



TESTIMONY OF  
JO-ANNE BASILE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
CT VOTES FOR ANIMALS  
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE on JUDICIARY  
IN SUPPPORT OF SB 1060

March 1, 2023

Co-Chairs Senator Winfield and Representative Stafstrom, Vice Chairs Senator Flexer and Representative Quinn, Ranking Senator Kissel and Representative Fishbein, Honorable Members of the Judiciary 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 strongly supports passage of SB1060, AAC the Appointment of an Advocate in Proceedings Concerning the Welfare or Custody of Animals.

It was almost 7 years to the month that this committee would embark on groundbreaking legislation and enter into uncharted territory to protect the interests of animals and ultimately make the world a safer place for both animals and humans. Guided by two super architects, then State Representative Diana Urban and UConn law professor Jessica Rubin the court advocate program was founded on the belief that crimes against animals must be taken more seriously. The research was indisputable linking abuse to animals and abuse to humans, especially spousal abuse. In fact, CT's court advocate program was named after a dog, Desmond, who was starved and brutally beaten to death for retaliation in a domestic dispute.

Fast forward to today, the program has been adopted in Maine and there is active legislative debate for a program in four other states. Much has been written on the program and scholarly research will be published shortly. CT's court advocate program involves more than 15 pro bono private practice attorneys plus UConn's Animal Law clinic and students who provide the legal power for cruelty cases involving cats and

dogs. A group of dedicated volunteers, called Desmond's Army, attends about 40 court cases per month standing witness to crimes against animals.

Throughout the seven years what is evident, and now can be demonstrated, is that there is a need to extend the court advocate program to all animals. What the pro bono attorneys and Desmond's Army have seen is an increase in horrific cruelty cases against many different types of animals. There have been cases of wild rabbits shot multiple times with a bb gun and then tortured to death, horses left to starve, over 100 goats living in deplorable conditions, a pet rabbit tortured by cutting off its legs while dangling in the hands of a human, flocks of geese intentionally mowed down by a car. These are violent crimes; these are the types of crimes researchers look at when describing the link between crimes against animals and crimes against people, oftentimes the most vulnerable of people.

CT Votes for Animals believes that these cases deserve an advocate in the courtroom in the interest of justice. SB 1060 makes no changes in the current law except to include all animals. In extending the law from dogs and cats to all animals, we want to make several points clear:

- SB 1060 will not change which animals are covered under CT's cruelty statutes;
- CT's cruelty statutes apply to all animals, domestic, farm and wildlife.
- The Court Advocate program remains a permissive program. SB 1060 does not change the judges' discretionary authority to appoint advocates.
- Cruelty cases that come before the Courts are sufficiently heinous and never frivolous or without merit.
- Given the severity of the cases, the presence of a court advocate can facilitate better outcomes overall in the interest of justice.

In closing I would like to dedicate our effort today to former State Representative Diana Urban. I know she wanted to be here but because of extenuating circumstances was unable to do so.

Desmond's Law is an exceptional program and one which should make CT lawmakers proud. CT Votes for Animals urges the Committee to continue its support and pass HB 1060.

Thank you for your consideration.

*Jo-Anne Basile*

Executive Director  
CT Votes for Animals  
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**Name:** Karen Laski

**Title:** Advisory Board Member

**Organization or Agency:** CT Votes for Animals

**Topic:** SB01060 - AAC THE APPOINTMENT OF AN ADVOCATE IN PROCEEDINGS CONCERNING...

Supports

**Testimony:**

Honorable Judiciary Committee Members,

I strongly support the expansion of Court Advocacy for Animals in Proceedings for Animal Welfare SB 1060. So many times cruelty cases are dismissed. We will induce more compassion in CT by passing this bill. I also support House Bill 6714 An Act Concerning Cruelty to Animals for the same reasons.

Thank you,

Karen Laski



**DESMOND'S ARMY**  
Animal Law Advocates

**Testimony of Linda Pleva**  
**Vice President, Desmond's Army Animal Law Advocates**

**In support of**

Senate Bill 1060 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE APPOINTMENT OF AN  
ADVOCATE IN PROCEEDINGS CONCERNING THE WELFARE OR  
CUSTODY OF ANIMALS

before the Judiciary Committee  
March 1, 2023

Co-Chairs Winfield and Stafstrom, Vice Chairs, Ranking Members and  
Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee

My name is Linda Pleva. I am the Vice President of Desmond's Army  
Animal Law Advocates and also the Community Engagement Coordinator  
for Connecticut Votes for Animals and I care about ALL animals.

As a member of Desmond's Army, I attend many court proceedings of  
people who are charged with Cruelty to Animals. Members of Desmond's  
Army attend approximately 45-55 animal abuse cases in court throughout  
CT every month. Many of these involve the abuse of animals that are not  
cats or dogs.

I believe that ALL animals feel pain and suffering. A horse feels the same  
pain from starvation and neglect as a dog would feel. A rabbit hurts as  
deeply as a cat would from having its limbs severed with scissors. A goat  
would feel and suffer the same pain as a dog would if it were kicked  
repeatedly in the ribs. This should not be about the type of animal being  
abused, but rather about the abuse inflicted on them by humans.

I have been in the courtroom and have watched judges struggle with the  
dilemma of wanting to but not being able to appoint an advocate in a case  
involving cruelty to an animal that is not a cat or a dog.

I have also been in courtrooms during an advocate's statement describing  
the abuse of an animal at the hands of his abuser. I have heard the  
absolute silence of the gallery as they listened to the horrors. I have seen  
the tears in their eyes during the statement and have heard the anger in  
their voices afterwards. People care about animals.

It is important to identify, through thorough, complete and fair prosecutions, people who abuse animals. As we know, there is a direct link between animal abuse and other forms of violence ... domestic violence, child abuse and elder abuse; in fact many mass shooters, school shooters and serial killers have a history of abusing animals. Animal cruelty is considered a gateway crime and a red flag to potential future violent behavior. It is not limited to only dogs and cats and therefore all animal victims of abuse should be entitled to the benefit of an advocate.

Allowing our judges to appoint an advocate on animal cruelty cases, no matter the type of animal, is a much needed step in protecting them and in turn protecting people.

Thank you