



Statement of
Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director
Connecticut Votes for Animals
Before the
Joint Committee on Planning and Development
In Support of HB 5170
An Act Concerning the Tethering and Sheltering of Dogs
February 25, 2022

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Cassano and Representative McCarthy-Vahey, Vice Chairs Senator Needleman and Representative Goupil, Ranking Senator Tony Hwang and Representative Joseph Zullo, distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Planning and Development. I am Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director of CT Votes for Animals, a grass roots animal advocacy organization representing over 5,500 supporters in almost legislative district in the state. CT Votes for Animal strongly supports HB 5170, An Act Concerning the Tethering and Sheltering of Dogs and urges the Committee to pass the bill.

The bill before you today will go a long way to resolving some of the unnecessary suffering experienced by dogs left outside during extreme weather conditions. As legislation which is humane for animals, reasonable for people and helpful to animal control officers, HB 5170 will allow Connecticut to catch up to many of its surrounding states in providing protective measures for dogs.

We know there are many situations across the state where dogs are left outside, either tethered or left to roam in the backyard regardless of the weather conditions 24 hours/day without any protection from the elements. Each time there's a winter storm, subfreezing temperatures, or days of extreme heat the news carries stories of dogs suffering outside. Due to the lack of appropriate laws Animal Control has been unable to take proactive action that both saves a dog in distress while educating the dog owner in better practices.

Connecticut has needed a statute that gives identifiable guidelines for a very long time. Currently, Animal Control Officers have Connecticut Gen. Stat. §53-247 – the state cruelty law – which criminalizes the failure to provide an animal in one's charge or custody with “proper food, drink or protection from the weather.” Charged with this offense brings with it a fine of not more than \$1,000 and/or up to one year in jail. No one – as you will learn today directly from Animal Control – wants the situation to rise to that level of action. This is why HB 5170 is such a critical tool for Animal Control Officers.

HB 5170 would provide earlier intervention on behalf of a dog by clarifying the obligations for the dog owner. The bill builds on the current tethering statute by adding continuous access to shelter if the dog is left outside for more than 15 minutes during weather advisories. It then clarifies what makes up adequate shelter removing much of the ambiguity which often creates problems yet providing sufficient flexibility for Animal Control Officer to use their best professional judgement. Specifically, the bill would clarify what constitutes adequate shelter in general (e.g., clean, dry, soundly constructed, adequately insulated/ventilated, safe from fire, provides access to drinkable water and light, etc.)

Lest anyone thinks this is a radical approach, I would recommend looking at how Connecticut stacks up to its surrounding states. According to the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) CT is solo among our neighboring states in failing to provide shelter and detailed requirements for dogs. HB 5170 would bring CT in line with our neighbors in specifying additional requirements, such as ventilation, sanitation, space, windbreaks, or bedding, etc.

CT Votes for Animals believes that enactment of HB 5170 is a common-sense enhancement that will mitigate against the horrific suffering inflicted on dogs such as BJ, a dog who froze to death in a Hartford backyard and the countless others that never make the news. Four years ago an almost identical bill overwhelming passed the House by a vote of 132 yea and with only 18 nay. For reasons having nothing to do with substance and everything to do with end of session rush the Senate had adjourned by the time the bill was brought over. It was truly a tragedy with significant consequences. CT Votes for Animals asks you to make up for that mistake now and move this bill forward so CT will have the necessary protections required for the humane treatment of dogs.

Thank you,

Jo-Anne Basile

Executive Director, Connecticut Votes for Animals
P.O. Box 1012, Bloomfield, CT
info@ctvotesforanimals.org