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Senate Agriculture Committee Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 552

Chairman Hackett, Vice-Chair Hoagland, Ranking Member O'Brien and members of the Senate Agriculture Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 552, which has three objectives relating to companion animals. This legislation is the product of well over a year of collaborating with a number of stakeholder groups, and incorporating much of their feedback.

If enacted, House Bill 552 will allow county dog wardens to chemically capture animals through the use of a tranquilizer gun, without having a veterinarian present. Under current law, in order for a dog warden to use a tranquilizer gun to capture a potentially dangerous dog, a licensed veterinarian must be present. The idea for this part of the bill was brought to me by my county dog warden. He explained to me that in the absence of a veterinarian, a dog warden's only current options are to either find a way to manage a dangerous dog with the use of a control pole or, if the situation escalates, shoot the dog. This not only puts our dog wardens at unnecessary risk, it is cruel to the animals they are attempting to handle. Safeguards are included in the legislation that require certified officers to obtain a classification from the State Board of Pharmacy prior to practicing chemical capture outside of the direct supervision of a veterinarian. The legislation would allow dog wardens to perform their duties more safely and efficiently.

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The second provision of this bill would prohibit animal shelters from using gas chambers to euthanize domestic animals. While most shelters across the state do practice humane euthanasia by injection of approved drugs, a small number still use the gas chamber. My proposal would prohibit animal shelters from using a gas chamber as a form of euthanasia except in circumstances where the Veterinary Medical Licensing Board and the State Board of Pharmacy have declared that there is a shortage of approved lethal injection substances; in such a situation, the shelter might have had to resort to the use of a firearm or other means to euthanize the animal.

The third provision of House Bill 552 will eliminate the mandate for dog wardens to sell unclaimed dogs to teaching or research institutions for \$3. Currently, after the three-day impound period has passed, a dog seized by the county dog warden must be turned over to research or teaching facilities for \$3, if such facilities request the dog. By eliminating this mandate language from code, the county dog warden still *may* sell such dogs to research and teaching facilities, but will not be mandated to do so and the dog warden may set the fee at which they turn over these dogs.

Again, thank you Chairman Hackett and members of the committee for taking the time to listen to sponsor testimony on House Bill 552. I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.