



General Assembly

February Session, 2026

***Raised Bill No. 5264***

LCO No. 1579



Referred to Committee on INSURANCE AND REAL ESTATE

Introduced by:  
(INS)

***AN ACT CONCERNING SERVICE AND THERAPY ANIMALS IN INSURANCE UNDERWRITING, THE APPOINTMENT OF AN ADVOCATE IN PROCEEDINGS CONCERNING THE WELFARE OR CUSTODY OF COMPANION ANIMALS, ASSAULT OF A DOMESTIC ANIMAL AND ESTABLISHING AN ANIMAL ABUSE TASK FORCE.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2026*) No insurer that delivers,  
2 issues for delivery, renews, amends or endorses a homeowners or  
3 tenants insurance policy in this state on or after October 1, 2026, shall  
4 cancel, refuse to renew or refuse to issue such policy solely on the basis  
5 of (1) the breed of dog owned by the insured or the applicant, with  
6 respect to any dog that is a dog trained or being trained as a service  
7 animal to assist blind, deaf or mobility impaired persons, or (2) the  
8 ownership of a therapy animal by such insured or applicant. As used in  
9 this section, "service animal" has the same meaning as provided in  
10 section 22-345 of the general statutes, and "therapy animal" has the same  
11 meaning as provided in section 17a-22ee of the general statutes.

12 Sec. 2. Section 54-86n of the general statutes is repealed and the  
13 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

14        (a) For the purposes of this section, "companion animal" means a  
15 domesticated dog, cat, horse, rabbit, ferret, bird, rodent, fish, reptile,  
16 amphibian or other species of animal kept for pleasure rather than  
17 utility and that is normally kept in or near the household of its owner or  
18 keeper and is dependent on a person for food, shelter and veterinary  
19 care, but does not include a dog, cat, horse, rabbit, ferret, bird, rodent,  
20 fish, reptile, amphibian or other species of animal kept for farming or  
21 biomedical research practices.

22        [(a)] (b) In any prosecution under section 53-247, as amended by this  
23 act, or in any court proceeding pursuant to section 22-329a or in the  
24 criminal session of the Superior Court regarding the welfare or custody  
25 of a [cat or dog] companion animal, the court may order, upon its own  
26 initiative or upon request of a party or counsel for a party, that a  
27 separate advocate be appointed to represent the interests of justice. If a  
28 court orders that an advocate be appointed to represent the interests of  
29 justice, the court shall appoint such advocate from a list provided to the  
30 court by the Commissioner of Agriculture pursuant to subsection [(c)]  
31 (d) of this section. A decision by the court denying a request to appoint  
32 a separate advocate to represent the interests of justice shall not be  
33 subject to appeal.

34        [(b)] (c) The advocate may: (1) Monitor the case; (2) consult any  
35 individual with information that could aid the judge or fact finder and  
36 review records relating to the condition of the [cat or dog] companion  
37 animal and the defendant's actions, including, but not limited to,  
38 records from animal control officers, veterinarians and police officers;  
39 (3) attend hearings; and (4) present information or recommendations to  
40 the court pertinent to determinations that relate to the interests of  
41 justice, provided such information and recommendations shall be based  
42 solely upon the duties undertaken pursuant to this subsection.

43        [(c)] (d) The Department of Agriculture shall maintain a list of  
44 attorneys with knowledge of animal issues and the legal system and a  
45 list of law schools that have students, or anticipate having students, with

46 an interest in animal issues and the legal system. Such attorneys and law  
47 students shall be eligible to serve on a voluntary basis as advocates  
48 under this section. The provisions of sections 3-14 to 3-21, inclusive, of  
49 the Connecticut Practice Book shall govern a law student's participation  
50 as an advocate under this section.

51 Sec. 3. Subsection (a) of section 53-247 of the general statutes is  
52 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October*  
53 *1, 2026*):

54 (a) Any person who overdrives, drives when overloaded, overworks,  
55 tortures, deprives of necessary sustenance, mutilates or cruelly beats or  
56 kills or unjustifiably injures any animal, or who, having impounded or  
57 confined any animal, fails to give such animal proper care or neglects to  
58 cage or restrain any such animal from doing injury to itself or to another  
59 animal or fails to supply any such animal with wholesome air, food and  
60 water, or unjustifiably administers any poisonous or noxious drug or  
61 substance to any domestic animal or unjustifiably exposes any such  
62 drug or substance, with intent that the same shall be taken by an animal,  
63 or causes it to be done, or, having charge or custody of any animal,  
64 inflicts cruelty upon it or fails to provide it with proper food, drink or  
65 protection from the weather or abandons it or carries it or causes it to be  
66 carried in a cruel manner, or fights with or baits, harasses or worries any  
67 animal for the purpose of making it perform for amusement, diversion  
68 or exhibition, shall [, for a first offense, be fined not more than one  
69 thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than one year or both, and for  
70 each subsequent offense, shall] be guilty of a class D felony.

71 Sec. 4. Section 53a-61 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
72 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

73 (a) A person is guilty of assault in the third degree when: (1) With  
74 intent to cause physical injury to another person or a domestic animal,  
75 he causes such injury to such person, [or] to a third person or to a  
76 domestic animal; or (2) he recklessly causes serious physical injury to

77 another person or a domestic animal; or (3) with criminal negligence, he  
78 causes physical injury to another person or a domestic animal by means  
79 of a deadly weapon, a dangerous instrument or an electronic defense  
80 weapon.

81 (b) Assault in the third degree is a class A misdemeanor and any  
82 person found guilty under subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of this  
83 section shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of one year which  
84 may not be suspended or reduced.

85 Sec. 5. Section 53a-61a of the general statutes is repealed and the  
86 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2026*):

87 (a) A person is guilty of assault of an elderly, blind, disabled or  
88 pregnant person, [or] a person with intellectual disability or a domestic  
89 animal in the third degree when such person commits assault in the  
90 third degree under section 53a-61, as amended by this act, and (1) the  
91 victim of such assault has attained at least sixty years of age, is blind or  
92 physically disabled, as defined in section 1-1f, or is pregnant, [or] (2) the  
93 victim of such assault is a person with intellectual disability, as defined  
94 in section 1-1g, and the actor is not a person with intellectual disability,  
95 or (3) the victim of such assault is a domestic animal.

96 (b) No person shall be found guilty of assault in the third degree and  
97 assault of an elderly, blind, disabled or pregnant person, [or] a person  
98 with intellectual disability or a domestic animal in the third degree upon  
99 the same incident of assault but such person may be charged and  
100 prosecuted for both such offenses upon the same information.

101 (c) In any prosecution for an offense under this section based on the  
102 victim being pregnant it shall be an affirmative defense that the actor, at  
103 the time such actor engaged in the conduct constituting the offense, did  
104 not know the victim was pregnant. In any prosecution for an offense  
105 under this section based on the victim being a person with intellectual  
106 disability, it shall be an affirmative defense that the actor, at the time  
107 such actor engaged in the conduct constituting the offense, did not

108 know the victim was a person with intellectual disability.

109 (d) Assault of an elderly, blind, disabled or pregnant person, [or] a  
110 person with intellectual disability or a domestic animal in the third  
111 degree is a class A misdemeanor and any person found guilty under this  
112 section shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of one year which  
113 shall not be suspended or reduced.

114 Sec. 6. (*Effective October 1, 2026*) (a) There is established a task force to  
115 (1) study the establishment of a state animal abuse registry, (2)  
116 recommend revisions to the accelerated pretrial rehabilitation program  
117 established under section 54-56e of the general statutes concerning (A)  
118 restricting participation in such program by any person charged with,  
119 or that is a repeat offender of, an animal cruelty offense identified in  
120 section 53-247 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, and (B)  
121 ways to improve such program, and (3) recommend revisions to statutes  
122 concerning animal cruelty or neglect. Such study shall include, but need  
123 not be limited to, an examination of the following: (A) The information  
124 that should be collected for such registry and how often such  
125 information should be updated, (B) how such registry would be  
126 accessed by the public, (C) the content of the accelerated pretrial  
127 rehabilitation program and any recommendations for improvements to  
128 such program, and (D) laws in the state relating to animal cruelty or  
129 neglect.

130 (b) The task force shall consist of the following members:

131 (1) Two appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives;

132 (2) Two appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate;

133 (3) One appointed by the majority leader of the House of  
134 Representatives;

135 (4) One appointed by the majority leader of the Senate;

136 (5) One appointed by the minority leader of the House of

137 Representatives;

138 (6) One appointed by the minority leader of the Senate;

139 (7) The Chief State's Attorney, or the Chief State's Attorney's  
140 designee; and

141 (8) The Chief Public Defender, or the Chief Public Defender's  
142 designee.

143 (c) Any member of the task force appointed under subdivision (1),  
144 (2), (3), (4), (5) or (6) of subsection (b) of this section may be a member  
145 of the General Assembly.

146 (d) All initial appointments to the task force shall be made not later  
147 than thirty days after the effective date of this section. Any vacancy shall  
148 be filled by the appointing authority.

149 (e) The speaker of the House of Representatives and the president pro  
150 tempore of the Senate shall select the chairpersons of the task force from  
151 among the members of the task force. Such chairpersons shall schedule  
152 the first meeting of the task force, which shall be held not later than sixty  
153 days after the effective date of this section.

154 (f) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the  
155 General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to insurance  
156 shall serve as administrative staff of the task force.

157 (g) Not later than January 1, 2027, the task force shall submit a report  
158 on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committees  
159 of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to  
160 insurance and the judiciary, in accordance with the provisions of section  
161 11-4a of the general statutes. The task force shall terminate on the date  
162 that it submits such report or January 1, 2027, whichever is later.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2026</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	54-86n
Sec. 3	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	53-247(a)
Sec. 4	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	53a-61
Sec. 5	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	53a-61a
Sec. 6	<i>October 1, 2026</i>	New section

**Statement of Purpose:**

To: (1) Prohibit any homeowners insurance or tenants insurance policy from discriminating based on owning any dog that is a dog trained or being trained as a service animal to assist blind, deaf or mobility impaired persons or is a therapy animal, (2) allow the court to appoint an advocate in proceedings concerning the welfare or custody of companion animals, (3) expand assault in the third degree to include domestic animals, and (4) establish an animal abuse task force.

*[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]*