



Statement of  
Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director  
CT Votes for Animals  
In Opposition to  
SB1069 Revisions to Certain Domestic Animal Related Statutes  
Before the Environment Committee  
February 27, 2023

Co-Chairs Senator Lopes and Representative Gresko, Vice Chairs Senator Hochadel and Representative Palm, Ranking Senator Harding and Representative Callahan, 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 is opposed to certain sections contained in SB 1069. Specifically, CVA is opposed to changes in the definition of “animal” because it diminishes protection for some of CT’s most vulnerable animals, undermines the commitment of our ACOs to protect animals, fails what our town residents expect from their state and potentially establishes a precedent that will unravel our animal cruelty statutes. Significantly, it is a cruel and inhumane approach to addressing CT’s wildlife, community cat populations and other animals. CVA also opposes changes to the seizure provisions shown on lines 57-59 in HB 1069.

Animal control officers are the first responders for animal related issues in their communities...any type of animal. They are the town’s “boots on the ground” whenever it comes to matters concerning animals. It is who the community relies on and who provides serves expected by town citizens. Removing the ability of ACOs to intervene in possible acts of cruelty against wildlife, certain birds, reptiles and community cats is abhorrent. It is unrealistic to believe that DEEP has the staff or ability to intervene in a timely fashion for 169 towns. By their own admission, DEEP is short staffed. This extra burden on DEEP by the Department of Agriculture’s proposal would mean staff would fail at their duties and animals would suffer. DEEP and ACOs frequently collaborate when necessary regarding wildlife and other non-traditional animals. I’ve seen this

firsthand in my own town when a neighbor was reported torturing birds. First on the scene and the initial investigation was local animal control and later addressed by DEEP. ACOs are a part of their community, a resource the community depends on. The system currently in place which relies on local animal control works well and should be continued.

Secondly, I am concerned about the confusion created when “cruelty” is defined differently depending on the section of the law. Section 53-247 is the primary criminal cruelty statute. The definition of animal in this statute encompasses all animals, domestic and wildlife. ACOs, sometimes police, are the officials responsible for charging under Sec.53-247. Yet as proposed under SB 1069, ACOs are restricted from intervening in cruelty attempts under 22-327. The proposed change creates confusion and portends badly for what could be future proposals to change the definition of animal found in other parts of CT’s statutes. The proposed bill is treading into unknown territory with possible far-reaching implications and certainly a dramatic policy shift in how CT cares for all its animals.

Lastly, SB 1069 will add an additional option to the forfeiture provisions used when animal cruelty charges are made. Under SB 1069 animal owners charged with cruelty will have the additional option for “an order to compel the owner to provide care in a manner that the court determines necessary.” Cruelty charges are serious actions and forfeiture of animals is done to remove animals from a dangerous situation. It is frequently the only tool available to provide immediate protection for the animals while the case is under investigation. Given the severity of these cases, there is no reason to believe keeping animals with the owners charged with cruelty will ensure their safety and needed protection.

CT Votes for Animals believes the DOAG’s proposals noted above are short sighted, not well thought out and certainly not in the best interests of CT’s animals. CVA strongly urges the Committee to strike the Department’s proposed changes reflected in SB1069.

Thank you for your consideration.



Testimony from Susan B. Linker

Board Chair CT Votes for Animals and Chief Executive Officer, Our Companions Animal  
Rescue

Testimony in Opposition of SB1069- AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO CERTAIN DOMESTIC  
ANIMAL RELATED STATUTES.

Dear Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

This bill has a provision to redefine "animal" in a way that would remove all wildlife and community cats from the definition of "animal" and would interfere with an animal control officer's (ACO's) ability to prevent cruelty to wildlife and community cats. This could restrict ACO's ability from working with wildlife and community cats.

Such a change would create considerable statutory vagueness and confusion, especially for ACOs, who would have to navigate different definitions of "animal" in different sections of law.

This would also weaken our state's cross reporting law by preventing ACOs from reporting cases of cruelty to wildlife to the Department of Children and Families.

Please do not allow this bill to move forward as it would have negative consequences on wildlife and other animals who all deserve protection and compassion.

**Name:** Christine Kaminski

**Title:**

**Organization or Agency:**

**Topic:** SB01069 - AAC REVISIONS TO CERTAIN DOMESTIC ANIMAL RELATED STATUTES.

Opposes

**Testimony:**

Dear Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

I care about animals and I vote. I am writing today in opposition to two bills being heard at the public hearing being held on Monday, Feb. 27, 2023.

1. Please OPPOSE HB 6726, An Act Concerning the Regulation of Livestock and Certain Rabbit Processing Facilities.

I do not want to see my tax dollars used to promote the killing of rabbits. Please remove Section 27, Lines 797-811. Rabbits are wonderful animals—smart and sociable with unique personalities—and are also popular household pets. Please keep in mind that due to public demand, many 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 disallow sale of commercially bred rabbits in pet stores. Industry leaders 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. Another concern is that if passed, HB 5263 may exacerbate spread of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease (RHDV), a highly transmissible and fatal disease for wild and domestic rabbits that is spreading across the country. In light of the emerging viral threats that jump the species barrier from animals to humans, Connecticut's Department of Agriculture should instead be promoting plant-based markets, including expansion and innovation of plant-based proteins (and eventually cultivated meat), to ensure a greater availability of more diverse, safe, and dependable protein sources.

2. Please OPPOSE SB 1069, An Act Concerning Revisions to Certain Domestic Animal-Related Statutes. This bill has an absurd provision (Section 1, lines 4-10) to redefine "animal" in a way that would remove all wildlife and community cats from the definition of "animal" and would interfere with an animal control officer's (ACO's) ability to prevent cruelty to wildlife and community cats. Such a change would create considerable statutory vagueness and confusion, especially for ACOs, who would have to navigate different definitions of "animal" in different sections of law. Further, it would weaken our state's cross reporting law by preventing ACOs from reporting cases of cruelty to wildlife to the Dept of Children and Families, and thus compromise the state's ability to intervene in cases of animal abuse, domestic violence, and other forms of violence.

Thank you,

Christine Kaminski

449 Ezra St

Bridgeport, CT 06606

**Name:** Andrea Kerin

**Title:** Connecticut Resident

**Organization or Agency:**

**Topic:** SB01069 - AAC REVISIONS TO CERTAIN DOMESTIC ANIMAL RELATED STATUTES.

Opposes

**Testimony:**

I am writing to Oppose SB 1069, An Act Concerning Revisions To Certain Domestic Animal Related Statutes.

This bill would remove wildlife, and likely community cats, from the definition of ‘animal’. Local ACOs are the first responders to wild and domestic animal crises in their communities. If this bill passes they would no longer be able to help injured wildlife nor put suffering wildlife out of its misery. The DEEP would not be able to step into the vacuum this definition change would create as they are understaffed for their currently responsibilities. This bill, if passed, would increase animal suffering in our state. Please oppose the definition change of animals contained in SB 1069.

Sincerely,

Andrea Kerin