



Testimony of  
Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director CT Votes for Animals  
Before the Joint Committee on the Environment  
In Support of SB 235, AAC Veterinary Reporting of Dogs Used in Animal Fighting  
March 14, 2022

Co-Chairs Senator Christine Cohen and Representative Joe Gresko, Vice Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Senator Miner and Representative Harding, Honorable Members of the Committee

CT Votes for Animals would like to thank the Environment Committee for raising SB235, AAC Veterinary Reporting of Dogs Used in Animal Fighting. I am Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director of CVA a grass roots animal advocacy organization representing almost 6,000 supporters in every district of the state.

Dog fighting is a cruel and insidious form of animal abuse. It should no longer come as a surprise that Connecticut has a history of dog fighting. The uncovering of a major dog fighting ring this fall in New York and Connecticut horrified many in the state. The months-long interstate investigation netted more than a dozen people and resulted in the rescue of about 100 dogs. Three Connecticut residents were among those arrested, and 15 dogs were rescued from Orange and Meriden. A law enforcement authority in New York's Suffolk County called this one of the "largest and most brutal dogfighting rings this county has ever seen."

Using animals to fight is a sadistic and horrific form of animal cruelty. It is a bloody "sport" in which animals are mutilated and killed while betting is taking place. In 2007, the country was shocked to learn of football player Michael Vick's animal fighting ring, in which tens of thousands of dollars exchanged hands while the dogs were tortured and killed.

Unfortunately, when it comes to prosecuting animal cruelty cases, Connecticut's track record is less than encouraging. According to a [2019 Office of Legislative Research report](#)<sup>1</sup>, there were 110 cases of animal fighting — typically dog and cock fighting — brought under Connecticut's animal cruelty statute from 2008 to 2018. Guilty verdicts were delivered in only 27 of the cases during that 10-year period; the remaining 83 cases were dismissed or dropped.

Raised bill 235 gives law enforcement one more tool to fight this crime. The bill requires veterinarians to report to local law enforcement information about dogs they treated and believe may have been used in animal fighting. By making this report the proposed law may not only

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<sup>1</sup> CT General Assembly, Office of Legislative Research *Connecticut's Animal Cruelty Laws*, Michelle Kirby, Senior Legislative Attorney September 13, 2019 | 2019-R-0196

save the dog treated but also other innocent dogs used in the dogfighting ring. Of necessity, the bill gives veterinarians protection from civil liability charges in making this report. The protection is fair and critical to the success of their involvement in reporting. A number of states have similar requirements and all that do provide immunity for good faith reporting. CVA recognizes this is not a simple requirement and there are both pros and cons to a mandate. The complexity is captured in a statement by the American Veterinary Medical Association “The AVMA encourages veterinarians to learn to recognize the signs of animal fighting, educate the public about the harm caused by animal fighting, and to collaborate with law enforcement with respect to recognition and enforcement of applicable laws.”

CT Votes for Animals once again thanks the Committee for raising SB 235. We believe raising the bill is an important first step and urge the Committee to keep an open dialogue moving forward.

Thank you,

*Jo-Anne Basile*

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