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To Whom It May Concern,

Unfortunately, I am unable to attend today's hearing with regard to the proposed changes to VSA Title 13, Chapter 8, but would like to take this opportunity to represent what I feel is language that would be detrimental to law officers and humane officers working in the field. To that end, I am concerned about minimizing space size for caged cats and dogs, the suggested formula using kilograms, the removal of language requiring dogs guarding livestock to be assured shelter, and the need to better define how to assure "adequate" shelter for dogs kept out of doors.

I was employed by the City of Rutland for 33 1/2 years, from 1979-2012, as the Animal Control Officer, responsible for the welfare of animals within the City. During my tenure I addressed thousands of calls responding to complaints of neglect, abuse, and abandonment which sometimes necessitated intervention of quarreling neighbors over animals. The majority of the calls were justified. On several occasions, these cases were brought before the court and the town always prevailed.

Several years ago, I testified on many occasions before the Senate and House Committees with regard to the need for the language that is now being challenged. Please take into consideration the following arguments for keeping language as is:

1) When determining the appropriate space required for dogs and cats caged, predominately for most of their lives, the cage sizes are being reduced to a size that would not allow animals to comfortably lie down, stretch out, defecate and urinate, have a spot for clean, unaffected food and water, and comfortable, clean bedding - let alone the need to exercise in that space. Keeping an animal caged is detrimental to its mental health and physical well being. To minimize the space now provided would make this living arrangement even more precarious. One hour a day is not near enough to provide freedom of confinement. Animals, especially, need to be free to walk daily, and for more than one hour.

2) It is impossible to calculate space size in "kilograms" easily when in the field and being able to responsibly comment on a possible violation. The weight of the animal and the cage size is much easier to visualize and calculate, and the square footage could be altered, per the layout of the cage.

3) The inclusion of specific insulation as a means to allow the animal to retain its body heat, is necessary to include that will assure that any generated heat doesn't dissipate into the atmosphere, provided that a wind break is made of material that will assure that wind and cold cannot enter. It was once suggested that including the need for a wind break might suffocate an animal. Unless the windbreak is made of material that completely locks in the animal, that is not a credible argument.

4) I have seen dogs over the years that have suffered from frost bite when left outside too long, or that lacked adequate shelter. The suggestion to eliminate shelter for dogs that "guard livestock" makes no sense. I have found no other legislation excluding certain breeds of dogs from shelter. It makes little sense. This is language that can not be enforced, nor scientifically justified.

Thank you for the opportunity to share what I've learned through my extensive training and experience in the field.

Craig C. Petrie

