

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-456 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

AN ACT CONCERNING A GRANT PROGRAM FOR WILDLIFE

Title: REHABILITATION FACILITIES IN THE STATE.

Vote Date: 3/18/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/13/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

Co-sponsors:

Rep. Mary M. Mushinsky, 85th Dist.

Rep. Patricia A. Dillon, 92nd Dist.

Sen. Paul Cicarella, 34th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

To establish a grant program for certain nonprofit wildlife rehabilitation facilities in the state.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

Substitute language authorizes the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection to create a grant program for registered nonprofit wildlife rehabilitation organizations in Connecticut, with eligibility and funding criteria established by the commissioner. It also appropriates \$500,000 from the General Fund for the program for fiscal year 2026–2027.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie Dykes, Commissioner, CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

DEEP opposes SB 456 because the Department does not have funding to support the proposed grant program. It would allow DEEP to accept donations to support the program but without a dedicated funding source or resources to market and promote external support, it is unlikely that the proposed account would generate sufficient funding to meaningfully support a grant program. They also noted that wildlife rehabilitators can already accept donations directly. Additionally, SB456 would require DEEP to develop new administrative requirements for wildlife rehabilitation organizations and may necessitate regulation promulgation. These provisions would create additional administrative burdens for both DEEP and the wildlife rehabilitation community without achieving the intended goal of providing meaningful financial support.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Connecticut General Assembly Animal Welfare Caucus

The Animal Welfare Caucus supports SB 456 because it establishes a framework for accountability by requiring participating organizations to register with DEEP and provide information regarding facility operations, staffing, and training. This approach promotes transparency while allowing the department to prioritize grants for organizations that meet established standards. For many rehabilitators, even modest financial support can significantly improve their ability to provide veterinary care, specialized diets, and appropriate housing for wildlife during recovery.

Laura Simon, President, Connecticut Wildlife Rehabilitators Association

Connecticut Wildlife Rehabilitators Association support SB 456 provided that several key improvements are made to ensure the program works as intended. They support the funding concept of this bill, but several critical changes are necessary for it to become an effective program that supports wildlife rehabilitators. They attached specific language and revisions that they feel are necessary to be added to SB 452 in their testimony.

Senator Paul Cicarella, State of Connecticut, 34th District

Sen. Cicarella supports SB 456 because many wildlife rehabilitation centers operate with limited resources and rely heavily on donations and volunteer support. Establishing a grant program will provide the assistance needed to run these facilities and help ensure they have the tools and resources needed to continue their work.

Many Wildlife Rehabilitators sent in Testimony in Support of SB 456 because it is an expensive endeavor to house, feed, medicate, provide veterinary care, and prerelease facilities for wildlife. Depending on the species, many require very specialized diets, caging and isolation. It is not uncommon to spend thousands of dollars to take care of injured animals and raise the abandoned young. Providing a modest financial support through a grant program would make a meaningful difference in their ability to continue this work.

Allison Bloom DVM, Kensington Bird & Animal Hospital

Jeffrey Buchbinder, Killingly Wildlife

Ingrid Casa, CWRA

Ann Marie Conaty, State Licensed Rehabber

Oona Cutrone, Executive Director non-profit, Pachaug Wildlife Rehabilitation

Kim Hargrave, Executive Director, Pequotsepos Nature Center

Annie, CT State Director, Humane World for Animals

Rose Morals, Claws N Paws Rehab Center

Beverly, Popen Connecticut Audubon Society

Anthony Pierlioni, Vice President, the Turtle Room

Joshua Levin, Advocacy Manager, CT Votes for Animals

Sherry Harmon, Nutmeg Acres Wildlife

Linda Dreher, Wildlife Rehabilitator, Turtle Haven

Christine Cummings, Director, A Place Called Hope

Amanda Coler, Owner, A Shedding Chance Reptile Rescue

55 Connecticut Residents sent in Testimony in Support of SB 456

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Judy Ganswindt

Date: March 30, 2026