

Planning and Development Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-5170

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING THE TETHERING AND SHELTERING OF DOGS.

Vote Date: 3/11/2022

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/25/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Planning and Development Committee
Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.
Rep. Laura M. Devlin, 134th Dist.
Rep. Nicole Klarides-Ditria, 105th Dist.
Rep. Tammy Nuccio, 53rd Dist.
Rep. Kathy Kennedy, 119th Dist.
Rep. Kathleen M. McCarty, 38th Dist.
Sen. Heather S. Somers, 18th Dist.
Rep. Joseph H. Zullo, 99th Dist.
Rep. Anne M. Hughes, 135th Dist.
Rep. Tom Delnicki, 14th Dist.
Rep. Charles J. Ferraro, 117th Dist.
Rep. Michael A. Winkler, 56th Dist.
Rep. Susan M. Johnson, 49th Dist.
Rep. Jennifer Leeper, 132nd Dist.
Rep. Cara Christine Pavalock-D'Amato, 77th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This legislation clarifies the definition of “adequate shelter” for dogs and creates additional guidelines regarding the tethering of dogs. The purpose of this legislation is to provide greater protection and increase safety for dogs that are kept outside by owners.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Bryan P. Hulburt, Commissioner, Department of Agriculture: The Commissioner submitted testimony in support of the bill with changes. He recommended that a weather

advisory, as described in Line 38, be defined only as those issued by the National Weather Service. He also requested that the line “in a manner that places such dog at adverse risk of injury by another animals’ in Section 1 (a)(2) be removed because it is too broad.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Rep. Laura M. Devlin, 134th Dist.: Rep. Devlin is a cosponsor of this bill. She believes strengthening current statutes regarding tethering and clarifying the definition of adequate shelter will better protect dogs from wildlife and prevent dogs from suffering in extreme weather. She also added a clarification that the bill does not target residents who keep sporting or working dogs and is meant only to hold irresponsible dog owners to account.

Rep. Nicole Klarides-Ditria, 105th Dist.: Rep. Klarides-Ditria is a cosponsor of this bill. She submitted testimony requesting statutory language changes in accordance with recommendations from Animal Control Officers (ACOs). She asks that ACOs be given the necessary enforcement powers to combat irresponsible dog owners.

Brenda Kupchick, First Selectwoman, Town of Fairfield: First Selectwoman Kupchick is a former state representative who has supported and advocated for similar bills in previous legislative sessions. She believes this bill will empower police and ACOs to coordinate a response when a dog’s wellbeing has been compromised due to neglect. She advocated that dogs will be better protected from abuse if ACOs are able to determine whether a dog is receiving considerate care.

Peter Reid, Animal Control Officer, Towns of Westport and Weston: Officer Reid argued that the current enforcement provisions need to be improved. He requested changes to verbiage about “weather advisories” and “outdoor environmental conditions” due to their vagueness. He also requested minimum and maximum guidelines for tethering, 40 degrees Fahrenheit and 90 degrees Fahrenheit respectively. He believes set temperature standards would make it difficult for violators to challenge in court.

Several animal welfare organizations submitted testimony in support of the bill. These organizations argued that current statutes do not go far enough to protect the well-being of dogs kept outside for extended periods of time. These organizations appreciated language that distinguishes between different breeds of dogs and sets standards accordingly. For example, Stacey Ober from the American Kennel Club stated in her testimony “What is ideal for a Chihuahua is very different than the needs and tolerances of a Saint Bernard”. These organizations believe this bill will better equip ACOs to enforce sheltering and tethering regulations. They also argued this bill will bring Connecticut closer to the standards several other states have set regarding this issue.

1. Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director, Connecticut Votes for Animals
2. Laura Burban, Dan Cosgrove Animal Shelter
3. Andrea Dobras, Board Chair, Connecticut Votes for Animals
4. Annie Hornish, Connecticut Senior State Director, Humane Society of the United States
5. Karen Laski, Board Member, Connecticut Votes for Animals
6. Susan Linker, CEO, Our Companions Animal Rescue
7. Julie Loparo, Westport Animal Shelter Advocates

8. Laurie Maulucci, President, Connecticut Association of Dog Clubs and Responsible Dog Owners
9. Stacey Ober, Legislative Analyst, American Kennel Club

In addition, 46 constituents submitted testimony in support of the legislation. Several of them are dog owners themselves or are volunteers who have worked at animal shelters and animal rehabilitative organizations. They argued that this legislation is overdue and that current animal welfare laws are inadequate. They also argued for giving ACOs enforcement mechanisms to prevent abusive situations from escalating even more.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Carol Phelps, constituent: The speaker appreciates the bill in principle; however, they believe the bill is too broad to solve the issue of sheltering and tethering dogs. They are in favor of using current animal cruelty laws to protect the welfare of dogs but hold that this bill could be detrimental to some dogs and owners.

Reported by: Glenn Prushinski

Date: March 21, 2022