



Statement of  
Jo-Anne Basile, Executive Director  
Connecticut Votes for Animals  
Before the Environment Committee  
March 6, 2020

**Support for HB 5338, An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Animal Fighting Paraphernalia**

The Honorable Co-Chair Christine Cohen and Co-Chair Mike Demicco, Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee

CT Votes for Animals (CVA) is a grass roots animal advocacy organization representing over 5,000 citizens across the State of Connecticut. CVA members care deeply that Connecticut provides a safe and humane environment for all its animals. CVA speaks up for animals as a reminder to the public that a compassionate world is good for all and one in which we should all want to live.

CVA strongly supports HB 5338, An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Animal Fighting Paraphernalia. Using animals to fight is a sadistic and horrific form of animal cruelty. It is a bloody sport, where animals are mutilated and killed all in a frenzied atmosphere while betting is taking place and money is exchanged to the so-called winner. Back in 2007, the country was shocked to learn of football player Michael Vick's private animal fighting ring where tens of thousands of dollars exchanged hands between Vick and others while the dogs from his Bad Newz Kennels were tortured, suffered and killed.

Unfortunately, Vick's practice was not an anomaly. While we presume this practice is found in other places, it is also found in the back yards and alleyways of Connecticut. And frequently animal fighting is combined with a range of other criminal activities like gambling and drug trafficking. HB 5338 will help law enforcement and State prosecutors bring justice to these crimes. By criminalizing the possession and sale of the specific implements used in animal fighting, it will help increase law enforcement's success at prosecuting those responsible for these crimes. The ability to include animal fighting implements during the investigation gives law enforcement another tool in their "toolbox".

One note, I understand that some concern has been raised by animal trainers and others who legitimately possess some of the implements noted in the bill. In our reading we believe the language is clear in its intent to target *only* those involved in the practice of animal fighting and certainly not those who possess the same equipment for legitimate purposes. We would consider, however, any language changes necessary to make the intent further clarified assuming it doesn't undermine or weaken the bill's main purpose.

CVA believes HB 5338 is a good bill that will serve well both law enforcement and those working to protect the interests of animals from these heinous assaults. CVA strongly encourages the Committee to favorably pass HB 5338 and move it closer to enactment.

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