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March 8, 2024

Testimony of Susan Linker, Board Member, CT Votes for Animals  
To the Environment Committee

In Opposition to SB 196 AAC the Harvesting of Rabbits for the Local Food Supply  
In Support – if amended -- of SB 291 AAC the Sale of Certain Balloons  
In Support – if amended -- of SB 190 AAC the Use of Neonicotinoids

Senator Lopes, Representative Gresko, vice chairs, ranking members, and honorable members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony regarding three bills on behalf of CT Votes for Animals.

We strongly **oppose SB 196 AAC the Harvesting of Rabbits for the Local Food Supply**. Rabbits are loving, smart, sociable animals with unique personalities, which is why they have become one of our countries most popular and beloved pets.

The USDA does not include rabbits in its definition of livestock; therefore, they are not protected by their laws and regulations. This bill would result in thousands of these innocent creatures being subjected to some of the worst forms of cruelty of all farmed animals.

The reality of modern rabbit farming is barbaric and deplorable. There is no data to support an increased desire for rabbit meat in the U.S. and certainly not in CT, as evidenced in the past. Like dog meat in Asia, consumers are demanding that pets should not be killed for food.

Treating these family members with kindness and compassion is something that our society has thankfully been moving toward over the years. Most cosmetic companies no longer test on rabbits, many furriers no longer produce coats made from the pelts of rabbits, and laws have been passed that prohibit the sale of commercially bred rabbits in pet stores. Pet industry leaders like PetSmart and Petco no longer sell rabbits. A few years ago, when Whole Foods tried selling rabbit meat, vigorous public outcry resulted in the discontinuation of the sale of rabbit meat by Whole Foods and other stores.

A bill like this is a step backward in the humane treatment of these delightful companion animals. I strongly urge this committee to not support this bill.

Regarding **SB 291 AAC the Sale of Certain Balloons**, we **support** this bill to prohibit the sale of helium and lighter-than-air balloons that are not biodegradable. However, we ask you to **amend** the bill to also ban the release of these balloons. Birds, turtles, and other wildlife commonly mistake balloons for food. Once consumed, animals can choke or experience grave internal injuries, eventually leading to painful death. Many animals become entangled in balloon strings causing strangulation or rendering them unable to fly, move, or escape from

predators. Although balloons take only moments to release, they can take hundreds of years to biodegrade and remain a threat to wildlife for generations into the future. Please protect Connecticut's wildlife and amend this bill to ban the release of these balloons and take favorable action on SB 291 AAC the Sale of Certain Balloons.

Finally, regarding **SB 190 AAC the Use of Neonicotinoids**, we are grateful to the committee for hearing the public's concerns about the dangers of neonicotinoids (neonics) to Connecticut's birds, bees, wildlife, and people. However, **the bill as drafted is deficient and must be amended** to ban the non-agricultural use of neonics. An EPA study from May 2023 shows that the three most commonly-used neonics likely jeopardize the continued existence of over 200 threatened and endangered species – or about 11% of the entire endangered species list<sup>1</sup>. New York just banned non-agricultural uses of neonics and most neonic-treated seed. Ten states have some restrictions already in place, and most neonic uses are banned in Europe and parts of Canada. It's time for Connecticut to do the same. Please substitute the language from last year's SB 963 which was approved by both the Environment Committee and the Appropriations Committee.

Thank you for your time and consideration to our concerns on these important issues.

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<sup>1</sup> EPA, 2023; <https://www.epa.gov/pesticides/epa-takes-next-step-endangered-species-act-review-three-neonicotinoids>



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Testimony to the Environment Committee

In Support – if amended -- of SB 190 AAC the Use of Neonicotinoids

In Opposition to SB 196 AAC the Harvesting of Rabbits for the Local Food Supply

In Support – if amended -- of SB 291 AAC the Sale of Certain Balloons

Colette Griffin, Board Chair

Good morning, Senator Lopes, Representative Gresko, vice chairs, ranking members, and honorable members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today regarding three bills on behalf of CT Votes for Animals. We are a grass-roots advocacy organization dedicated to improving the lives of Connecticut's animals, with 8,000 supporters across the state. This written testimony addresses three bills on your agenda today that impact Connecticut's animals.

First, regarding **SB 190 AAC the Use of Neonicotinoids**, we are grateful to the committee for hearing the public's concerns about the dangers of neonicotinoids (neonics) to Connecticut's birds, bees, wildlife, and people. However, **the bill as drafted is deficient and must be amended** to ban the non-agricultural use of neonics. An EPA study from May 2023 shows that the three most commonly-used neonics likely jeopardize the continued existence of over 200 threatened and endangered species – or about 11% of the entire endangered species list<sup>1</sup>. New York just banned non-agricultural uses of neonics and most neonic-treated seed. Ten states have some restrictions already in place, and most neonic uses are banned in Europe and parts of Canada. It's time for Connecticut to do the same. Please substitute the language from last year's SB 963 which was approved by both the Environment Committee and the Appropriations Committee and effectively eliminates non-agricultural use of neonicotinoids.

Second, we strongly **oppose SB 196 AAC the Harvesting of Rabbits for the Local Food Supply**. Rabbits are intelligent, gentle, and curious animals and are the third most common family pet after dogs and cats. Rabbits are beloved companion animals in Connecticut and most state residents would be aghast to think that their elected officials would facilitate the slaughter of these lovely animals.

The USDA does not include rabbits in its definition of livestock; therefore, they are not protected by their laws and regulations. The dual categorization of rabbits as both companion animals and animals raised for food leaves rabbits raised for meat unprotected and the industry unregulated. With little oversight, rabbits raised for slaughter are unlikely to receive any humane treatment.

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<sup>1</sup> EPA, 2023; <https://www.epa.gov/pesticides/epa-takes-next-step-endangered-species-act-review-three-neonicotinoids>

Because of people's love for these animals, the multi-billion-dollar cosmetic industry has moved away from using rabbits in testing programs in response to consumer demand. Likewise, Whole Foods market attempted to sell rabbit meat and immediately dropped it within a year due to complaints from customers. Like dog meat in Asia, consumers are demanding that pets should not be killed for food.

On behalf of CT Votes for Animals, and animal lovers across the state, we urge to support these beautiful and beloved bunnies and take no further action on SB 196.

Finally, regarding **SB 291 AAC the Sale of Certain Balloons**, we **support** this bill to prohibit the sale of helium and lighter-than-air balloons that are not biodegradable. However, we ask you to **amend** the bill to also ban the release of these balloons. Birds, turtles, and other wildlife commonly mistake balloons for food. Once consumed, animals can choke or experience grave internal injuries, eventually leading to painful death. Many animals become entangled in balloon strings causing strangulation or rendering them unable to fly, move, or escape from predators. Although balloons take only moments to release, they can take hundreds of years to biodegrade and remain a threat to wildlife for generations into the future. Please protect Connecticut's wildlife and amend this bill to ban the release of these balloons and take favorable action on SB 291 AAC the Sale of Certain Balloons.

In summary, we (1) **support, if amended, SB 190 AAC the Use of Neonicotinoids** and ask you to substitute language from last year's SB 193, (2) **strongly oppose SB 196 AAC the Harvesting of Rabbits for the Local Food Supply** and ask you to take no further action on this bill, and (3) **support, if amended, SB 291 AAC the Sale of Certain Balloons** and ask you to take favorable action on this bill and.

Thank you for considering our positions, we would be happy to address any questions that you have.

March 7, 2024

Re: SB 190 – An Act Concerning the Use of Neonicotinoids

Dear Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

My name is Andrea Dobras and I am a Connecticut resident and Connecticut for Animals Education Fund Board Member . I strongly urge you to **oppose** SB 190 – An Act Concerning the Use of Neonicotinoids ***as it is currently written*** .

The wording from last year’s bill should be reinstated to ban the non-agricultural use of neonics. The bill should provide specifics about how and when neonics can be used to save trees under attack from invasive insects and ban their use on other trees and shrubs.

Thank you for your consideration .

Sincerely,

Andrea Dobras  
Secretary/Board Member, Connecticut For Animals Education Fund  
116 Morgan Avenue, East Haven, CT 06512

**Name:** Andrea Kerin

**Title:** Wildlife & Environ. Advocate

**Organization or Agency:**

**Topic:** SB00190 - AAC THE USE OF NEONICOTINOIDS.  
Supports

**Testimony:**

I support SB 190 only with the amendment that restores the language from last year's bill SB 963 which was approved by both the Environment and Appropriations Committees AND effectively eliminated non-agricultural use of neonicotinoids.

I oppose SB 190 as written because it does not accomplish the stated goal of reducing non-agricultural use of neonics. In fact, SB 190 fails to add any protections that aren't already in place. It's useless.

Sincerely,

Andrea Kerin

## **Environment Public Hearing 3-8-24**

Testimony of Karen Laski – Board Member- CT Votes for Animals

SB 190 – An Act Concerning the Use of Neonicotinoids - Oppose (as written)

Good Afternoon Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

My name is Karen Laski. I'm a long-time advocate for animals and serve on the Board of CT Votes for Animals.

**We oppose the ban on Neonicotinoids SB 190 (as currently written).** This poison seems to be found in many places, our water, local stream and rivers. Much is in our drinking water and a high percent in our own bodies and the bodies of birds, mammals and pollinators.

We don't want our food and water contaminated since the poisons of Neonicotinoids can cause severe neurological damage. Parkinson's disease is thought to arise from pesticides. My Dad died of Parkinson's and when he was first diagnosed, the doctor asked if had ever worked on a farm. My father answered yes, when he was young. The doctor said, "yes, pesticides."

To protect bees and the health of children and all Americans, we must switch from the extensive use of chemical pesticides.

We ask that the wording from last year's bill be re-instated to ban the non-agricultural use of Neonicotinoids.

Thank you,

Karen Laski

Glastonbury