

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-318 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL WELFARE.

Vote Date: 3/13/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/4/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

Co-Sponsors:

Sen. Martin M. Looney, 11th Dist.

Rep. Nicholas Menapace, 37th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

To identify resources for persons needing to place their companion animal in another person's care due to a domestic violence situation and to clarify the authority of the State Veterinarian to combat disease among companion animals and establish a working group to study ways to improve the funding of the animal population control program.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

Requires the Commissioner of Agriculture to study pet placement options for domestic violence victims, expands the State Veterinarian's authority to prevent the spread of disease among animals and to humans, and establishes a working group to evaluate and recommend improvements to the animal population control program.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Bryan Hurlburt, Commissioner, CT Department of Agriculture

CT Department of Agriculture supports SB 318 with a few concerns.

Section 1 would require the State Veterinarian to identify contact persons for victims of domestic violence who may need to seek alternative accommodation for their companion animals. This would place a substantial burden on the Office of the State Veterinarian well outside their existing purview and expertise. They recommend relocating this program within the Judicial Branch or victim services system. These entities are equipped for confidential, immediate response services.

Section 2 clarifies when the State Veterinarian may issue orders to prevent the spread of disease. By modernizing the language to refer more broadly to “disease” ensures clearer authority to respond to the full range of animal health threats, including parasitic, vector-borne, or novel conditions that may not fit older statutory terminology.

Section 3 creates a working group to study the current Animal Population Control Program that was established in 1995. The program provides sterilization and vaccination benefits for dogs and cats via three voucher programs. This program receives no direct funding from the general fund. DoAG is prepared to form the working group and help to develop actionable recommendations to the committee within available staffing resources. DoAg testified that this can be done administratively and does not need to be put into statute.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Sen. Martin Looney, 11th District.

Sen. Looney Co-Sponsored this bill and hopes SB 318 will address recent reports of animal cruelty and the problem of abused partners being afraid to leave the situation out of fear of what the abuser will do to the abused person’s pet. SB 318 will help these victims find temporary shelter for their animals while they move to a domestic violence shelter. Hopefully we might also find ways to help pet owners who are in other crises.

Joshua Levin, Legislative & Advocacy Manager CT Votes for Animals

CT Votes for Animals supports SB 318 because it expands support services for survivors of domestic violence and carves out a path for much needed revisions to the Animal Population Control Program. The new provisions will protect not only DV survivors and their companion animals, but also the friends and family members. Abusers often retaliate against those who assist victims, so this strengthens safety for both survivors and their support network. The CT Votes for Animals also supports the section on a working group to study the APCP which is urgently needed to focus on modernizing the program by increasing value of the spay/neuter vouchers, raising reimbursements rates for participating veterinarians, direct funding to communities with the greatest need, particularly those with significant feral cat populations, rather than distributing funds evenly statewide and expanding eligibility by increasing the low-income program threshold.

Betsy Grenier, Executive Director, CT Veterinary Medical Association

CT Veterinary Medical Association supports SB 318 and states they already operate a program aligned with the goals of this bill. The program, Companions in Crisis, has been functioning for almost 20 years and has a well-established connection with the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence. This Foundation assists in providing safe, confidential housing for pets of victims of domestic violence until they can be reunited so victims can leave their homes and go to safe shelters. They suggest areas where the state partnership could strengthen these efforts. Transportation assistance for victim’s animals to confidential locations and funding support which would help the Foundation to continue their work and expand their mission. They also request that they formally include veterinary representation in the workgroup.

Liza Andrews, VP of Government Relations, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence support SB 318 because it establishes a system to assist survivors of domestic violence in safely placing pets when fleeing abuse. Abusers frequently use survivor’s attachment to pets as a method of coercion to stay in an abusive

relationship. The centralized information sharing system is crucial in helping survivors keep their pets. CCADV has worked with CT Veterinary Medical Foundation for years and this proposal will increase the number available locations where survivors can safely leave their pets temporarily. They suggest adding language to clarify that under this program, all survivors must be able to retrieve their pets and if any timelines exist in those facilities for retrieval of animals that they explicitly apply in these cases.

The following Organizations Support SB 318:

James Bias, Executive Director, CT Humane Society

Alisa Clements, Director of Government Affairs, Pet Advocacy Network

Adriana Petizzo, Legislative Fellow, Yale Legislative Advocacy

24 Residents of Connecticut Support SB 318.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Phil Guidry, JD, Director, Policy Analysis, Government Relations, American Kennel Club

The American Kennel Club has concerns with Section 3 of SB 318 and request that it be amended. The bill lists those who must be part of the workgroup, including, “a representative of an animal rights organization”. An alternative is needed, and a better option would be “a representative of an animal welfare organization. Their anti-animal ownership bias precludes a representative of an animal rights organization from being a required member of the workgroup. AKC believes a representative of an animal welfare organization will provide a more balanced approach to addressing the needs of the animal population control program that Connecticut’s dog and cat owners deserve.

Timothy Acker, Vice President, Northwestern CT Dog Club

Northwestern CT Dog Club opposes Section 3 of SB 318 which includes a “representative of an animal rights organization” on the workgroup. They agree with the American Kennel Club that it should be a representative of an animal welfare organization.

Reported by: Judy Ganswindt

Date: March 26, 2026