



Statement of

Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director

CT Votes for Animals

In Opposition as Drafted

HB 5215 AA Establishing a Task Force to Study the Epidemic of Domestic Dog Attacks  
in the State.

Before the Environment Committee

February 15, 2023

Co-Chairs Senator Lopes and Representative Gresko, Vice Chairs, Ranking Minority  
and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee

CT Votes for Animals is a grass roots animal advocacy organization. CVA is dedicated to improving and protecting the lives of all CT animals by championing legislative changes at the CT General Assembly and mobilizing animal supporters in every legislative district of the state.

CT Votes for Animals (CVA) is testifying on HB-5215: AA Establishing a Task Force to Study the Epidemic of Domestic Dog Attacks in the State. CVA wants to make clear that we are not opposed to the concept of a working group to look at improving the state's practices concerning dog attacks. We are interested in working with the Committee to ensure the task force composition will reflect those who have knowledge of dog behavior and are dedicated to the prevention of dog biting incidents. We do take great exception, however, at the title of the bill as it is untrue and prejudicial. As some on this committee will recall, we worked very hard in 2018 at finding a compromise to address the issue. While not perfect by any means, the 2018 bill as passed by the House had more balanced representation than found in HB 5215.

CT Votes for Animals is committed to the goal of safe and humane communities for people and dogs. However as drafted, HB 5215 disproportionately emphasizes consequences over ensuring appropriate behavioral changes of people and dogs at the outset. And the heavy concentration of law enforcement and other government interests also reflects an emphasis on post-dog bite process, rather than prevention. Missing, in

particular, are experts in dog behavior – knowledge of which is perhaps most critical to resolving problems of human-dog interaction – and only minimal representation accorded to those with knowledge of research on dog aggression and effective dangerous dog laws. Without the corresponding adjustments to the membership, a working group would be hard pressed to satisfy what should be the goal of preventing domestic dog attacks.

CVA recognizes the longstanding issues surrounding the state dog bite statute, Connecticut Gen. Stat. §22-358, and its failure to provide for the successful resolution of incidents involving aggressive dog behavior. CVA and others knowledgeable in dog behavior hope the Environment Committee leadership will make adjustments to the composition so that any recommendations will deliver long-needed due process to dog owners, protect dogs from needless suffering, and focus public resources on dogs who truly pose a threat to their communities.

It is my hope that the Environment Committee understands the need to make appropriate changes to find a solution that is science based and directed by experts in the field. However, without changes in composition, CVA will oppose HB 5215 as drafted. It is my hope the committee will not miss this opportunity to do the right thing in preventing dog bites in the state.