



**TESTIMONY OF
JO-ANNE BASILE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CT VOTES FOR ANIMALS
BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE on ENVIRONMENT
IN OPPOSITION TO HB 6726
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

I am Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director of CT Votes for Animals, a grass roots animal advocacy organization with members in every legislative district in the State. On behalf of CVA's supporters I am expressing our strong opposition to Section 27 in HB 6726 concerning the processing of rabbits for food consumption.

I am appalled, as are most animal lovers in CT, that as the country recognizes the elevated role rabbits play as household pets, Connecticut's Department once again proposes to initiate a program that will expedite killing and processing of rabbits for food. If passed the legislature's action will institute a factory-farming like business in CT killing thousands of rabbits annually. While a small minority of the population may choose to eat rabbit meat, instituting a plan of this size and scope will put CT agriculture policy out of touch with the State's general population.

The status of rabbits has changed significantly over time. They now represent one of the 3 most common household pets after dogs and cats. Rabbits are always included in efforts to stop the sale of companion animals in pet stores. Understand that many of the rabbits slaughtered are the same breed of rabbits kept as pets. Because of their role as family pets, industry leaders like Petco and PetSmart no longer sell rabbits; instead stores include rabbits in their adoption programs along with cats and dogs. The multi-billion-dollar cosmetic industry has rapidly moved away from using rabbits in testing programs due to consumer demand. Whole Foods market attempted to sell rabbit meat and immediately stopped it within a year due to complaints from customers. Further the Department of Agriculture does not have the capacity to successfully monitor new

agricultural practices. With little oversight, rabbits are unlikely to receive any humane protections. From our experience DOAG appears overloaded with animal cruelty complaints and we suggest they address existing work before venturing into new areas.

Lastly and importantly, the Department made two unsuccessful attempts to institute this slaughter last year in both the Environment Committee and in Commerce both efforts were resoundingly defeated. Perhaps DOAG thought by burying it within this larger bill it could skate by as just another agricultural commodity. People in CT are smarter than that. They didn't want it last year and they don't want it this year or ever.

On behalf of all CT Votes for Animals' voters we urge you to remove Sec.27 concerning rabbit processing from HB 6726 and if not, to vote no on the entire bill.

Thank you,

Jo-Anne Basile

PO Box 1012, Bloomfield CT 06002
info@ctvotesforanimals.org



Testimony from Susan B. Linker

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

Testimony in Opposition of HB 6726- AN ACT CONCERNING THE REGULATION OF LIVESTOCK AND CERTAIN RABBIT PROCESSING FACILITIES.

Dear Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

On behalf of our members representing residents across the State of Connecticut, we thank you for the opportunity to express our strong opposition for this piece of legislation.

I was dismayed, and frankly disgusted, when I learned this bill is being raised again this session. As a charitable organization that rescues, rehabilitates and adopts rabbits each year, I can assure you that rabbits are loving, smart, sociable animals with unique personalities, which is why they have become one of our countries most popular and beloved pets.

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 human treatment of these delightful companion animals. I strongly urge this committee to not support this bill.

Name: Christine Kaminski

Title:

Organization or Agency:

Topic: HB06726 - AAC THE REGULATION OF LIVESTOCK AND CERTAIN RABBIT PROCESSIN...

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: HB06726 - AAC THE REGULATION OF LIVESTOCK AND CERTAIN RABBIT PROCESSIN...

Opposes

Testimony:

Dear Honorable Members of the Environment Committee

I oppose HB 6726, An Act Concerning The Regulation Of Livestock And Certain Rabbit Processing Facilities.

This bill would create factory-like farming of rabbits for meat production. Rabbits are the third most popular companion animal today. A similar bill was proposed last year and defeated by two committees. Please delete section 27 of HB 6726 concerning rabbit slaughter or oppose the bill in its entirety.

Marlene Wilhelm, AS in Criminal Justice
House Rabbit Connection, Inc. – President
House Rabbit Society – Educator, Chapter Manager
CT Votes for Animals – Advisory Committee
Desmond’s Army – Member

February 27, 2023

I am a registered voter in CT, I pay CT taxes, and have been a lifelong resident of this state for 65+ years.

Opposition to HB 6726

#1 many of you on the panel own dogs, cats, and yes, even bunnies from what I saw in the Concourse several years ago. It was plain to see you adore your furry family members.

Rabbits are the 3rd most popular companion animal right behind cats & dogs.

Since 2000 rabbits as indoor pets have seen a surge from 23% - 41% in homes.

People who own rabbits as pets, as I do, adore their antics (as soon as my Dutch bunny, Gabriel, heard the theme music to JEOPARDY he’d race into the family room, position himself on the couch next to my husband, and insist on being pet for the entire show).

Rabbits live indoors with their human family and other pets. Most are litter box trained, house broken, are opinionated, and have wonderful personalities.

Just as you would deplore the thought of your beloved pet being served for Sunday dinner, bunny owners would deplore it as well.

#2. Confusion

In the last several years we have seen a rise in laws protecting the welfare of bunnies. Several states and many cities have added rabbits to their existing bills to prevent pet stores from sourcing their pets from not only puppy and kitty mills but also rabbit mills. NY recently passed a state-wide ban on commercially bred cats, dogs, and rabbits. Kudos to NY!

Many major cosmetics companies have pledged to go cruelty-free and no longer test their cosmetics on rabbits.

Many major fashion houses have gone fur-free!

In this same house we have bills that have included rabbits to safe guard their well-being.

Great strides have been made on behalf of many animals including rabbits.

Why turn the clock back centuries to promote the slaughter of rabbits for food? The fact is the public is demanding alternative protein for a variety of reasons.

#3. Whole Foods started a pilot program in 2014 to offer rabbit meat in their cases.

However there was an immediate backlash from organizations and individuals (1)

“Whole Foods decided to stop selling rabbit meat after poor sales, animal welfare concerns, and protests from groups squeamish over meat obtained from animals commonly kept as pets.”

#4. There is no such thing as “humane slaughter”.

Having interned with CSP Troop H in and East Hartford Police Department in their Evidence Department I can testify their is definitely “a smell of death” that is triggered almost immediately after death occurs.

All animals, even fish, are sensitive to these scents. The "smell of death" is said to consist of more than 400 volatile organic compounds produced by bacteria which break down tissues in the body into gases and salts. ... Our sense of smell relies on the detection of airborne molecules.

Animals going to slaughter are very aware of this phenomenon and react with tremendous fear (you can see it in their eyes), increased heart rate etc. They will fight with everything they have to escape with their lives ie. The bull who escaped from the Bloomfield slaughter, Saba Live Animals, on Granby Street only to be tracked down across the street and slaughtered in plain-view with a machete.

Please read the following article about slaughterhouses, it's employees, and the emotional toll it takes on both animals and humans.

<https://thehumaneleague.org/article/slaughterhouses> (2)

5. The demand from the public for more plant based foods and products continues to increase. Many restaurants now carry a variety of plant based food. (3,4)

In a recent study conducted by [FoodIngredients1st](#) (5) in December 2022 Vladimir Mićković, co-founder and CBO of vegan 'meat' start-up Juicy Marbles, and Nestlé states "the environmental angle often overshadows the fact that our reliance on animal protein is causing a humanitarian crisis. If a food system's role is to properly feed people, it's doing a poor job. We use 80% of the food we grow for feeding livestock and get 17% of global calories in return."

1. https://www.globalmeatnews.com/Article/2015/09/21/Whole-Foods-Market-halts-sale-of-rabbit?utm_source=copyright&utm_medium=OnSite&utm_campaign=copyright
2. <https://thehumaneleague.org/article/slaughterhouses>.
3. <https://www.ctvisit.com/articles/plant-based-connecticut>
4. <https://www.womenshealthmag.com/food/g29609221/vegan-friendly-restaurants/>
5. <https://m.foodingredientsfirst.com/news/alt-meat-players-reveal-growing-demand-for-plant-based-festive-options.html>

As you can see from the above links today's society has shown they are not willing to tolerate animal cruelty or exploitation in any form. Instead, "***they are choosing more plant-based options for a variety of reasons, including health, environmental and animal welfare concerns,***" according to Vladimir Mićković.

All animals are sentient beings that deserve to live out their lives in a safe, humane environment.

Keep rabbits off CT dinner plates.

Regards,

Marlene Wilhelm
President
House Rabbit Connection, Inc.

House Rabbit Society Educator
House Rabbit Society Chapter Manager
Hopline.org
Marlene@hopline.org

“Never, never be afraid to do what's right, especially if the well-being of a person or animal is at stake. Society's punishments are small compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul when we look the other way.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.

Sent from my iPad