

Nate Biscotti

From: Renee M. Falconer <rfalconer@NCHSI.org>
Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 4:17 PM
To: Nate Biscotti
Cc: Emilie Krasnow
Subject: [External] Testimony

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Thank You Chair and Committee

I am testifying today in support of Bill H.578

My name is Renee Falconer. I reside in Brownington, Vermont. I am a long time Animal control officer in Orleans County and also a Co founder of 2 non profit animal welfare organizations..PETS of the Kingdom and VAACA (Vermonters Against Animal Cruelty and Abandonment). I have over 20 years of experience both as an animal control officer, and animal cruelty investigator. In those 20 years, I have witnessed first hand, the strengths and weaknesses of our laws.

Requiring Education, treatment and counseling for offenders should be mandatory. As with most other crimes, we see repeat offenders. We also know that around 70% of people who abuse or neglect animals are also inflicting the same abuse or neglect on a family member, spouse, or children. On the flip side of this, around 80 % of domestic violence also involves harm to a family pet. Treatment and counseling would be addressing so much more than just animal abuse.

Our Civil forfeiture Process needs some help. The Civil forfeiture bill S.237, was passed in June of 2014. I helped to create this bill after a seizure case in 2012 nearly bankrupted our non profit. 6 draft horses were seized by law enforcement, and in our care for 15 months. The expenses exceeded \$35,000. In the past 11 years I have worked on many other seizure cases, with multiple other organizations, and I have seen the current civil forfeiture bill work in a few cases, but have seen it fail in more. Civil forfeiture needs to be utilized and understood by law enforcement, state's attorney's and judges. Adding owner accountability for cost of care to the forfeiture bill will also help. It will force owners to either pay for the care that they should have legally been providing for the animals, or they will opt to surrender the animals which may in turn, keep many of these cases out of the court system altogether. We need to repair this system so that our unfunded, volunteer based, rescues and shelters don't have to struggle with care and expenses while waiting months or longer for their day in court.

Oversight of offenders who are charged with animal cruelty is a must. Offenders often repeat their crimes or go against court orders and acquire more animals. I am currently aware of 2 separate cases where court orders prohibited an offender to own more animals, and yet, they have more animals because there is no clear plan to prevent or prosecute this behavior.

In 2025, the collaborative efforts through VAACA and all partnering shelters and rescues have saved, rehabilitated, provided vet care for, and rehomed a total of 2,359 abandoned, surrendered, and seized animals.

I ask that you please consider supporting this bill,

Since we have no funding in Vermont for animal welfare, we need to, at the very least protect our Rescues, animal control officers, and Shelters who do this work, day in and day out with nothing more donations.

From: Nate Biscotti <Nate.Biscotti@vtleg.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 8:50 AM
To: Renee M. Falconer <rfalconer@NCHSI.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Zoom Link for Todays Meeting

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Hello Renee!

Here is the Zoom link for todays meeting at 1:00 PM with the House Judiciary Committee: <https://legislature-vermont.gov.zoom.us/j/93870589321?pwd=PiEPBPgIMCq0hDjf2GHkBSZRFIDa9z.1>

Best,

Nate Biscotti

Committee Assistant, House Judiciary
Office of Legislative Operations
Vermont General Assembly

Attention Witnesses: If you have documents to accompany your testimony, please submit as a PDF 24 hours in advance of your scheduled time on the Agenda. Should you require accessibility services, please [click here](#) and note that requests should be made 48 hours in advance of testimony.

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