 4, 2016, be

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SENATE

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acted upon as indicated and the Agenda be incorporated by reference in the Senate Journal and transcript and placed immediately on the Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.
Immediate roll call is ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

Come on, come on, come on. Crisco, Crisco, Crisco.
Where's Crisco? Where is Crisco? Come on Joe.

All members have voted? All members have voted?
The machine will be closed. The Consent Calendar passed.

THE CLERK:

Consent Calendar Number 3 [inaudible].

(Applause.)

THE CHAIR:

I almost [inaudible] holding the clock back. Don't worry about it [inaudible] it. Senator Duff.

SENATOR DUFF (25TH):

Madam President, I move that we adjourn Sine Die.

THE CHAIR:

**JOINT
STANDING
COMMITTEE
HEARINGS**

**ENVIRONMENT
PART 1
1 – 575**

**2016
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REP. MUSHINSKY (85TH): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. ARCONTI (109TH): Thank you. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you, Margaret.

MARGARET MINER: Right.

REP. ARCONTI (109TH): Representative Lavielle followed by James Govoni.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Good afternoon, Senator Kennedy, Representative Arconti, Senator Chapin and Members of the Committee. Very good to see you. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I will tell you quickly that I have submitted some testimony in writing to you about two bills. We're not going to talk about here; one is H.B. No. 5147 which I support, the animal cruelty bill. And SJR5, which I also support. Everything in there is stuff that I think other people have said, but I do recommend both the amendment and reforming the conveyance bill process through statutory means. And you'll read all that.

I am here today to introduce you to my constituent, John Threshie, from Wilton. We are going to talk about H.B. No. 5149, which is about tire recycling, et cetera. And I also support this bill very strongly, as I supported mattress stewardship, and paint stewardship, and so on.

The -- Mr. Threshie is going to speak to you today about his support for the bill because he owns a company called Tirex, which actually offers the kinds of environmentally friendly, and energy-saving technology for recycling tires that is -- is dealt

between the DEEP and the federal.

SENATOR KENNEDY (12TH): Okay. All right, thank you.

BILL GASH: Yes, sir.

REP. ARCONTI (109TH): Any other questions? Seeing none; thanks, Bill. Thanks for your testimony.

Now we're moving on to H.B. No. 5147. Amy Harrell.

AMY HARRELL: Hello, Senator Kennedy, Senator Chapin, Representative Arconti and Senator Moore and the Members of the Committee. I'm Amy Harrell, President of Connecticut Votes for Animals.

And I'm here to -- to urge support for H.B. No. 5147, which would increase the maximum penalty for persons convicted of subsequent offenses of malicious animal cruelty.

You know, the link, first of all, between animal cruelty and domestic abuse has been very well studied and documented. There is clear evidence of that link. Because wherever there is animal abuse there is also a good chance there could be child and spousal abuse, and vice versa.

In 2011 the Connecticut legislature recognized the importance of this link when it enacted a law to require cross-reporting of child abuse and animal cruelty. So now, the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Agriculture are sharing their case reports of abuse and neglect, and as a result, they are very likely saving lives. Also the Federal Bureau of Investigation, just this past January, began tracking animal cruelty

offenders as a separate category, instead of putting them into a catch-all other category. Clearly, animal cruelty is significant beyond the fact that it's unjust to treat animals so poorly. But animal cruelty offenders pose a greater risk to humans as well.

And so I really urge passage of this bill which would impose a Class C felony charge for people convicted of a second offense of malicious animal cruelty. Thank you.

REP. ARCONTI (109TH): Thank you very much, Amy. Senator Kennedy.

SENATOR KENNEDY (12TH): Thank you, Amy. This Committee has heard testimony on this issue, and we've heard that -- of the roughly 3,700 animal cruelty prosecutions over the approximately last ten years. Half have been withdrawn, a third have been dismissed and those that have been found guilty, by and large, most of them received accelerated rehabilitation.

And why -- why do you think that that is? Why do you think so many people are -- like even these are some of the most vicious cruel crimes; why are there so many, in your view, just kind of allowed to almost walk away scot free?

AMY HARRELL: I think there are a whole multitude of factors, and clearly I think, you know, while increasing the maximum penalty for animal abuse is obviously an important step in -- in addressing animal cruelty, I think there are other aspects of -- of the -- of the process, the judicial process, that could also be addressed too, so that perhaps for getting a greater conviction rate so that no so

many cases are tossed out.

And I -- I think really fully addressing animal cruelty involves looking at the process in many different steps. And -- and penalties for animal abuse is certainly an important step.

SENATOR KENNEDY (12TH): And compared to other states that you're aware of; I realize you're focused on Connecticut, but is there -- are -- is there something that we can -- we should understand or know about, perhaps what other states have done?

Have they taken further steps to try to stiffen, so to speak, the penalties involved in animal -- animal cruelty, to your knowledge? Or can you not speak to that?

AMY HARRELL: I'm not an expert on that, but my understanding is that most states are where we are in considering what is an appropriate penalty, and how -- how to deal with animal cruelty cases.

I think there is a growing awareness everywhere that animal cruelty is -- you know, has larger ramifications than we previously thought, and that we need -- we need to seriously address those abuses. So -- so, I believe other states are about where we are.

SENATOR KENNEDY (12TH): Thank you.

REP. ARCONTI (109TH): Representative Byron.

REP. BYRON (27TH): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your testimony, Amy. And you're right, and I -- I've read studies in the past where animal cruelty is what's called a -- a bridge crime to domestic

violence.

My question has to do with the present penalty. Can you shed some light on what the -- what the present penalty is for animal cruelty?

AMY HARRELL: So, generally speaking, there are two levels of animal cruelty. There is -- there is a lesser sort of -- I mean there is a lesser level of cruelty and then a greater level of cruelty that's a felony level, and that's what this bill addresses.

The -- the lesser charge is really more for neglect, for hoarding cases, and I believe that is a misdemeanor. Currently the -- the penalty, the second level penalty, is a Class D felony, which for a first offense, or a subsequent offense, which would be one to five years in prison and/or up to \$5,000 in fines, I believe.

REP. BYRON (27TH): So, this bill would move this from a Class D to a Class C?

AMY HARRELL: Yes, which is one to -- one to ten years in prison and up to \$10,000 in fines for a subsequent offense; malicious cruelty.

REP. BYRON (27TH): All right. And those goes right back to what you were saying a moment ago where there's two different types of cruelty.

So that would -- this would be for the most severe --

AMY HARRELL: That's right.

REP. BYRON (27TH): -- cases of animal cruelty?

AMY HARRELL: Yes.

REP. BYRON (27TH): Thank you for your testimony, Amy.

REP. ARCONTI (109TH): Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66TH): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, good afternoon.

So, in your mind, this would not be for many of the, what I guess we'd call, more newsworthy abuse of animal issues that we've seen over the last two or three issues -- two or three years, where an individual or individuals may be prosecuted for having 50 animals that have somehow been uncared for or cared for in a way that's not appropriate.

AMY HARRELL: Right, no, I --

REP. MINER (66TH): So this is -- this is a -- a singular act, or more than a singular act?

AMY HARRELL: Right. I mean I think the range of cruelty that people are capable of is -- continually astounds me. So we could potentially be talking about several animals involved.

But I believe what you're referring to is more of hoarding cases. Animal hoarding is a real problem, and individuals who are predisposed to hoarding materials, also hoard animals. And they can end up with the 40 or 50 cats or dogs that are suffering from severe neglect.

Those situations I don't believe are ever prosecuted under this more -- under this second-level offense; those are first-level misdemeanor charges.

REP. MINER (66TH): And -- and so with respect to Senator Kennedy's comment about the dismissal rate, do you see any chance that by increasing the penalty to a level that's beyond what a judge might think appropriate, either financially or in terms of a sentence, contributes in any way for the level of dismissals -- the number of dismissals?

AMY HARRELL: I think the important thing with this is -- is it's still allows for a range. In other words, of -- of penalty; whether years in prisons or -- or -- or the fine, and that the -- the -- the ground-level penalty is still one year, but the maximum-level penalty increases to ten years, up from five years.

So, I think it still allows quite a bit of discretion on the part of the court as to -- as to how to penalize someone convicted of cruelty, and it just -- but it allows a greater range. So for animal cruelty offenders who have really committed despicable, truly despicable acts for the second time, or the third time, this bill would allow the possibility of a greater sentence. So, I think there's still quite a bit of discretion and latitude there for the courts.

REP. MINER (66TH): Right, and I'm -- I'm not in any way condoning the acts or, you know, try to find any harbor for them, but my points is that whether it's, I guess, this issue or -- or littering, we don't like it. There's no doubt about it. Societally I think we're opposed to those kind of activities, those actions.

But when you begin to create a penalty phase that -- that doesn't seem to be in sync with the court, I

think you're going to see more dismissals. The judge is going to say, I can't imagine putting somebody away for a year, especially if they wouldn't do that for taking a similar action against another human being.

And so that's my -- that's what I'm asking you. Do you -- do you think there's a risk at going to another level where the dismissals, or some other charge may be pled to where you don't really get the results you want. I think what you're trying to do is really send home a message that if you've come back and done this again, you've got to go to jail for a year.

AMY HARRELL: Well, again, I mean I think -- I understand what you're saying, and I think I may agree with you if -- if what this did was also mandate of minimum sentence.

So, if it mandated a minimum sentence of -- of -- of five years, a higher minimum sentence than what it currently does, then I -- I think I would be inclined to agree with you. But -- but it doesn't really do that. I think it, you know, it's still -- compared with the current statute, the minimum sentence is still the same essentially, except one is a -- except for the classification of a felony.

But the -- the fines and the -- and the jail time is still the same minimum level, if that makes sense.

REP. MINER (66TH): Thank -- thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. ARCONTI (109TH): Representative Byron.

REP. BYRON (27TH): Thank you once again, Mr. Chair.

Just one other question, Amy.

And you touched upon this a moment ago; where there's lesser degrees of animal cruelty, and perhaps that could be attributed to mental health issues, and -- and certainly we want to point those individuals in the right directions.

But perhaps if you can enlighten us a little bit with an example of what would constitute a Class C felony, and a \$1,000 fine and mandatory -- what did you say, up to ten years, I think?

I -- I want to be able to paint this picture in -- in my mind. I mean those are pretty stiff penalties, and I -- I -- I want to make sure that I have clarity to understand what -- what type of maliciousness is enacted on these --

AMY HARRELL: I think keeping, for example, several -- let's say maybe a dozen, animals. Let's say they're goats and -- and they are -- they have been severely neglected, not out of mental illness, but -- but, you know -- and this is up for the courts to decide, but -- but purposely neglected and abused as in they're emaciated, they have been mistreated as in been struck repeatedly, have been forced to live in filthy conditions, perhaps also used to work on the farm and to do work that they're not cut out for. And that this behavior went on for a period of years.

REP. BYRON (27TH): Okay, so this -- is it just limited to farm animals, or would this -- this would also entail like dogs and -- and household pets as well, and cruelty to --

AMY HARRELL: Yes, it would apply to any species. I

mean any species --

REP. BYRON (27TH): Predominately leaving emaciated.

AMY HARRELL: Sorry?

REP. BYRON (27TH): Leaning more towards the animal being emaciated.

AMY HARRELL: Emaciated or -- or shot with a gun, stabbed, hung from a tree, knocked against walls --

REP. BYRON (27TH): Beaten.

AMY HARRELL: Beaten, yeah, maliciously.

REP. BYRON (27TH): Correct, and that was what I was trying to get to. Thank you very much for your testimony. That clears a lot up for me.

SENATOR KENNEDY (12TH): If I could just make a comment. Yeah, I think in -- also in response to your question, Representative, you know, what we're talking about here is extreme neglect.

AMY HARRELL: Right.

SENATOR KENNEDY (12TH): Extreme animal cruelty. The deliberate mutilation, torture; setting your animal on fire. These are things that do happen, unfortunately.

And I think the idea behind this is that for changing the second offense -- okay, so the first offense we're going to leave the same, because we're a forgiving society. We understand that there are some -- sometimes circumstances that we need to consider.

AMY HARRELL: Right.

SENATOR KENNEDY (12TH): But for the second offense, it -- it's going to extremely restrict the -- the -- the ability for somebody to seek accelerated rehabilitation, be -- because felonies under our Class C felony are only granted accelerated -- accelerated rehabilitation, quote/unquote, for good cause. And there would be no good cause if an individual already had a conviction for animal cruelty.

So, I think we're looking for allowing for, you know, an understanding that there may be circumstances the first time around --

AMY HARRELL: Right.

SENATOR KENNEDY (12TH): -- but not letting people repeat it time after time; be get -- getting off without any kind of penalty, or with any ability, quite honestly, for the court to even track these people, because many of these records are expunged, so somebody's arrested year after year, there's no way for the court to even find out how many other times the person has been charged with a similar crime.

So, anyway, that's how I see the -- the -- these are really for the most extreme types of cases.

REP. BYRON (27TH): It makes me wonder if there's -- there would then be a need for a list then; you know, or an offenders list.

SENATOR KENNEDY (12TH): Well, in -- in a way, I think that this does kind of create a -- a list. It

doesn't create maybe a -- a public-user database where anybody with a computer can type in the person's name and see if they've been convicted of animal cruelty, but in fact it does create a type of list, at least for law enforcement officials to see that the person has in fact a record of doing the same thing over and over again, which I think is -- is important public policy.

REP. ARCONTI (109TH): Representative Miner.

REP. MINER (66TH): I thought I had this pretty well squared away in my mind until I heard the word neglect.

So, I'm reading the bill and I don't see the word neglect in here anywhere. And I can't imagine a -- an awful hoarding situation where animals either died or were on the verge of dying where that wouldn't be neglect. But I thought I understood you to say that in hoarding situations they would be subject to the lesser charge.

And so, it sounded to me that Senator Kennedy was making the case that even though the word neglect is not here in this language that that might be -- that act might also be included.

So, is it -- is it your understanding and your intention that -- that neglect, as awful as it may be, or less awful, could be something that someone was charged with under this statute?

AMY HARRELL: I think it really depends on the other surrounding circumstances. I -- I think there is neglect in that, you know, someone -- you know, a dog owner fails to bring their dog into a veterinarian for medical care; that is neglect. But

then there is also neglect that encompasses several animals where they are starved to death and -- and kept in unsightly circumstances.

But, you know, I think -- the cruelty statutes are not black and white. And I -- and I believe that's intentional, and I believe there is -- that can be a positive thing because it allows flexibility on the part of the court, and in part of the prosecutor to -- to make their own judgments, depending on the whole variety of circumstances that they could be confronted with.

REP. MINER (66TH): Thank you.

REP. ARCONTI (109TH): Thank you, Representative. Any other questions or comments? Seeing none; thanks, Amy.

AMY HARRELL: Thank you.

REP. ARCONTI (109TH): Now moving on to S.B. No. 77. Kevin Reynolds.

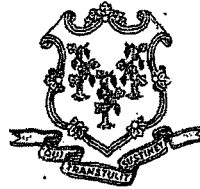
KEVIN REYNOLDS: Good afternoon Senator Kennedy, Representative Arconti and Members of the Environment Committee. My name is Kevin Reynolds and I'm here today testifying on behalf of the American Coatings Association in support of S.B. No. 77, AN ACT CONCERNING THE TIMING OF THE SUBMISSION OF THE PAINT STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM'S ANNUAL REPORT.

The American Coatings Association, or the ACA, is the -- is a trade association of the paint and coatings industry. Beginning in 2010, the ACA worked very closely with the leadership of this Committee, The DEEP, the paint industry and community leaders around Connecticut to establish

11-5

SENATOR MARTIN M. LOONEY
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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February 19, 2016

Good morning Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis and members of the Environment Committee. I am here to testify in support of HB 5147, AN ACT INCREASING THE MAXIMUM PENALTY FOR PERSONS CONVICTED OF SUBSEQUENT OFFENSES OF MALICIOUS AND INTENTIONAL ANIMAL CRUELTY.

In Connecticut we have long recognized that crimes of animal cruelty are not only horrific acts in themselves, but they are often precursors to violent crimes against people (especially against children). In 2011 the General Assembly enacted a law that required cross reporting of animal cruelty and child abuse and that law was strengthened in 2014.

Recently the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has launched a national database on crimes of animal cruelty. These acts are now counted alongside felony crimes like arson, burglary, assault, and homicide in the FBI's expansive criminal database. This year, the Bureau's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) began collecting detailed data from participating law enforcement agencies on acts of animal cruelty. Before this year, crimes involving animals were lumped into an "All Other Offenses" category.

In light of the FBI's action, I believe that increasing the penalty for repeated instances of serious forms of animal cruelty is appropriate. Massachusetts also recently enacted enhanced penalties for animal cruelty and made veterinarians mandatory reporters of animal abuse.

Current law in Connecticut makes this crime a class D felony. This bill would leave that in place for first offenders but it would make subsequent offenses a class C felony. This reflects the bipartisan compromise in SB 361 as amended by LCO 7389 that passed the State Senate in 2015 but was not taken up by the House. I would strongly encourage the committee to pass this sensible legislation.

M.S.

To Ct lawmakers:

Re: Bill HB 5147

Please pass this bill.

In animal rescue we see heartbreaking animal abuse and too often the offender gets a slap on the wrist and simply learn to go on and hurt other animals but in a way that is not found out publicly. Even repeat offenders go free with minimal punishment. It has been proven that animal abusers often also cause domestic violence. Serial killers often start out as animal abusers. we need stronger laws and we need them enforced in court! We need an animal abuser registry. Please vote for the animals ... you are also voting to reduce future human abuse.

Thank you

Trish Ulin

President

Friends of the Bristol CT Animal Shelter Inc .

P.S.

In regards to Bill #HB 5147 to increase the maximum penalty for 2nd time offenders of malicious animal cruelty.

State Rep. Gary Byron is hoping to strengthen animal cruelty laws with this bill imposing stiffer penalties on anyone convicted of intentionally maiming, torturing or mutilating animals to a seven year prison sentence and potentially a \$5,000 fine.

Byron would also like to support a bill that would create an offender list for those convicted of animal cruelty.

We need people to be held accountable for their cruel and unnecessary actions and tighten the full extent of our law concerning this issue.

I strongly agree with this idea and would love to see more people in our political world to show that kind of compassion for God's other creatures that also deserve life in peace.

Thank you for your hopeful time in reading this as well as your hopeful interest in aiding us in the fight and not the problem.

Dimitri

I am writing in support of this bill HB 5147 My name is Carolyn Schmaling from Monroe, CT I am not affiliated with any animal organization, but I do support and have made donations to several animal rescue organizations. I am in support of this bill and feel that it is about time our leaders take Animal Safety seriously. For too long animals have been viewed as property and owners have gotten away with too much. We need to enforce our laws better when it comes to our furry friends. The people who purposely injure an animal should know that they will be caught, prosecuted and pay for that crime. I realize that some laws can be open to interpretation, but purposely injuring an animal should be considered a crime. It needs to start with leaving animals outside exposed in inclement weather - more than just a slap on the wrist, tethering animals for extended periods of time. Create an animal abuse registry and make it public! People need to be held accountable for how they treat animals and know the state means business. I truly hope this can pass, and without hesitation. I fully support State Rep Gary Byron in his quest for animal safety laws. Lets get this passed!!

Sincerely
Carolyn Schmaling
Monroe, CT

A.S.

In regards to Bill #HB 5147 to increase the maximum penalty for 2nd time offenders of malicious animal cruelty.

State Rep. Gary Byron is hoping to strengthen animal cruelty laws with this bill imposing stiffer penalties on anyone convicted of intentionally maiming, torturing or mutilating animals to a seven year prison sentence and potentially a \$5,000 fine.

Byron would also like to support a bill that would create an offender list for those convicted of animal cruelty.

I agree with these proposals, although we should have stiffer penalties for FIRST time offenders, sending the message that we will not tolerate abuse. We need people to be held accountable for their cruel and unnecessary actions and tighten the full extent of our law concerning this issue.

I strongly agree with this idea and would love to see more people in our political world to show that kind of compassion for God's other creatures that also deserve life in peace.

Thank you for you hopeful time in reading this as well as your hopeful interest in aiding us in the fight and not the problem.

Thank you,
Kelly Pugh



February 19, 2016

Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, Senator Chapin, Representative Shaban and distinguished members of the Environment Committee:

My name is Gordon G. Willard and I am Executive Director representing the Connecticut Humane Society. We are deeply privileged to be submitting this testimony in support for your raised bill HB5147 "An Act *INCREASING THE MAXIMUM PENALTY FOR PERSONS CONVICTED OF SUBSEQUENT OFFENSES OF MALICIOUS AND INTENTIONAL ANIMAL CRUELTY.*"

HB5147 is an important step to ensure that those who continuously commit malicious offenses which cause pain, suffering and death to animals receive increased penalties after the first offense. A number of studies clearly show that there is a strong and undeniable link between animal abuse committed as a child or adult and subsequent horrifying offenses against humans.

Animal abuse, especially acts that inflict pain and suffering which provide pleasure, satisfaction, and a sense of power and control to the abuser is an indicator of already existing or future disturbing behavior. These crimes often called "bridge crimes" lead to violent offenses against people and should be recognized as such and addressed through our legal system.

For the first time ever starting in 2016, the FBI will collect data on animal cruelty crimes via its National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). By taking animal cruelty crimes out of the "other crimes" category and specifically tracking animal cruelty separately, the FBI is signaling that animal cruelty is a violent crime on par with other violent crimes like assault, arson and homicide

Recognizing malicious and intentional acts that cause suffering to animals, not necessarily resulting in their death, as serious and worthy of our attention is not just about animal rights. It is about human decency, about protecting those creatures that enrich our lives and the very serious mandate of halting those who would continue on a pathway of cruelty and violence that will eventually harm other humans.

Connecticut ranks 31st in the **Animal Legal Defense Fund's 2015 U.S. Animal Protection Law Rankings** for anti-violent animal laws and this legislation ensures this poor ranking is addressed. **Unfortunately, Connecticut also received the lowest ranking of all New England States.**

The Connecticut Humane Society represents a constituency that cares deeply about animals and people and about the social mandates established through our State Government. **The Connecticut Humane Society has identified HB5147 as one of its top legislative priorities of 2016 and hopes you will support advocating for passage this year!**

Thank you for listening to my testimony and for considering favorably approving HB5147. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding my testimony.

Testimony for **HB 5147** An Act increasing the maximum penalty for persons convicted of subsequent offenses of malicious and intentional animal cruelty.

Environment Committee 2/19/16

Karen Laski, Board member of CT Votes for Animals

I am writing to express my support for increasing the maximum penalty for subsequent offenses of animal cruelty because most people who are caught committing cruel acts are not punished and not recorded because their case is nolle or they are given accelerated rehabilitation.

I think this bill will expand awareness among the public that lawmakers take animal cruelty seriously and abuse to animals might happen less often because of the stakes involved. Going home and kicking the dog should not be a running joke.

According to the FBI, 68% of abused women reported that the abuser had also committed violence against their pets. Abuse of animals is a predictor of future violence to people. Only a tiny fraction of animal abusers in CT receive penalties and the crime is not recorded for most.

Since I was a teenager, I have always kept an eye out for people abusing animals and have found many neglectful situations in which animals were suffering on a daily basis. Trouble was and is, that most of these cases weren't against the law and "owners" of the animals laughed at my questions. I jumped at the chance to attend CT Votes for Animals first meeting in 2008. There is so much that needs to be done to insure that our animals are shielded from pain and suffering by creating and improving laws that protect their welfare.

Please pass this bill out of committee.

Thank you,

Karen Laski
279 Fern St.
Manchester, CT 06040

p. 7, ln 8



State of Connecticut

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL**

REPRESENTATIVE GAIL LAVIELLE
ONE HUNDRED FORTY-THIRD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 4200
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Testimony

in Support of

HB 5147: An Act Increasing the Maximum Penalty for Persons Convicted of Subsequent Offenses of Malicious and Intentional Animal Cruelty

Environment Committee

February 19, 2016

Good afternoon, Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis, Senator Chapin, Representative Shaban, and distinguished members of the Environment Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 5147, An Act Increasing the Maximum Penalty for Persons Convicted of Subsequent Offenses of Malicious and Intentional Animal Cruelty.

This bill would increase the penalty for repeat animal cruelty offenses to a class C felony.

I strongly support this bill. I believe that there is no excuse or valid reason for intentional cruelty to animals. I would respectfully make one suggestion, which would involve slightly amending lines 10-12 to read: "while performing medical research according to approved protocols as an employee of, student in, or person associated with any hospital, educational institution, or laboratory".

My thanks to the Committee for raising this bill.

Representative Gail Lavielle
143rd district