

**PA13-99**

HB5836

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**JOINT  
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**2013**

the university needs to be on the table and held accountable for community use of resources.

REP. GENTILE: Thank you, sir. Amy Harrell followed by Susan Linker followed by Karen Laski

AMY HARRELL: Good afternoon. My name is Amy Harrell. I'm the president of Connecticut Votes for Animals and a resident of Vernon, Connecticut. I'd like to thank the Members of the Environment Committee and Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, for the opportunity to testify today in support of three bills, House Bill 5844, 5836, and 5027.

Concerning 5027 on prohibiting the sale of pets from animal mills, some of the most egregious animal cruelty offenders can be found inside the puppy mill industry which supplies Connecticut pet stores with animals. There are far more humane options for families who would like to have a puppy, including rescue organizations, shelters, and responsible breeders.

I fully support the complete prohibition on the sale of commercially bred dogs, cats, and rabbits in Connecticut's 18 pet stores as Representative Kupchick and Senator McKinney intend to amend. They discussed that this morning.

Concerning House Bill 5836 on the expansion of the Animal Population Control Program, the main goal of this bill is to further enhance and protect the ACP program by helping to ensure that money in the account actually goes toward its intended purpose. The ACP account is well funded not through taxes but through

dog license and pound adoption fees and sales of the Caring For Pets license plates.

The account has recently been offering with an annual surplus, and the extra accumulation of funds have been switched twice resulting in over \$1 million diverted to other state budget lines. A portion of this diverted money was specifically donated by Connecticut citizens who bought the Caring For Pets plates because they believed they were helping with the pet overpopulation problem.

I believe an account sweep of this magnitude is unconscionable. We are proposing modest expansions and benefits to the low-income program of the APCP which largely mirror the Department of Agriculture's own recommendations according to their recent annual reports.

Concerning House Bill 5844, the tethering of dogs, I have spoken with numerous animal control officers in recent months. There is unanimous agreement that the current dog tethering statutes are not yet concrete enough to give chained dogs the protection they need. While there are solid restrictions regarding the manner in which dogs may be chained, there is no enforceable language that addresses the length of time a dog may be chained.

House Bill 5844 would prohibit chaining at night between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Dogs are highly social creatures. The last thing they want is to be alone outside and in the dark, nor do they want to be outside in severe cold or heat, hence we propose to also restrict tethering when the temperature reaches above 90 or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

REP. ZIOBRON: Yep.

REP. GENTILE: Thank you. Any additional questions? Thank you, Amy.

AMY HARRELL: Thank you.

REP. GENTILE: Susan Linker followed by Karen Laski.

SUSAN LINKER: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify. My name is Susan Linker. I am the CEO of Our Companions Animal Rescue. I'm also a member of Connecticut Votes for Animals. I'm here today to testify on three bills, House Bill 5836, which is the APCP bill, 5844, which is the tethering bill, and 5027, which is the pet shop bill.

First, with respect to 5836, the Connecticut's Animal Population Control Program in the past 19 years has done remarkable things for animals. And one of the concerns that we've brought over the years is the fact that there is a surplus of funds that aren't being used for the intended purpose, so much, so much money just sitting out there that about a million dollars has been stolen, swept out of this fund, and allocated elsewhere to make up for deficits in other areas.

This is a state program that by statute was designed for the sterilization of pets, for animals adopted from municipal pounds, for feral cats, and for the pets of those who are defined as low income who can't afford to screen their animals. And to have close to a million dollars taken out really indicates that this is an area that we need to address.

The Department of Agriculture, in the last two or three years in their own report, has

established that they want to allocate more funds for the low-income program and specifically to expand the, basically the redemption value of the vouchers, which is the mechanism for getting the money to get the animals spayed and neutered.

So our bill is in line with those proposals on the Department of Agriculture to raise the low income amount from ten percent to 20 percent and to increase the benefits for those people who can't afford to spay or neuter their pets.

And particularly with the economy the way that it is, rescue organizations and people who are in the rescue business really have an interest in helping people out who have the least amount of money and statistically often have the most amount of pets.

With respect to 5844, the tethering bill, I know we spoke a lot about the shelter standards that we're talking about. There is a dog name Diamond in my town of Bloomfield, and Diamond lives in a box. Diamond is on a tiny chain strapped around his neck and lives in a box. And it's about a mile from the high school.

And about probably once a quarter Diamond gets off the leash and chases around children very aggressively, because when you chain a dog outside, they basically become dangerous animals. These are companion animals that are meant to be in people's homes, and when they're neglected socially, they guard their territory, and they become a real public safety issue.

Beyond the fact that it's just inhumane to deny a pack animal the luxury of having to be around other people, it really is a public

safety issue. And I've seen how aggressive this dog gets. It's not socialized to people. It never has been. And when people approach, it is very aggressive, guarding its territory which he is chained to.

This bill is, I think, very reasonable. In the middle of the night when there is the most risk, I have seen wild animals destroy tethered dogs. That is as inhumane as it can get. I would never leave my dog out all night long chained to something. And I think most reasonable people would understand that.

So I'm hoping that we can build upon the successes we've made in the past years and have more protections for dogs that, unfortunately, are resigned to living their entire lives at the end of a chain.

Last, with respect to 5024, the pet shop bill, obviously, we strongly support that. Dogs from, puppies sold in pet shops come from puppy mills. And no reputable breeder I've ever met in my life would ever sell their dogs to a pet shop for resale. There's a reason why they're being sold in pet shops.

HB 5027

And if you just google puppy mills, you'll realize the horrible nature of this industry. And a lot of states are moving towards this, and I'm hoping that Connecticut will be one of them. So thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify.

REP. GENTILE: Thank you, Susan. Karen Laski followed by Marlene Wilhelm and then Debora Bresch.

KAREN LASKI: Hi, everyone. Thank you for this hearing. My name is Karen Laski, and I have been involved in animal welfare for over 40

HB 5844  
HB 5836  
HB 5027

years, and I'm currently on the board of Connecticut Votes for Animals.

I'm here to support House Bill 5844, the dog tethering bill, House Bill 5836, the animal population control program bill, and H.B. 5027, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF DOGS AND CATS FROM SUBSTANDARD DOMESTIC ANIMAL MILLS.

Many years ago, I would drive by places where dogs were chained and check on them in the middle of the night to see if they were still there. I was so frustrated that I could never help them, because no law prevented them from being chained day and night in the sweltering heat and frigid cold.

Several generations of dogs later, we are here with a bill that could give some relief to dogs enduring this endless misery. Dogs who are continually chained are frustrated, bored, and many times driven to extreme anxiety and depression. They pace back and forth repetitively. Chained dogs are vulnerable to attacks by wild animals or cruel humans.

They suffer from pressure sores, frostbite, and heat stroke. They are constantly on the edge and can never relax. Along with wide constituent support for this bill, there are many positive aspects and benefits. Less people will be waking up in the middle of the night to the barking of a frustrated dog.

Homeowner security could be increased by the presence of a dog being inside at night rather than outside. Statistics show that one of the best deterrents to an intruder is an inside dog. Outside dogs become aggressive, not protective.

Regulations against chaining give animal control officers a tool to crack down on illegal dog fighting since many fighting dogs are kept in chains. According to world renowned dog expert Victoria Stilwell, many common behavioral problems could be avoided if owners understood how severe confinement can compromise natural behavior.

Dogs teach us love and patience. They improve our health and lift our spirits. Our best friends are suffering. Let's give them a break. Thank you.

REP. GENTILE: Thank you, Karen. Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER: Karen, you're such a good advocate, and thank you for doing this.

KAREN LASKI: Thank you.

SENATOR MEYER: We see you every year. I've got to tell you, I am suffering so much today because of my dog last night though. 2:30 in the morning, dog hears a raccoon, and our dog, Mo, went crazy. You know, we had to let her out in the middle of the night.

KAREN LASKI: Yeah.

SENATOR MEYER: I mean, you know, just would not stop.

KAREN LASKI: Yep.

SENATOR MEYER: The raccoon was --

KAREN LASKI: (Inaudible) you.

SENATOR MEYER: -- trying to get into a bird feeder, so I'm exhausted today. Just had to share that with you.

for an Easter photo having rabbit excrement on it.

So I would really like to see rabbits and small animals extended to that small, or the pet bill shop that is coming up. So I thank you for your time today. I ask you to really consider what I have proposed today. And, again, thank you for the work that you are doing.

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you, Debora. Any questions? Thanks. Our next witness is Debora Bresch followed by Steve Alexander and Nancy Parker.

DEBORA BRESCH: Good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I'm here on behalf of the ASPCA's 22,000 members in Connecticut. I'm here in support, like the others, of H.B. 5844 and H.B. 5836, 5844 concerning chaining, 5836 concerning the Animal Population Control Program.

And I am here requesting an amendment to H.B. 5027 to prohibit the sale of cats and dogs in pet stores. And I will note that Los Angeles, Representative Kupchick mentioned the Los Angeles ordinance that was passed just in November that prohibits the sale of cats and dogs and rabbits in pet stores, so that is, has been considered a reasonable inclusion in these bills.

I'll start just briefly with the chaining bill. We know that chaining is a moral hazard. It's inhumane to the dogs. It's a public safety hazard. The importance of this bill, like that bill that you passed in 2010 to also regulate chaining to a certain degree, this bill is essentially an endangerment statute.

HB 5844

Unlike the cruelty law which essentially can be used to intervene after the fact after an animal is already in serious trouble, this can be used to intervene before an animal is, before a dog is in serious trouble. But these are reasonable regulations that would allow an animal control officer simply to ensure that that animal, that that dog is safe.

Again, chaining overnight is, poses a particular problem to dogs as do extreme weather conditions. But a dog can be chained during those extreme weather conditions providing appropriate shelter is given. So there's really nothing extreme in this proposal, so it's a common sense endangerment statute or bill, excuse me.

With respect to 5836 concerning Animal Population Control Program, I would just like to say that we think all the provisions in that bill really go toward ensuring that the Animal Population Control Program lives up to best practices.

Our goal in allowing the Department of Agriculture to give money directly to registered nonprofits and animal control officers to help with low income spay/neuter is to, is a recognition of the fact that spay/neuter is a multidimensional problem not only to someone who needs it, that their animal needs a spay/neuter operation, but perhaps they need transport to the clinic.

There are other aspects of this problem, and we want to give registered nonprofits and animal control officers some leeway. And we think this would be a good use of that money. Perhaps the Department of Ag would give them vouchers, but perhaps they would give them grants.

This is what's being done in New York now. We, the ASPCA actually runs the program there, but we give out large grants to registered nonprofits to manage spay/neuter programs, and they're able, the money goes a lot further.

I just briefly would like to say in support of H.B., the amendment to H.B. 5027, I think it's an idea that, whose time has come. The puppy mill problem is really multidimensional. Senator Meyer, you mentioned your dog, Mo. The issue of puppy health is only one aspect of the problem and actually, from our perspective, a more marginal one.

The real problem is the endemic cruelty in these puppy mills. And pet stores purchase 99 percent of their dogs from puppy mills. And, you know, the problem there is not only the standards themselves, which are minimal, the USDA standards. A beagle was mentioned. I mean, if you can think of a beagle in a dishwasher, that's all the space that is required for a dog 24/7 in these mills.

And there are other problems. So even if a mill is doing everything appropriately, which they're not, it would still be cruelty that if you saw it in front of you at that moment you would call animal control. But because it's out of sight, it's out of mind. But the problem is, is they're not doing everything correctly.

And this is, you don't have to take my word for it. The office of the inspector general audited them. I provided those pictures in my testimony, some very disturbing stuff, I caution you. If you looked at these pictures, these, this is cruelty that's endemic to the industry, and the office of the inspector

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you, Mr. Alexander. Are there any questions of this witness? Appreciate you coming. Our next witness is Nancy Parker.

NANCY PARKER: Hi. Good afternoon, Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, Senator Chapin. I'm Nancy Parker. I live in Hartford. I've been doing animal advocacy and supporting animal rights for a dozen years now, and I want to speak in favor of three bills, House Bill Number 5844, AN ACT CONCERNING THE OVERNIGHT TETHERING OF DOGS OUTDOORS AND TETHERING OF DOGS OUTDOORS UNDER CERTAIN WEATHER CONDITIONS, H.B. 5836, AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING FOR THE VACCINATION, STERILIZATION, AND HEARTWORM TESTING OF DOGS AND CATS OWNED BY LOW-INCOME PERSONS OR ADOPTED FROM MUNICIPAL OR REGIONAL SHELTERS, and H.B. 5027, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF DOGS AND CATS OBTAINED FROM SUBSTANDARD DOMESTIC ANIMAL MILLS.

I remember a dozen years ago, 10 or 12 years ago, Julie Lewin working hard on tethering bills. And I have never actually seen, I mean, I can picture it, and I've heard many stories over the years, but if I saw that, I don't know what I would do. I'd probably call the animal control, but I think it's terribly inhumane to put an animal out there under those kind of conditions.

HB 5844

And as far as the availability of funding for vaccination and sterilization and heartworm testing, I took my mentee to the Connecticut Humane Society about over a year ago, and I adopted a cat with her. And I know it cost me about, I had to pay about \$150. It's something that she couldn't have afforded. She really wanted a cat badly, and she's got

HB 5836

two young children, and they wanted, they actually got a kitten.

But it's, a lot of people would make good animal owners, but they cannot afford those basic services, and they're not really aware of those vaccination, sterilization, heartworm testing that the animals need. I, I'm sorry, I, I actually, I recently adopted a cat from a shelter in May, back in May, and it told, several months later, he wasn't doing too well, and I took him to my vet.

I had been told when I adopted him he was three, but when I took him to the vet about three months later, I found out he was more like 12. He ended up costing me a, he had a very bad intestinal problem and ended up costing me about \$5,000 in two surgeries.

And I had already fallen in love with this kitty, and I was very willing, you know, I was willing and able to pay for the surgery, but I know that there are a lot of people who cannot, who could not afford it. And I don't know what would have happened to the cat, but luckily he's home with me.

So I would just very much like to speak in favor of these three bills. I've read many stories about the puppy mills, and I've read many stories in my H.S., Humane Society United States magazines and ASPCA magazines, and I know that it's detrimental. The puppies come in sick.

HB 5027

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you for your advocacy, Nancy.

NANCY PARKER: Thank you very much.

SENATOR MEYER: Are there any questions by the Committee? Thanks again for staying in touch

Hi everyone. Thank you for this hearing. My name is Karen Laski. I live at 279 Fern St. in Manchester.

I'm here to support **HB 5844, the dog tethering bill, HB 5836 the Animal Population Control Program bill, and HB 5027, An Act prohibiting the sale of dogs and cats from substandard domestic animal mills.**

I have been involved in Animal Welfare for over 40 years and I am currently on the Board of CT Votes for Animals.

Many years ago, I would drive by places where dogs were chained and check on them in the middle of the night to see if they were still there. I was so frustrated that I could never help them because no law prevented them from being chained day and night and in the sweltering heat and frigid cold. Several generations of dogs later we are here with a bill that could give some relief to dogs enduring this endless misery.

Dogs who are continually chained are frustrated, bored and many times driven to extreme anxiety and depression. They pace back and forth repetitively. Chained dogs are vulnerable to attacks by wild animals or cruel humans. They suffer from pressure sores, frostbite and heatstroke. They are constantly on edge and can never relax.

Along with the wide constituent support for this bill there are many positive aspects and benefits. Less people will be waking up in the middle of the night to the barking of a frustrated dog. Homeowner's security could be increased by the presence of a dog being inside at night. Statistics show that one of the best deterrents to intruders is an inside dog. Outside dogs become aggressive not protective. Regulations against chaining give Animal Control Officers a tool to crack down on illegal dog fighting, since many fighting dogs are kept in chains.

According to world renowned dog training expert, Victoria Stilwell, many common behavioral problems could be avoided if owners understood how severe confinement can compromise natural behavior.

Dogs teach us love and patience. They improve our health and lift our spirits. Our best friends are suffering. Let's give them a break.

Environment Committee, Public Hearing: 3/15/13

Testimony from Gretchen LaBau, 67 Duncaster Road, Bloomfield, CT  
Advisory Board Member, Our Companions Animal Rescue  
Member, CT Votes for Animals

Thank you for your attention to my support of the following bills:

HB 5836, An Act Concerning the Availability of Funding for the Vaccination, Sterilization, and Heartworm Testing of Dogs and Cats Owned by Low Income Persons or Adopted from Municipal or Regional Shelters

HB 5844, An Act Concerning the Overnight Tethering of Dogs Outdoors and the Tethering of Dogs Outdoors Under Certain Weather Conditions

HB 5207 An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Dogs or Cats From Substandard Domestic Animal Mills at Pet Shops. (HB5027)

In regard to HB 5836, it is time to modify the program so that it meets the current needs of our communities. By increasing the funding available for low-income people in the APCP program (Animal Population Control Program), the funds of the APCP program can be used for their intended purpose. The Department of Agriculture, in their annual reports, has recommended that these benefits be increased in the low-income program.

In regard to HB 5844, it is only humane to make sure that dogs are not subjected to harsh weather conditions and are brought in at night where they will be safe.

In regard to HB 5207, a ban on pets being sold in pet shops would insure that people who acquire pets (HB5027) either by adopting them from a shelter or from a reputable breeder. Pets sold in pet shops are bred in puppy mills under cruel conditions and contribute to the overpopulation of dogs, many of whom end up being euthanized.

I urge you to support these three important pieces of legislation. Thank you.

**Environment Committee, Public Hearing: 3/15/13**

Testimony from Susan B. Linker, 7 Sunset Lane, Bloomfield, CT  
 CEO, Our Companions Animal Rescue  
 CT Votes for Animals volunteer

Dear members of the Environment Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify **IN SUPPORT** of the following bills:

- HB 5836, An Act Concerning the Availability of Funding for the Vaccination, Sterilization, and Heartworm Testing of Dogs and Cats Owned by Low Income Persons or Adopted from Municipal or Regional Shelters.
- HB 5844, An Act Concerning the Overnight Tethering of Dogs Outdoors and the Tethering of Dogs Outdoors Under Certain Weather Conditions
- HB 5207 An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Dogs or Cats From Substandard Domestic Animal Mills at Pet Shops. (HB5027)

First with respect to HB 5836, while Connecticut's Animal Population Control Program (APCP) has made tremendous contributions to our states spay/neuter efforts during its 19 years of existence, it is long overdue to modify the program to meet the current needs of our community. HB 5836 will expand the sterilization benefits for low-income individuals. The Department of Agriculture has expressly recommended in their annual reports that these benefits need to be increased in the low-income program, and by doing so, it will allow the funds in the APCP program to be used for the intended purpose. In the past, over a million dollars have been swept out of the APCP account and redirected elsewhere because there was such a extreme surplus in this program. This was not the intended use of the funds and HB 5836 will ensure that the funds are being used for the purpose for which they were intended.

The modest expansions in benefits we are proposing should be easily absorbed by the APCP account. Yet they will result in even more significant reductions in homeless pets in CT, and in return, reduce the burden on our municipal and regional shelter system.

As you know the animal protection community has been working over the years to improve the conditions for dogs who live their lives chained. HB 5844 would provide obvious, reasonable and clearly defined protections for chained dogs. It will prohibit chaining a dog outside at night between 10pm and 6am, and require that chained dogs never be left outside in severe weather conditions without shelter strong enough to protect them from the elements.

HB 5207 would create a ban on pets being sold in pet shops. It's a fact and certainly no secret that puppies (HB5027) sold from pet shops come from puppy mills. These mills are without question unspeakably cruel dog breeding factories. No reputable breeder would ever breed animals for the purpose of reselling them at pet shops.

The inhumane practices of puppy mills, combined with the fact that 3 to 4 million homeless dogs and cats are euthanized in U.S. shelters each year, speaks to the need to ban the sale of pets in pet shops. This would allow people rescue homeless pets, and if they choose to purchase a dog, they may go directly to a breeder so they can see first-hand the conditions of the animals.

I thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony and I urge you to support these three important pieces of legislation.

**Testimony Concerning HB 5836**

**Jean Anderson DeVito  
Our Companions Animal Rescue - Volunteer**

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5836 which would *utilize existing funds in the state's Animal Population Control Program (APCP)*, to expand spay/neuter and vaccination benefits to pets belonging to low-income families.

I am a registered voter in Southington, and a Volunteer with Our Companions Animal Rescue.

As a person who loves and cares for animals, I believe the need to spay/neuter and vaccinate pets is a necessary part of caring for animals. It is also critical in addressing issues of over-population and maintaining animal health. Sadly, neglecting these procedures often results in more unwanted and/or unhealthy animals ... often leading to animal suffering.

In the current economy it becomes cost prohibitive for many people, especially low-income families, to cover the cost of providing this important pet care. I believe HB 5836 will help toward achieving this goal.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify. I urge you to strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,

Jean Anderson DeVito  
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**JOINT  
STANDING  
COMMITTEE  
HEARINGS**

**ENVIRONMENT  
PART 8  
2352 - 2684**

**2013**



## STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of Steven K. Reviczky  
Commissioner



Testimony presented to the Environment Committee of  
The Connecticut General Assembly  
By the Connecticut Department of Agriculture  
March 15, 2013

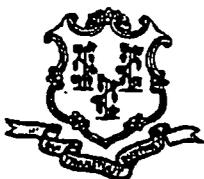
**H. B. 5836 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING FOR THE  
VACCINATION, STERILIZATION AND HEART WORM TESTING OF DOGS AND  
CATS OWNED BY LOW INCOME PERSONS OR ADOPTED FROM MUNICIPAL OR  
REGIONAL SHELTERS**

Chairmen Meyer and Gentile, Vice Chairs Maynard and Albis, Ranking Members Chapin and Shaban and members of the Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

The Animal Population Control Program (APCP) was created by statutory language in 1992 and implemented on May 22, 1995, to provide vaccination and sterilization benefits for any unsterilized dog or cat adopted from a municipal impound facility in Connecticut. Program goals are to reduce pet overpopulation, reduce the spread of rabies and other diseases through immunizations and subsequently increase the effectiveness of local Animal Control Departments through education and law enforcement. The APCP program has by all accounts been very successful, vaccinating and sterilizing more than 80,000 animals since 1995. Most Connecticut veterinary practices participate in the program. To utilize this program, a Connecticut resident must pay a \$45.00 fee at the time of adoption, which entitles the adopter to a vaccination/sterilization voucher good for sixty days. The voucher provides a one-time sterilization benefit of \$50.00 for a male cat, \$70.00 for a female cat, \$100.00 for a male dog, and \$120.00 for a female dog plus two pre-surgical vaccinations coincident with the sterilization. In addition, adopters are required to pay for other services as specified by the veterinarian. Non-residents may adopt a pound pet and pay a \$5.00 municipal fee, but are not eligible for program benefits. Pets too young or sick may be granted a medical extension by the veterinarian; however, all young animals must be sterilized by six (6) months of age. Funding for the APCP comes from an annual surcharge on Connecticut dog licenses (\$2.00 sterilized/\$6.00 unsterilized), the \$45.00 adoption fee, proceeds from the sale of the "Caring for Pets" commemorative license plates and donations.

Local animal control programs are largely underfunded, under staffed and underappreciated for their contribution to public health, public safety, animal welfare and quality of life. Feral cats are a serious issue in many communities contributing to quality of life issues, disease among the cats, impact on native bird populations, and feral cats are a vector in the spread of rabies among animals and potentially humans who may come in contact with a rabid feral cat. Municipal feral cat programs are voluntary (C.G.S. § 22-

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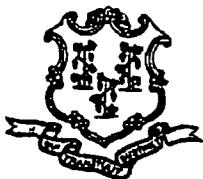
339) and few towns have taken on that responsibility as budgets and personnel are limited. It is very unlikely that this proposal will increase municipal feral cat programs. Very few towns have the resources to permit animal control officers to take on the additional duties of running new programs or managing the distribution of monies to non-profits for feral cats or low income spay/neuter benefit programs.

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture is concerned that, while well intentioned, the proposed bill will not achieve the desired goals and would offer the following suggestions and commentary:

The title of this bill indicates that heartworm testing is included. We agree that it should be but heartworm language is not present in this proposal.

1. In line 14 delete "animal control officers and". We do not believe this change is needed as very few animal control officers work with feral cats and or groups. Additional language is not required for those few that do. The Department of Agriculture's Animal Population Control Program (APCP) provides a list of feral cat groups to Municipal Animal Control Officers so they know who to turn to if they need assistance in that area.
2. Lines 17 -20 are not necessary. The APCP has such a program in place right now. The APCP works with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to certify that low-income individuals meet the definition requirements pursuant to C.G.S. Sec. 22-380e (12)(A)(B)(C)(D)(E)(F)and (G). Permitting ACOs to make these decisions is not necessary. Allowing private organizations (registered non-profits) to decide who gets to access APCP funds would be a nightmare for the APCP to track and administer. Presently, the program sends blank applications for the low income program to all ACOs, veterinarians', town clerks and every DSS office in the state. The circulation of information for the low income program is statewide. In order to properly administer the program the Department should be in control of the distribution and accountability of all benefits.
3. Lines 32 - 36 should be deleted. Disseminating vouchers to municipal ACOs and nonprofits and allowing decisions to be made regarding APCP funding outside of the Department would create a very difficult tracking problem. The statutory screening process that is already in place with DSS serves this purpose. Requiring DSS to work with each municipal ACO or several private non-profit groups would not be an efficient use of limited state resources. Most nonprofits struggle with few volunteers and municipal ACOs will be reluctant to increase their paper work and their reporting requirements to the state. Definitional problems will arise when determining what is a registered non-profit group and with whom they are to register.

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4. Lines 67 – 71 establish new criteria for payments specific to low income applicants. Presently, the payments are made based on the sex of the animal as the sterilization procedures for each sex are different and have different costs. Basing payments on the weight of the animal adds unneeded complexity and would require separate forms as well as upgrades to the software used to track expenses.
5. Lines 92 - 99: It is not clear to us what this language intends. As written the language would require reimbursement for any (all?) vaccinations the veterinarian feels are necessary. No monetary limits for specific vaccinations are placed on this benefit as is the case in the existing language.

The department generally agrees that the spay/neuter programs need to reach more pet owners.

The department respectfully asks that our suggestions be considered and that we have the opportunity to work with the proponents of this bill, veterinarians, non-profit groups and municipal animal control officers to craft language for the 2014 session to address the needs identified in this proposal. Additionally, the reimbursement rate for spay/neuter and vaccination procedures has not been updated since 2000. It is time to look at the payments for these procedures. We would like the opportunity to work with stakeholders to better use APCP funding to bolster local animal control programs, address the feral cat issues and provide realistic payments to veterinarians so low income pet owners are not disenfranchised.

**Testimony Concerning HB 5836****Jennifer L. Kelsey****Epidemiologist**

I am pleased to learn that the Environmental Committee is considering HB 5836, which would use existing funds in the state's Animal Population Control Program to expand spay/neuter and vaccination benefits to pets belonging to low-income families.

I am a registered voter in Clinton, and perform a variety of volunteer tasks for organizations concerned with animal health and welfare. As an epidemiologist, I donate time to assist veterinarians with research involving the health and welfare of companion animals.

On a societal level, assisting low-income people with funds for spaying and neutering and for vaccinations would obviously and importantly decrease the number of homeless puppies and reduce the spread of preventable contagious diseases. Using existing funds for these purposes would be both humane and cost-effective.

On a personal level, I recently spent some time in the waiting room of the New Haven Central Veterinary Hospital, which both provides high-end specialty care and serves as an urban "emergency room" for animals belonging to residents of New Haven and surrounding towns. One of the families had brought in a dog, wrapped carefully in an old blanket, who was having trouble delivering puppies and was herself at risk of dying. It was not a "planned pregnancy," and if the dog had been spayed, this never would have happened. I have no idea how the veterinary care was going to be paid for, but the mother dog was obviously much loved. In addition to being of great benefit and cost-effectiveness to society as a whole, increased assistance to low-income families for spaying/neutering and vaccinations would also enhance the quality of the lives of both the people and the animals they love.

I strongly encourage you to vote for this sensible and cost-effective bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

Jennifer L. Kelsey  
25 Tower Hill Road  
Clinton CT 06413  
jennykelsey@comcast.net

**Testimony Concerning H.B. No. 5836**  
**KAY MCCARTHY**  
**SAFE, INC. and HAMDEN HAPPY TAILS FOUNDATION, INC.**

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of H.B. 5836, AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING FOR THE VACCINATION, STERILIZATION AND HEART WORM TESTING OF DOGS AND CATS OWNED BY LOW INCOME PERSONS OR ADOPTED FROM MUNICIPAL OR REGIONAL SHELTERS..

I am a registered voter in Hamden, and I am the Treasurer of SAFE, Inc., as well as the Treasurer of Hamden Happy Tails Foundation, Inc.

As treasurer of these two groups, I pay numerous medical bills for rescued animals. However, we aren't able to help everyone, and people with limited funds cannot always afford to pay to get their pets spayed/neutered or vaccinated, which causes a health risk to others.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,

Kay McCarthy  
422 West Todd Street  
Hamden, CT 06518  
203-288-3686  
kmccarthy43@comcast.net



Mandy Wieting  
64 Valley Falls Road  
Vernon CT 06066

**Testimony Concerning HB 5836 • March 10, 2013**  
**Graphic Designer for Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary**

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of Raised Bill 5836, to utilize existing funds in the state's Animal Population Control Program (APCP), to expand spay/neuter and vaccination benefits to pets belonging to low-income families.

I am a registered voter in Vernon, and I am a graphic designer and volunteer for Our Companions Animal Rescue.

Animals have been a part of my family since I was too young to remember. Thankfully, we have always had the means to have them spayed/neutered and give them the vaccinations they needed. In this economy, many people are unable to properly take care of themselves, and unfortunately, taking their beloved pet to the vet just isn't feasible. Rather than have them relinquish the pet to a pound or shelter, which would not only be devastating to both the pet and their family, we need to use all available funds to help them. There are already far too many beautiful animals in pounds euthanized too soon. Why would we want to add more when we can help them?

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,

Mandy Wieting  
64 Valley Falls Road  
Vernon, CT 06066

Dear Honorable Members of the Environment Committee

Please support HB 5836 to help spay/neuter/vaccinate pets of low income Ct. Residents. We need to reduce the millions of unwanted pets in our society. Thank you.

Sally Westcott  
298 Castlewood Dr  
Bloomfield, Ct. 06002  
[sallywestcott@rocketmail.com](mailto:sallywestcott@rocketmail.com)

Testimony Concerning HB 5836

Amy Gagnon  
Volunteer, Connecticut Votes for Animals  
Volunteer, Protectors of Animals  
Advocate, New Britain Pound

To Members of the Environmental Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for HB 5836, An Act Concerning The Availability Of Funding For The Vaccination, Sterilization And Heart Worm Testing Of Dogs And Cats Owned By Low Income Persons Or Adopted From Municipal Or Regional Shelters. I am a registered voter in the town of Wethersfield and I am a research historian at Connecticut Humanities in Middletown.

When I am not at work, I spend a great deal of my free time advocating for animals. I volunteer at a no-kill shelter and I work with various rescue groups throughout the state helping to improve the lives of homeless, neglected, and abused animals. I have firsthand experience at numerous municipal pounds and shelters across the state, and am very familiar with the animals that find their way there. The majority of these animals are not spayed or neutered, and quite possibly have never received vaccinations. Budgets are tight in municipalities, and shelters rely on donations. I am overjoyed that the Animal Population Control Program exists, as it helps countless families and their adopted animals.

Today's economy is tough. That is a fact. Many are out of work and struggle day to day to make ends meet. One of the first sacrifices people make when trying to survive these tough economic times are their pets. Because they can longer afford them, they relinquish them to their towns or abandon them. Small non-profit organizations are popping up and much like human assistance programs, these organizations aid people's pets. They donate food and other essentials for the animals, thus allowing them to remain in the home. What a wonderful thing! And what a wonderful thing it would be to expand the APCP program, giving low income families just one more reason to be able to keep their beloved family member.

Not only would the expansion of funds help families, it would help control the animal population and keep pets healthier. This would mean fewer unwanted cats and dogs, and fewer burdens on the municipal pound system. It is a win-win situation.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my thoughts. Please support this important and necessary piece of legislation.

Very Sincerely,  
Amy Gagnon  
597 Wolcott Hill Road Wethersfield, CT 06109  
agr321@gmail.com 860-881-9644

**Testimony Concerning Raised Bill 5836**  
**Angela Grace Colantonio**

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of Raised Bill, 5836 AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING FOR THE VACCINATION, STERILIZATION AND HEART WORM TESTING OF DOGS AND CATS OWNED BY LOW INCOME PERSONS OR ADOPTED FROM MUNICIPAL OR REGIONAL SHELTERS

I am a registered voter in Wethersfield, who advocates on behalf of animals and encourages legislators to support animal rights initiatives. I believe that all residents of Connecticut, regardless of their socioeconomic background, should be able to share their lives and homes with a companion animal in a responsible manner. All dogs and cats should be spayed or neutered to prevent increases in the number of stray animals and the number of companion animals that end up in shelters.

The state should definitely shift animal control funds to programs that assist populations in greatest need of assistance with caring for their animals properly. As a former volunteer at the Connecticut Humane Society, I know that there are many dogs and cats in need of homes. The price of vaccinations, sterilization, and health tests should not deter anyone from caring for their animal companions in a responsible, healthy way and taking preventative measures to controlling the animal companion population. Additionally, from personal experience, and after doing pet therapy with my dog for two years, I know that there are many health benefits associated with caring for a dog or cat. Low-income people should be able to experience these benefits by sharing their homes with a dog or cat that is spayed or neutered without worrying about the cost of procedures, tests, and vaccines.

In short, there are many reasons to support this bill: it helps to more effectively control the animal companion population, it promotes the health of cats and dogs, it allows low-income individuals to experience the countless benefits of having an animal companion, and it is cost neutral.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and be a voice for the animals. I hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

For the animals,  
Angela Grace Colantonio  
16 Morrison Avenue  
Wethersfield, CT 06109  
[Agcolantonio@me.com](mailto:Agcolantonio@me.com)  
860.817.2626

**Testimony in Support of Bill HB 5836**

Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 5836, which would utilize existing funds in state's Animal Population Control Program (APCP), to expand spay/neuter and vaccination benefits to pets belonging to low-income families.

The Humane Society of the United States says, "The number of homeless animals varies by state – in some states there are many as 300,000 homeless animals euthanized in animal shelters every year. These are not the offspring of homeless "street" animals – these are the puppies and kittens of cherished family pets and even purebreds. Many people are surprised to learn that nationwide more than 3 million cats and dogs are euthanized in shelters. Spay/neuter is the only permanent, 100 percent effective method of birth control for dogs and cats."

The individuals in CT who qualify for the APCP are often not able to afford the difference between what this voucher covers and what the actual price of the surgery costs. Low-income individuals have difficulty with accessing transportation and are not able to travel to the few low cost options provided in CT. I have seen this issue first hand as a social worker assisting clients who are eager to make this responsible decision to spay/neuter their companion animals but cannot afford it.

Please help alleviate pet overpopulation and the burden of overcrowding in our state's animal shelters by supporting HB 5836.

Thank you.

Caitlin Sorge  
Bethlehem, CT

\*Source for quote:

[http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet\\_overpopulation/facts/why\\_spay\\_neuter.html](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet_overpopulation/facts/why_spay_neuter.html)

Testimony Concerning HB 5836

Charlene W. Rogers

Municipal Animal Control Officer

Farmington Police Department

I would like to thank the Environmental committee for this opportunity to express my support of HB 5836 *to utilize existing Connecticut APCP funds to expand benefits to low income families.*

I am a registered voter in Burlington, and I am the Municipal Animal Control Officer with the Farmington Police Department for over twenty years.

During my daily shift I am contacted by residents of Farmington who are unemployed, elderly or impaired and are of low-income status, that have a pet that in need of neutering and vaccinations. These residents have a limited budget though they adequately care for their pets but are unable to afford the neutering and vaccinations.

The Connecticut APCP program has been a great success because of Frank Ribauda and with the existing money within the program I support that this legislation to allow low-income families the ability to have their pet neutered and vaccinated.

By having these funds available to low-income families there will be less unwanted litters, less chance of a rabies exposure, a decrease in feral cats and abandoned dogs. There will also be an increase in viral immunity resulting in healthier pets for everyone!

I respond to numerous feral cat and kittens living in adverse conditions and abandoned dogs and puppies left in secluded and public areas of town to fend for themselves. These unwanted animals are usually a result of random breeding and expensive veterinary costs that deter some people from taking their pet to a veterinarian because of financial constraints.

The number of unwanted pets could be decreased with the help of this much needed resource.

Please support this important House Bill 5836 to allow low-income families that love their pets, the opportunity to have financial assistance for preventative veterinary care.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of House Bill 5836 to decrease the number of future litters and sick dogs and cats that reproduce and spread disease in our towns and cities.

Charlene W. Rogers

[rogersc@farmington-ct.org](mailto:rogersc@farmington-ct.org)

860-675-2440

**Testimony Concerning Raised Bill 5836**  
**Noranne Nielsen**  
**Mansfield Animal Control Officer**

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of Raised Bill, HB 5836, AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING FOR THE VACCINATION, STERILIZATION AND HEART WORM TESTING OF DOGS AND CATS OWNED BY LOW INCOME PERSONS OR ADOPTED FROM MUNICIPAL OR REGIONAL SHELTERS.

I am a registered voter in Mansfield, and I am an Animal Control Officer for the town of Mansfield since 1999.

I support HB5836.

I'm a big supporter of spay/neuter. Mansfield has a mandatory cat spay neuter ordinance which is very successful. If I hear of a feral cat colony, I get in action right away, to prevent the colony from growing. Access to feral cat vouchers would be handy. I currently ask for APCP feral cat vouchers through CATS North East, Inc. which has been working fine, but the vouchers run out after only a couple of months.

There is definitely an overpopulation of pit bull type dogs in this State, which is concerning. Pit bulls are currently they most bred dog. This needs to stop. The municipal shelters are full of mostly unfixed pit bulls. Pit bull owners need all the help they can get to do the responsible thing and have their dogs fixed. I have helped several low income families in Mansfield with APCP voucher (low income) applications. I often have to help them every step of the way to make sure they follow through. It would be more efficient if I had some vouchers on hand for low income families, so I can schedule the neuter appointment and get the voucher to the local vet, as some people lose their APCP voucher before the neuter appointment. Heartworm testing needs to be done before the surgery, and has now to be paid by the dog owner, which causes a financial obstacle to get the dog fixed. If the test was included the actual use of the low income vouchers would be raised, making the program more effective.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,  
Noranne Nielsen, Animal Control Department  
Town of Mansfield  
4 South Eagleville Rd  
Mansfield, CT 06268  
860-487-0137  
aco@mansfieldct.org

**Testimony Concerning HB 5836**  
**Paula Fischer**  
**Our Companions Animal Rescue**

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5836, a bill that would utilize existing funds in the state's Animal Population Control Program (APCP), to expand spay/neuter and vaccination benefits to pets belonging to low-income families.

I am a registered voter in West Hartford, and I am a long time, passionate volunteer and former Board member of Our Companions Animal Rescue.

Everyone deserves the love of a pet, no matter what income level. Yet, veterinary services have become so expensive that many pet owners cannot afford proper care, especially if the animal isn't sick. Therefore, many lower income pet owners will not spay or neuter, adding to the problem of pet overpopulation. I know of others who have considered taking in a stray dog or cat, but because they cannot afford to have the pet spayed/neutered along with other vet care, they'd leave the pet on the street to fend for themselves.

By providing spay/neuter and vaccination benefits to pets belonging to low income families, you are not only helping reduce pet homelessness and improving the quality of life of pets but also gifting the love and joy pets provide to families that would not otherwise have the means to experience it.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify, and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,

Paula Fischer  
860.233.6403  
paulafischer62@aol.com



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Page 1 of 1

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March 15, 2013

Environment Committee  
Room 3200, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106  
(860) 240-0440

Re: **SUPPORT of HB 5836**, AAC the availability of funding for the vaccination, sterilization, and heartworm testing of dogs and cats owned by low income persons or adopted from municipal or regional shelters

Dear Co-Chair Meyer, Co-Chair Gentile, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

On behalf of the Connecticut supporters of The Humane Society of the United States, I submit this letter in **SUPPORT of HB 5836**, which would make more funds from the Animal Population Control Program (APCP) accessible to low-income persons, as well as providing for the allocation of funds to assist animal control officers with the sterilization and vaccination of feral cats, allowing municipalities to better address feral cat issues in their communities.

Spay/neuter is a proven way to reduce pet overpopulation, and reduces the numbers of animals killed in shelters, currently estimated at 3-4 million annually (nationally).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,

**Annie Hornish**  
Connecticut State Director  
The Humane Society of the United States  
Cell: (860) 966-5201 Email: [ahornish@humanesociety.org](mailto:ahornish@humanesociety.org)

**Testimony Concerning HB5836****Caroline K. Gaetano****Program Manager Our Companions Animal Rescue and Member of CT Votes for Animals**

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB5836 AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING FOR THE VACCINATION, STERILIZATION AND HEART WORM TESTING OF DOGS AND CATS OWNED BY LOW INCOME PERSONS OR ADOPTED FROM MUNICIPAL OR REGIONAL SHELTERS.

I am a registered voter in West Hartford, and I am Program Manager for Our Companions Animal Rescue and a member of CT Votes for Animals.

As Program Manager for Our Companions, I am responsible for answering our Helpline Calls and for the intake of all animals being surrendered by their current owners. Believe me, there is no shortage of animals in need and often people are surrendering their pets because they can no longer afford care for them. Rather than crowd shelters and rescue organizations with animals from these types of cases, funding vaccination, sterilization and heart worm testing for low income owners will keep a significant percentage of animals out of shelters. Furthermore, animals living in shelters need to be sterilized, vaccinated and tested for heart worm before they are eligible for adoption.

Education is the key. By training the animal control officers and educating both them and the public, we can gradually reduce the huge number of homeless animals.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Warm regards,

Caroline K. Gaetano  
89 LeMay Street  
West Hartford, CT 06107

Testimony Concerning HB 5836  
Environment Committee Hearing  
3/13/2013

I am writing as a senior citizen, who has been feeding the poor strays who come into the neighborhood, and thank god for the Bridgeport Cat Project, who were so nice and trapped two, had then neutered. These people work tirelessly (sp?) to help out. Please vote to pass all of these bills to assist the animals.

I can't thank the cat project enough for what they did. I donate food and whatever I can to help out.

I know you will do the right thing and do what is best for these poor animals.

Claire Benoit  
Black Rock, CT

Testimony Concerning HB5836

Cynthia Opderbeck  
Mansfield Animal Shelter  
Storrs

I appreciate the opportunity to express to the Environment Committee my support of HB5836, which would expand spay/neuter and vaccination benefits to pets belonging to low-income families, utilizing existing funds in the state's Animal Population Control Program (APCP).

I am a registered voter in Storrs Mansfield. I am also a volunteer at the Mansfield Animal Shelter and have been for the past three years.

It is mandatory that all pets be vaccinated for disease! This is a basic requirement for keeping animals and their human owners safe from disease, fundamental to responsible care of pets in our charge.

It is also essential that the pet population be carefully controlled by a well ordered spay/neuter program! This is of course in the best interest of the community in order to prevent animal overpopulation, which contributes to undue stress on human owners, to pet neglect and abandonment, to pressures and burdens on the community's good will and its shelters, and can result ultimately in elimination of unwanted animals, a most unfortunate outcome.

By far, most pet owners want to do right by their animals. Many homes where animals are kept as pets, however, find themselves in difficult circumstances financially, and the community should be ready to come to the assistance of owners when the need arises, to help them to be responsible and caring. The availability of assistance for immunization services and for spay/neuter programs is essential for those in need. Passage of HB5836 would go a long way toward achieving the goals of vaccination for all pets and amelioration of the pet overpopulation problem.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify; I do trust you will strongly support this very important piece of legislation.

I thank you for your anticipated support of HB5836.

Sincerely yours,

Cynthia N Opderbeck  
714 Storrs Road  
Storrs, CT 06268  
(860)786-7217

11 March 2013

**Testimony Concerning Bill 5836**  
**Jonathan Finger**

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of Bill 5836, concerning the expansion of spay/neuter benefits to pets in low-income families.

I am a registered voter in New Haven, CT.

Companion animal overpopulation in America is a problem that has many causes. One of the most prominent causes is that people either don't take the time to spay and neuter their pets or they simply don't have the means to. Many states in America have passed laws requiring the sterilization of animals adopted from animal shelters.

According to [www.humanesociety.org](http://www.humanesociety.org), "Spaying or neutering your pet is an important decision for pet owners. As animal lovers who value our pets, it is important to understand the impact of this decision. ... In every community, in every state, there are homeless animals. In the U.S. as a whole, there are an estimated 6 to 8 million homeless animals entering animal shelters every year. About half of these animals are adopted, and tragically, the other half are euthanized. These are healthy, sweet pets who would have made great companions.

This mass euthanization can be prevented and this bill aims to address this problem. I urge you to consider its importance.

Thank you,

Jonathan Finger  
875 Orange St.  
New Haven, CT 06511

**Testimony Concerning HB5836  
Lana Burchman  
Our Companions**

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5836.

I am a registered voter in Bloomfield, and I am a volunteer at Our Companions

We are the stewards of our environment and make daily choices. I am a seventy year old woman and animals have always a part of my life. I have had cats and dogs since I was a small child. Dogs, as all animals, particularly domesticated animals, need lots of love, protection and our respect. They need a safe environment, food, water and exercise. Their life is greatly improved and they make better pets when they are spayed or neutered.

I am hoping that the State of Connecticut will take action to expand the spay and neuter benefits to pets belonging to low income families.

I have knowledge of families not having their animals spayed or neutered because of the cost. Currently I know of two families in my immediate area. There is improvement to animal life and health when dogs and cats are spayed or neutered. In these difficult economic times we all need to come together to do what we can to help maintain the pet population, their well -being and their safety.

I am asking consideration to make that happen.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,

Lana Burchman  
288 Castlewood Drive  
Bloomfield, CT. 06002  
860-308-2583  
lanaburchman@yahoo.com

Testimony Concerning HB 5836  
Trish Black

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5836.

I am a registered voter in Milford.

Help the population of uncared for pets by spaying/neutering stray cats and dogs.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,

Trish Black  
Black\_t@subway.com

March 14, 2013

Environment Committee  
Connecticut State Legislature

Re: My Support of HB 5836

Dear Committee Members, Other State Legislators and Concerned Connecticut Residents:

I have been doing animal rescue in Connecticut for approximately 25 years. My volunteer efforts have mostly been geared towards trapping feral cats in Bridgeport and getting them spayed/neutered in order to address the overpopulation of unwanted and/or feral cats and kittens. The unwanted cats are a severe burden to the animal control departments. Some cities will not deal with feral cats at all, even if the cat is stuck somewhere injured.

In the last two years, we have set humane cat traps in locations within Bridgeport where they are many feral cats, BUT it is friendly cats going into our traps.. Never have I seen so many nice cats so thin and hungry cats roaming the city. These are nice: they were once pets. People are throwing their cats outside, and I truly believe that it is because they cannot afford to get their cats, and dogs, fixed. Pet care is just not a priority in today's economically rough times. When not fixed, the male cat will start to spray around the home; the female cat, and dogs, go into heat. The funding to curb the overpopulation issue is in the passing of HB 5836. Years ago the City of Bridgeport actually gave funds to a cat rescue group, helping to cover the costs of fixing feral cats. Now it cannot afford to help.

Two years ago, or maybe more, we started a major trapping project at Marina Village Housing Project. Some many cats living outside there. This year I have started trapping cats in PT Barnum Housing Project. The pregnant cats are all over the place. I saw 2 cats trapped in a sewer drain in PT Barnum. I saw a resident letting his dog run free to chase after the stray cats, with the teenagers outside yelling that the dog will make a good fighter. With more funding, the cats owned by lower income residents can be fixed. When the cats and dogs are let outside to fend for themselves, the cats and dogs get pregnant, the dogs can become aggressive; the cats become feral, and the city cannot spend time, rightfully, so to retrain and help an aggressive dog or a cat that has become feral when thrown outside by uncaring owners.

Please pass HB 5836. Families don't have the money to feed their children, let alone fix their pet. There are pet food banks that can help keep the pet in the home, allowing that pet to offer love and companionship to its owners. This bill needs to be passed. Its passing will result in funding saved by shelters from lowering its need to euthanize unwanted and/or unadoptable cats and dogs. Passing this bill allows low income folks to

keep their pets. And in turn, that eases the burden of the animal control departments and the rescue groups, like mine, who can turn back to helping the trap truly feral cats, not abandoned, cats.

Thank you.

Nancy Esposito  
Bridgeport Cat Rescue (BCR)  
105 Little Deer Road  
Bridgeport, CT 06606  
Home: 203-371-6427  
Mailing Address for BCR: P.O. Box 9, Stratford, CT 06615

**Testimony in *SUPPORT* of HB 5836: To utilize existing funds in the state's Animal Population Control Program to expand spay/neuter and vaccination benefits to the pets of low-income families.**

Submitted by:

Rosamund Downing

39 Moss St.

Pawcatuck, CT 06379

Dear Honorable Members of the Environment Committee:

As a resident of the Town of Stonington, I fully support HB 5836. This bill is a "win-win" for all concerned. HB 5836 would use existing funds from the APCP to provide vitally important health care to the animals of low-income families. Using funds in this way will not only help families with limited means, but will save taxpayer dollars as well.

Animals that are not spayed/neutered will produce multiple litters of unwanted babies. Most of these unwanted cats and dogs will eventually wind up at municipal shelters – placing more of a burden on already stretched town budgets and personnel. The benefits of vaccination should be obvious – rabies and other diseases pose a serious health risk to both domestic animals and humans (making this a public safety issue)!

From the perspective of a taxpayer, HB 5836 is a "no-brainer". Everybody benefits: animals, families, and municipalities. Please support this common sense approach to animal population control and public safety.

Thank you.

**Environment Committee**  
**Public Hearing: 3/15/13**

**Testimony Concerning HB 5836**

**An Act Concerning the Availability of Funding for the Vaccination, Sterilization, and heart worm testing of dogs and cats owned by low income persons or adopted from municipal or regional shelters.**

**Amy Harrell**  
**President, Connecticut Votes for Animals**  
**amy.cva@gmail.com**  
**Vernon, CT resident**

Connecticut's Animal Population Control Program has made tremendous contributions to our state's ability to reduce the pet overpopulation. In its 19 years of existence it has helped fund millions of spay/neuter procedures thus preventing countless additional litters that cannot be placed in homes. Better still, none of the funding for this program (even administrative costs) comes from tax dollars – revenue comes from dog license fees, pound adoption fees, and sales of the Caring for Pets CT license plates.

The program provides spay/neuter assistance through the distribution of vouchers, the value of which is pre-determined by the sex and breed of the animal. Most commonly, vouchers are obtained when an animal is adopted from a pound, in exchange for a \$45 adoption fee. The adopter then presents the voucher to a participating veterinarian at the time of surgery for redemption. In almost all cases, depending on the rates of the vet or clinic, the voucher only covers a portion of the total cost of the procedure. The adopter is responsible for the balance of the cost.

There are two sub-programs of the ACP that administer vouchers. One is the low-income program, for which 10% of the ACP account may be used. Low-income persons may obtain a voucher by submitting an application to the Dept. of Agriculture. Of those who receive the vouchers, only 50 – 60% are redeemed each year, which leaves a lot of intact animals able to reproduce and further burden our shelters with unwanted animals.

The second sub-program addresses feral cats. Under this program, funding is also limited to 10% of the ACP account, and vouchers are applied for and obtained by non-profits who are using Trap-Neuter-Return methods to control feral cat populations. This program has been very heavily used, with 96 – 98% of the vouchers redeemed.

HB 5836 primarily addresses the low-income program. We would like to further incentivize spay/neuter procedures for pets in low-income families by:

- 1) Raising the 10% cap on funding from the ACP account that may be spent on low-income vouchers
- 2) Increasing the voucher redemption values (for low-income vouchers only) so that the vouchers will cover a greater portion of the total cost at the vet. We have proposed new values loosely based on the rates at CT low-cost spay/neuter clinics.

Additionally, we recognize that the low redemption rate among low-income persons is not due solely to financial factors. Logistics and the application procedure can be a hindrance. We'd like to encourage further

streamlining the distribution of benefits by:

- 3) Allowing non-profits and Animal Control Offers direct access to vouchers under the low-income program for whenever they assist qualifying low-income persons with spaying or neutering their pets. Also, a number of ACOs are very proactive in assisting communities with Trap Neuter Return efforts, and they have expressed interest in having direct access to vouchers under the feral cat program – we have included this provision as well.
- 4) Finally, we are proposing to provide vaccination benefits to all animals adopted from pounds, regardless of whether they also receive a voucher for sterilization. This is in the best interest of public health and safety for animals and people alike.

As described above, the APCP Account is well-funded through dog license fees, pound adoption fees, and sales of the Pets license plates. For the past several years, the account has been operating with an annual surplus, reaching as high as \$243k in 2010. The extra accumulation of funds has been swept twice in the past 5 years, resulting in \$1,043,000 diverted to other state budget lines. A portion of this diverted money was specifically donated by Connecticut citizens who bought the Caring for Pets plates because they believed they were contributing to the cause of reducing our pet overpopulation. An account sweep of this magnitude is unconscionable, and I want to ensure it never happens again.

The modest expansions in benefits we are proposing should be easily absorbed by the APCP account. Yet they will result in even more significant reductions in homeless pets in CT, and in return reduce the burden on our municipal and regional shelter system.

I appreciate your consideration and support of this bill.

**Testimony Concerning HB 5844 and HB 5836  
Cora Martino - President  
Pitter Patter Feline Rescue, Inc.**

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5844 and HB 5836 DOG CHAINING AND APCP VOUCHERS FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE.

I am a registered voter in Stamford, CT

In my travels of TNR (Trap Neuter and Release I often see many dogs chained up in their back yards with no shelter from the elements and definitely no human contact. This needs to come to an end. It is cruelty at its best.

I am very big on TNR the feral cats in my community. Most of these cats were at one time owned by someone and then just disposed of like a dirty diaper. None of these cats are vaccinated, spayed or neutered. Not being vaccinated alone is a health issue to the community. Not only have that but the pregnant females given birth to helpless babies that are just born to die. It's a disgrace what I see these cats go through in this state of CT with all the money we have here. Spy/Neuter laws need to be enforced and most definitely availability to those who need it financially for APCP vouchers.

A personal story: We were called upon when a low-income family in a very low income area of Stamford was having a birthday party for their daughter. A group of children were playing catch with a ball. One child missed catching the ball and it rolled into bushes. The child went to retrieve the ball and 2 cats bolted from the hedges. This child startled these cats and was very lucky she was not bitten by one of them. This child would have probably have gone through a series of Rabies vaccines, we trapped and neutered over 9 cats just in her and her 2 neighbors yard.

Please pass both of these bills. It is a necessity and very much a community health issue. I speak from experience.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,

Cora Martino  
President- Pitter Patter Feline Rescue, Inc.  
23 Mead St.  
Stamford, CT 06907  
203-968-1450

**Testimony Concerning HB 5836  
Jamila HadjSalem**

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5836:AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING FOR THE VACCINATION, STERILIZATION AND HEART WORM TESTING OF DOGS AND CATS OWNED BY LOW INCOME PERSONS OR ADOPTED FROM MUNICIPAL OR REGIONAL SHELTERS.

I am a registered voter in Stafford Springs, CT.

Please support HB 5836, it's important for all dogs and cats, regardless of the economic status of their owners, or the shelter they're temporarily residing in, to have adequate medical care. Vaccines help reduce horrible, preventable illnesses in the overall cat/dog population, and maybe someday eliminate some of these diseases completely. Sterilization helps reduce their astronomical numbers, plus gives a more comfortable life to animals when they're not faced with the burden of continual pregnancies. These are extremely important, basic medical needs that should be given to all our cats and dogs.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,

Jamila HadjSalem  
12 Old Springfield Road  
Stafford Springs, CT 06076

40  
P17/10

Hi everyone. Thank you for this hearing. My name is Karen Laski. I live at 279 Fern St. in Manchester.

I'm here to support **HB 5844**, the dog tethering bill, **HB 5836** the Animal Population Control Program bill, and **HB 5027**, An Act prohibiting the sale of dogs and cats from substandard domestic animal mills.

I have been involved in Animal Welfare for over 40 years and I am currently on the Board of CT Votes for Animals.

Many years ago, I would drive by places where dogs were chained and check on them in the middle of the night to see if they were still there. I was so frustrated that I could never help them because no law prevented them from being chained day and night and in the sweltering heat and frigid cold. Several generations of dogs later we are here with a bill that could give some relief to dogs enduring this endless misery.

Dogs who are continually chained are frustrated, bored and many times driven to extreme anxiety and depression. They pace back and forth repetitively. Chained dogs are vulnerable to attacks by wild animals or cruel humans. They suffer from pressure sores, frostbite and heatstroke. They are constantly on edge and can never relax.

Along with the wide constituent support for this bill there are many positive aspects and benefits. Less people will be waking up in the middle of the night to the barking of a frustrated dog. Homeowner's security could be increased by the presence of a dog being inside at night. Statistics show that one of the best deterrents to intruders is an inside dog. Outside dogs become aggressive not protective. Regulations against chaining give Animal Control Officers a tool to crack down on illegal dog fighting, since many fighting dogs are kept in chains.

According to world renowned dog training expert, Victoria Stilwell, many common behavioral problems could be avoided if owners understood how severe confinement can compromise natural behavior.

Dogs teach us love and patience. They improve our health and lift our spirits. Our best friends are suffering. Let's give them a break.

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**CONNECTICUT  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
HOUSE**

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The bill passes.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar 317.

THE CLERK:

Calendar Number 317 on page 17 of today's calendar, Favorable Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment, Substitute House Bill 5836,  
AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING FOR THE VACCINATION AND STERILIZATION OF DOGS AND CATS OWNED BY LOW INCOME PERSONS.

ASSISTANT DEPUTY SPREAKER ALTOBELLO:

Representative Gentile of the 104th, you have the floor, Madam.

REP. GENTILE (104th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon.

ASSISTANT DEPUTY SPREAKER ALTOBELLO:

Good afternoon, Madam.

REP. GENTILE (104th):

Mr. Speaker, I move for acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

ASSISTANT DEPUTY SPREAKER ALTOBELLO:

Question before the Chamber is acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

Please proceed, Madam.

REP. GENTILE (104th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this bill makes a greater percentage of existing funds from the Department of Agriculture's Animal Population Control Program. It makes them accessible to lower income people for the purposes of vaccination, sterilization and heart worm tests for animals that are adopted from municipal pounds or shelters and to provide for the allocation of funds to assist animal control officers with the sterilization and vaccination of feral cats.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the bill is to help reduce pet overpopulation and I would urge passage of the bill.

ASSISTANT DEPUTY SPREAKER ALTOBELLO:

Question before the Chamber is passage of the bill.

Will you remark further?

Representative Shaban of the 135th, you have the floor, sir.

REP. SHABAN (135th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in support of the bill. For what the good chairwoman just said, I think it deserves repeating.

This is -- these are existing funds. All we're -- this bill does is allow access to existing funds at a greater percentage to accomplish a laudable purpose so I urge my colleagues to adopt the bill.

Thank you.

ASSISTANT DEPUTY SPEAKER ALTOBELLO:

Thank you, Representative.

Further on the bill? Further on the bill?

If not, staff and guests please return to the Well of the House. Members take your seats. The machine will be open.

THE CLERK:

The House of Representatives is voting by Roll.

The House of Representatives is voting by Roll.

Will Members please return to the Chamber immediately.

ASSISTANT DEPUTY SPEAKER ALTOBELLO:

Have all members voted? Please check the board to make sure your vote is properly cast.

If all members have voted, the machine will be locked.

Will the Clerk please take a tally.

And would the Clerk please announce the tally.

THE CLERK:

Bill Number 5836:  
Total Number Voting 146  
Necessary for Passage 74  
Those Voting Yea 146  
Those Voting Nay 0  
Absent and Not Voting 4

ASSISTANT DEPUTY SPREAKER ALTOBELLO:

Bill passes.

Will the Clerk please call Calendar 230.

THE CLERK:

On page 49, Calendar 230, Favorable Report of the Joint Standing Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding, House Bill 5250, AN ACT CONCERNING THE SAFETY OF WORKERS IN ROADWAY WORK ZONES.

ASSISTANT DEPUTY SPREAKER ALTOBELLO:

Representative Guerrero, the esteemed Chairman of the Transportation Committee from the 29th District of Rocky Hill, you have the floor, sir.

REP. GUERRERA (29th):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good to see you.

Mr. Speaker, I move acceptance of the Joint Committee's Favorable Report and passage of the bill.

ASSISTANT DEPUTY SPREAKER ALTOBELLO:

**S - 664**

**CONNECTICUT  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
SENATE**

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Would you remark further on the bill? Would you  
remark further on the bill?

Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER:

Yes, Mr. President.

It's a rather simple bill. And if there's no further  
comment or objection, I would ask that it go on our  
Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Seeing and hearing no objection, so ordered.

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On Page 18, Calendar 555, Substitute for House Bill  
Number 5836, AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF  
FUNDING FOR THE VACCINATION AND STERILIZATION OF DOGS  
AND CATS OWNED BY LOW INCOME PERSONS, Favorable Report  
of the Committee on ENVIRONMENT.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER:

Mr. President, I move acceptance of the Joint  
Committee's Favorable Report and passage of this good  
bill.

THE CHAIR:

On acceptance and passage of this good bill.

Would you remark further, sir?

SENATOR MEYER:

I will.

Colleagues, we have in Connecticut a -- a really good fund. It's called the Animal Population Control Fund. And it's used in part by low income people for the purpose of having funds to pay for the sterilizing and vaccinating of pets like dogs and cats. This bill does one simple thing. And that is it increases from 10 percent to 20 percent the amount of the fund that's available to low income people for the purpose of sterilizing and vaccinating their pets. And it's -- it's proposed by the Agriculture Commission and it was approved by the Environment Committee by unanimous vote.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Senator Chapin.

SENATOR CHAPIN:

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I also rise in support of the bill before us.

This fund that the good Senator from Guilford spoke of is a fund that sometimes has an extra money in it and I think the animal advocates that came to the Environment Committee and asked for -- for this change before us to tonight made a compelling argument that we should support it.

Mr. President, I would encourage all of us here in the Circle to support it this evening.

Thank you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you, Mr. President.

If I may a question or two to the proponent of the bill.

THE CHAIR:

Please proceed, sir.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you.

Through you, Mr. President.

I -- Senator Chapin answered part of my question, but if there's no excess funds that are available, would funds be diverted from an existing source that are using it to make that 10 to 20 percent?

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER:

Yes.

Through you, Mr. President.

To Senator Witkos, it's a good question. And there's nothing that can -- that can go outside the fund, so the fund is self-containing. And there will be no extra funds to -- to finance the project that's called for by this bill.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thank you.

Again, through you, Mr. President.

My understanding of Senator Chapin's comments were that at the end of the year there's some extra dollars leftover in the fund, so the advocate said, well let's use that extra dollar, so let's boost it up from 10 percent to 20 percent the amount of money that's available for folks for the sterilization and vaccination for low income.

But now if, say there's a year and so that would, I would assume use all the money. Some may go for other different programs I'm not aware of what those programs are. But if there's a year that it's tight and we don't have that extra 10 percent to give to this program, do we know what program will see a deficiency by 10 percent or they may not increase it that year by 10 percent?

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER:

Yes. Through you, Mr. President.

To Senator Witkos, as I understand it, we have one fund that's called the Animal Population Control Fund. And what this bill does is it amends existing law, which says that 10 percent of that fund can be allocated to low income people, by making it 20 percent. So it does not mean that there are going to be any -- necessarily any new funds added to the account. It's going to be within whatever the account is, 20 percent can be allocated to -- to low income people instead of 10 percent.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

I -- I guess I'll rephrase my question another way.

If there's -- through you, Mr. President.

If there's only one fund and currently the practice is 10 percent goes to this program, now this bill poses to increase that from 10 percent to 20 percent, where -- what other fund or what other program in that fund is not getting funded?

My initial thought was, according to Senator Chapin, there was extra money, so we bumped it up to 10 -- another 10 percent. So it was covered. So there's a program out there that wasn't receiving a deficiency funding, but now, I'm not so sure that by us increasing it in statute from 10 to 20 percent that we're not going to have a program that's not fully funded under its current statute.

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER:

Yes. Through you, Mr. President.

George Krivda of the Department of Agriculture has just explained that -- that the fund is generally used for animal control purposes, in particular sterilization and vaccination. And that -- and that there has been an increasing request by low-income people to help their own pets. And that's why this change has been made here.

So I'm not sure if that answers your question, but I'm not sure I really understand your question.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thanks, Mr. President.

I'll -- I'll try one more time.

Say for simplistic sake that we have \$100 in the fund and currently, under the current statutes \$10 goes towards the Low Income Sterilization Authorization Act. Now under the bill, that \$10 goes to \$20. So while originally we had \$10 going into that program and \$90 for something else, now we only have \$80 for something else. And I'm wondering where does that additional \$10 come from? Are we taking it away from another program to put into this program?

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER:

Through you, Mr. President.

No we're not taking it away. That's the -- that's why there's no fiscal note on this bill. It's -- it's one fund in which the Department of Agriculture, because of the request from low income people, is trying to reallocate the funds within the existing account and not raise any additional funds or additional money to it, but within the existing funds, an additional 10 percent will go to low income people for the purpose of their helping their pets.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS.

Again, I don't want to belabor this.

What other programs are funded through that one fund, besides the Low Income Program.

Through you, Mr. President.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER.

Yes. George Krivda has confirmed what I think the Environment Committee knows and that is that this -- this Animal Population Control Fund is for vaccinations and sterilizations of -- of pets, so that we have some reasonable control on our dog and cat population in Connecticut.

THE CHAIR:

Senator Witkos.

SENATOR WITKOS:

Thanks, Mr. President.

I want to thank Senator Meyer for answering my question. I'm going to take it offline with the Department of Ag.

Thank you.

THE CHAIR:

Thank you, Senator.

Will you remark further on the bill? Will you remark further on the bill?

Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER:

Okay, Mr. President, I think if there's no further objection or comment, may this kindly go in the Consent Calendar?

THE CHAIR:

Seeing and hearing no objection, so ordered.

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

Oh -- I apologize.

SENATOR LOONEY:

On the Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

If there's no objection, it will be placed on the  
Consent Calendar.

I apologize.

Senator Looney.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Yes, Madam President.

Madam President, if the Clerk would now list the items  
on the Second Consent Calendar so that we might move  
to a vote on that Second Consent Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk.

THE CLERK:

On Page 5, Calendar 275, Senate Bill 299.

On Page 7, Calendar 356, House Bill 6253.

Page 15, Calendar 518, House Bill 6316.

And Page 18, Calendar 555, House Bill 5836.

On Page 21, Calendar 579, House Bill 6358.

Page 40, Calendar 265, Senate Bill 191.✓

Page 41, Calendar 305, Senate Bill 1081.

And on Page 43, Calendar 388, Senate Bill 1096.

And Page 45, Calendar 553, House Bill 5250.

THE CHAIR:

Mr. Clerk, please call for a roll call vote. The machine will be open for this Second Consent Calendar.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call has been ordered in the Senate.  
Senators please return to the Chamber. Immediate roll call on today's Second Consent Calendar has been ordered in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

Do me a favor. Call it one more time now, so we can get them in here faster. Thank you.

THE CLERK:

Immediate roll call ordered in the Senate on the Second Consent Calendar of the day. Senators please return to the Chamber. Immediate roll call in the Senate.

THE CHAIR:

All members have voted, all members have voted, the machine will be closed.

Mr. Clerk will you call the last tally of the night.

THE CLERK:

On the Second Consent Calendar of the day.

Total Number Voting	35
Necessary for Adoption	18
Those voting Yea	35
Those voting Nay	0
Those absent and not voting	1

THE CHAIR:

Consent Calendar passes.

Senator Looney, do you have some good news for us, sir?

SENATOR LOONEY:

Madam President, just before moving for adjournment, we have a couple of other just Calendar items. One item on the foot of the Calendar.

Madam President, Calendar Page 49, Calendar 240, Senate Bill 849. I would move to remove that item from the foot and just mark it passed, retaining its place on the Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

And also, Madam President, other item on the foot of the Calendar, Calendar 182, Senate Bill 1000. Would move to remove that item from the foot and to mark it passed, retaining its place on the Calendar.

THE CHAIR:

So ordered, sir.

SENATOR LOONEY:

Thank you.

Madam President, the other items previously marked go for this evening, should now be marked passed, retaining their place on the Calendar. We hope to begin with those items early tomorrow.

And I would yield the floor now for Members for announcements of Committee Meetings or other Points of Personal Privilege.

THE CHAIR: