



State Senators Jay Hottinger and Sean O'Brien
Senate Bill 205 Sponsor Testimony
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 23, 2019

Chairman Eklund, Vice-Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, we are here to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 205.

This needed legislation would increase the penalties for killing or seriously injuring a companion animal, as well as create a new offense for those who aid or abet in the killing or causing serious physical injury to companion animals.

A companion animal is a cat, dog or any other animal kept inside a residential dwelling, but does not include livestock or wild animals. Under current law, needlessly killing a companion animal is generally a first degree misdemeanor, or a fifth degree felony on subsequent offenses. This bill will increase the penalty to a third degree felony.

Senate Bill 205 also redefines the most egregious acts of violence and makes those third degree felonies. Under current law, egregious acts are generally a first degree misdemeanor. These egregious acts, redefined as "serious physical injury," involve any of the following:

- Physical injury resulting from the unnecessary or unjustifiable cruel beating of a companion animal that causes prolonged or intractable pain or carries a substantial risk of death
- Physical injury resulting from the unnecessary or unjustifiable mutilation or maiming of a companion animal that causes prolonged or intractable pain or carries a substantial risk of death
- Physical injury resulting from the poisoning of a companion animal that proximately causes the death of the companion animal

Lastly, Senate Bill 205 would create a new offense which prohibits a person from knowingly aiding or abetting either of the cruelty prohibitions specified above – the penalty for which would be a fourth degree felony.

Certain instances of cruelty to animals have made it clear that we need stronger penalties for the killing or torture of a companion animal. We have heard horror stories of people strangling,

beating, skinning and setting animals on fire in their cages. Individuals who commit such horrific acts often receive punishments that do not match their crimes, and in some instances, are granted an early release from prison. Given this, there is a little deterrent for cruelty to animals.

Numerous studies have found that there is a link between animal abuse and criminal violence against people. One study found that women seeking refuge at a family violence shelter were 11 times more likely to report that their partner had committed violence against their pet.¹

People who commit heinous acts against companion animals should be given more than a slap on the wrist. By increasing the penalties for cruelty to companion animals, it is our hope that Senate Bill 205 will deter acts of violence against both animals and people.

For these reasons, we urge your favorable consideration on Senate Bill 28.

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<http://www.genderbias.net/docs/resources/guideline/Battered%20pets%20and%20domestic%20violence%20animal%20abuse%20reported%20by%20women%20experiencing%20intimate%20violence%20and%20by%20nonabused%20women.pdf>

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