I, Ronata L. Phillips's animals were seized by the Trumbull County Animal Welfare League on October 30, 2019.

Subsequently both my son and I were criminally charged with alleged animal cruelty.

As part of my case, a person named L. Kate Miller-Deross entered my property on October 21, 2019 along with Michelle E. Faulkner.  They claimed to be humane agents from AWL, and investigated my animals and my property - with no warrant. Miller-Deross flashed a large badge at my son and boyfriend on this day, and told them she was a humane agent - which was a lie.

On October 23, 2019, Miller-Deross and Faulkner became R.C. 1717.06 Humane Agents.  See Attachment A (Probate Court Records).

On October 29, 2019, Miller-Deross obtained a search warrant from the Newton Falls Municipal Court.  See Attachment B (Search Warrant and Affidavit). The search warrant was based upon Miller-Deross and Faulkner's presence at my property on October 21, 2019.  The Court signed this search warrant and my animals were seized on October 30, 2019.

The probate records (Attachment A) show that Kate Miller-Deross and Michelle E. Faulkner were not humane agents at the time of investigation on October 21, 2019 and therefore Miller-Deross lied to the Court in the Search Warrant Affidavit.  A lie by omission is the same as a direct lie. No where in the search warrant affidavit was it disclosed to the Court that neither Miller-Deross nor Faulkner had any police power authority on October 21, 2019, as they were not humane agents at that time.  Therefore, the search warrant was issued on false material facts.

I believe there needs to be oversight of humane societies and humane agents, and I believe this bill is a significant improvement on the current systemic lack of oversight.

I believe the provisions where animal husbandry training is required is beneficial.  The animals the Trumbull County Animal Welfare League seized from the raid on my property required very specific care and knowledge, and I do not believe currently that humane agents have sufficient skills or knowledge in this area.

In Trumbull County alone, a public record to the Probate Court shows five humane agents in Trumbull County alone.  Two are employed by Trumbull Humane Agency (a relatively new humane society), and three are employed by AWL. Currently when a humane agent is no longer employed by a humane society, no one knows.  So I am pleased to see this bill include the requirement that the identification of humane agents is recorded with the county sheriff, and when the humane agent is no longer employed as a humane agent, a record of this is also kept with the Sheriff.  I believe this provides more accountability, and in my case, if this requirement had existed, I would have been able to check with the Sheriff as to whether Miller-Deross and Faulkner were real humane agents. Instead I had to discover this months later through a public record request to the Probate Court.  Currently, these humane agents are not even listed on the probate court web page, so there is no way to verify who is a humane agent unless you propound a public record request.

I am also pleased to see that the bill will enable the probate judge to revoke approval of the appointment of humane agents.  I hope in my case that humane agents L. Kate Miller-Deross and Michelle Faulkner will have their authority revoked for impersonating a law enforcement official and lying in a search warrant under oath.

I strongly support any legislation to help normal citizens, pet owners and farmers defend themselves against animal rights activists and what our humane societies have become.

Ronata L. Phillips

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