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**Testimony by Lisa Nelson, VMD
House Committee on Agriculture and Forest Products
H. 512, an act relating to adequate shelter of dogs and cats
January 14, 2016**

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am also appreciative of the opportunity I have had to serve as the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association representative to the Animal Shelter Working Group, and thank Representative Bartholomew for his leadership.

As you are aware, there are two major issues for which we have proposed new language relating to dogs and cats: (a) minimum size of living space for dogs and cats (where a living space is a principal primary housing) and (b) adequate shelter for dogs maintained outdoors in enclosures, with proposals for standards of construction, and conditions of temperature, shade etc. Based on our work and the proposed language for both living space and outdoor shelters, humane investigators will have a more specific checklist and measurable standards in place.

The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association strongly supports this bill but recommends the following changes:

1. Clarification of (15) "living space" (page 1, line 16-20) and (19) "enclosure" (page 2, line 16-17). The definitions in this draft have some language overlap. "Living space", defined as principal, primary housing implies that there is built-in protection from the elements. The term "enclosure" does not necessarily imply protection from the elements, thus there is a requirement in the bill that "shelter(s)" need to be provided if the enclosure is outside. The dog is not confined to a shelter, as it would be in a living space. **We suggest that "living space" means any cage, crate or other structure used to confine an animal that serves as its principal primary housing and that affords protection from the elements.** We think this will help to further delineate living space from enclosure.
2. In the section (e) "Shelter for dogs maintained outdoors in enclosures", (page 6, starting on line 11) **we ask to have this changed to (C) Have four sides, a roof, and a ground surface that enables the dog to stay clean and dry. (page 6, line 21).** Although a shelter must protect from the direct rays of the sun and the direct effect of wind, rain or snow, (page 7, lines 4-6) it does not in the current proposal need to protect from wet ground.

Thank you very much for your time and for your consideration of this legislation. Please let me know if you have any questions.

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