



**State of Connecticut**  
**DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES**

**Office of Chief Public Defender**  
55 Farmington Avenue, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Hartford, Connecticut 06105  
(860) 509-6405 Telephone  
(860) 509-6495 Fax

**Deborah Del Prete Sullivan**  
Legal Counsel, Director  
[deborah.d.sullivan@pds.ct.gov](mailto:deborah.d.sullivan@pds.ct.gov)

**Testimony of John R. DelBarba, Assistant Legal Counsel**

**JUDICIARY COMMITTEE - MARCH 18, 2026**

**Raised Bill No. 5566**  
**AN ACT CONCERNING ACCELERATED REHABILITATION**  
**IN THE CASE OF ANIMAL CRUELTY**

The Office of Chief Public Defender (OCPD) opposes *Raised H.B. 5566, An Act Concerning Accelerated Rehabilitation in the Case of Animal Cruelty*, which repeals Subsection (c) of section 54-56e of the general statutes and substitutes language which includes the following new subsection:

*(11) to any person charged with a violation of section 22-329 or 53-247 who has previously participated in the program pursuant to this section, unless fifteen or more years have passed since the date that any charge or charges for which the program was invoked on the defendant's behalf were dismissed by the court.*

Respectfully, the Office of Chief Public Defender believes this added language is unnecessary because, while not virtually impossible, we don't foresee this as a potential reality under 54-56e of the general statutes.

Under our Accelerated Rehabilitation ("AR") statute, an individual generally is only able to use this program **one time**. While this is generally the rule, there is **one exception** to this rule. You may apply for AR a **second time** as long as your first AR application was for a **misdemeanor** and your second arrest is **10** or more years later.

The focus of this proposed prohibition is obviously animal cruelty. This bill cites to two specific offenses – 22-239 (Prevention of Cruelty to Dogs and other Animals - D Felony)

and 53-247 (Cruelty to Animals - D or C Felony) – as the charges that would trigger the “fifteen or more years have passed since the date that any charge or charges for which the program was invoked on the defendant behalf were dismissed by the court” language.

With the focus of this language on both 22-239 and 53-247, an individual would never be eligible for AR under this exception if either of the animal cruelty sections were charged where the court initially granted AR. These are both felonies and therefore would not fall within this exception.<sup>1</sup> OCPD interprets the language and spirit of this bill as one that would not preclude an individual from applying for an initial AR on something non-animal cruelty related, such as a misdemeanor larceny or trespass.

OCPD is always open to discussion on this and every other bill. Should this bill still move forward under some other theory that is inconsistent with OCPD’s interpretation of the language and spirit of this bill, OCPD would suggest in the alternative that a ten-year date is much more consistent with other programs where there is in fact a waiting period prior to any re-use of a diversionary program. Again, OCPD is unsure of the necessity of the bill.

As a result, the Office of Chief Public Defender **opposes** this bill as drafted and asks that the Committee take no action or, in the alternative, that the Committee replace the fifteen-year period with a ten-year date which is much more consistent with other programs where there is in fact a waiting period prior to any re-use of a diversionary program. Thank you for your consideration.

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on a Westlaw Cocounsel search, these statutes and regulations collectively establish the legal framework for preventing, reporting, and penalizing animal cruelty in Connecticut which include the statutes that address criminal penalties included in this legislation: [C.G.S.A. § 53-247](#), [C.G.S.A. § 22-351a](#), [C.G.S.A. § 17a-100a](#), [C.G.S.A. § 22-329b](#), [C.G.S.A. § 20-204b](#), [C.G.S.A. § 53-253](#), [C.G.S.A. § 29-108d](#), [C.G.S.A. § 53-252](#), [Regs. Conn. State Agencies § 22-344-82](#), [Regs. Conn. State Agencies § 22-344-49](#), [C.G.S.A. § 22-328](#), [C.G.S.A. § 22-26f](#), [C.G.S.A. § 20-202](#), [C.G.S.A. § 17a-100c](#).