



**Testimony By:** Joanne Bourbeau  
**Presented To:** The Vermont Senate Judiciary Committee  
**In Support Of:** H. 512, An Act Relating to the Adequate Shelter of Outdoor Dogs and Cats  
**Date:** March 17, 2016

My name is Joanne Bourbeau. This testimony is presented on behalf of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the nation's largest animal protection organization, along with the Vermont Humane Federation (VHF), the state's professional association for local animal shelters and rescue groups, in support of H. 512.

The HSUS is a long-standing and active member of the VHF, which I represented as part of a legislatively appointed work group led by Rep. John Bartholomew this summer, along with a representative of the Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA) and the Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs. Together it was our task to review the state's current minimum requirements for the outdoor shelter of dogs and cats, and provide recommendations on how the statute could be strengthened and clarified. It was recognized by our working group that several areas were in need of improvement, and the result of those discussions, and the subsequent work of the House Committee on Agriculture and Forest Products, is the bill you have before you.

The shelter of animals primarily housed outdoors is a serious concern both when the weather is extremely hot and when it's extremely cold. The VHF maintains a cruelty reporting website, [www.ReportAnimalCruelty.com](http://www.ReportAnimalCruelty.com), which allows us to gather statistics on the number and nature of complaints. Since 2008, when we started collecting this information, through 2015, nearly 20% of the total complaints we received from Vermonters statewide were concerning inadequate shelter.

During deliberations our working group tried to find that balance between not being *too* prescriptive, while still making the statutory standards clear to both pet owners and enforcement officials, with a goal toward improving animal welfare for pets kept primarily outside.

It's important to note that humane agents include a broad spectrum of individuals with varied backgrounds, experience and training, including municipal animal control officers, private humane society investigators, and local, regional and state law enforcement officers. There is no training mandate for civilians to “qualify” as humane agents, and the interpretation of what is “adequate” in terms of outdoor shelter can vary from individual to individual, and agency to agency. So having clear shelter standards that can be easily interpreted and defended is imperative to ensuring that animals kept outdoors are receiving proper care.

The HSUS and the VHF feel that the improvements made in H. 512 are reasonable, enforceable, and long overdue. We enthusiastically encourage your support of this bill.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Bourbeau". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joanne Bourbeau  
Northeastern Regional Director  
The Humane Society of the United States  
1787 Vermont Route 112  
Jacksonville, VT 05342  
802-368-2790  
[jboubeau@humanesociety.org](mailto:jboubeau@humanesociety.org)