

New England State Issues May 2023

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Connecticut – HB 6714 would redefine the crime of sexual contact with an animal, require that veterinarians report suspected incidents of animal cruelty, and prohibit persons convicted of animal cruelty or having sexual contact with an animal from possessing or working with animals for a period of five years. AKC, CFDRDO and veterinarians expressed concern the proposed definition of “sexual contact with an animal” could be interpreted as prohibiting routine canine reproduction procedures, such as artificial insemination. The Judiciary Committee voted favorably on an [amended HB 6714](#) that ensures that bona fide veterinary and animal husbandry purposes would not be inadvertently banned. The bill passed in the House on May 3 and is on the Senate calendar.

Connecticut – SB 1069 expands the definition of “animal”, expands licensed “grooming facility” to include any vehicle or trailer, and removes the definition of “kennel” allowing for personal kennels. It requires a kennel license for anyone who breeds more than two litters annually. Municipal animal control officers, instead of the Department of Agriculture, would be responsible for inspections and the enforcement of new detailed care and conditions. AKC submitted amendments after testifying before the Joint Environment Committee in February with CFDRDO. The committee approved an [amended SB 1069](#) that preserves the definition of “kennel”; does not expand the definition of “grooming facility”; but still uses the word “facility” when referring to a hobby breeder kennel license. AKC and CFDRDO worked with lawmakers and the Department of Agriculture on an amendment that removes any hobby breeder reference as a “facility” and requires a license if you produce more than five litters a year. The Senate adopted this amendment and the bill is now on the House calendar.

Connecticut – SB 729 would establish the Husky as the Connecticut state dog. AKC submitted a letter of support to the committee. An omnibus bill including this provision was raised as [HB 6822](#) and heard in March. The bill was voted favorably out of committee and is on the House calendar for consideration.

Connecticut – [SB 932](#) would authorize the emergency treatment and transport of police K9s injured in the line of duty along with other provisions to protect law enforcement K-9s. AKC submitted written testimony for the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Security hearing February 14. On March 16, the committee unanimously

voted the bill favorably. After favorable passage from the Appropriations Committee, it was sent to Judiciary Committee.

Connecticut – The Department of Agriculture submitted HB 6611 to consider a statewide dog license portal. An additional benefit of the electronic dog license portal proposed is a flat dog license fee whether a dog is intact or not. The platform will allow confidentiality for individuals with privacy protections in place. An [amended HB 6611](#) supported by AKC GR and the federation was voted favorably on March 3, but the Department is calling for additional changes. Amended HB 6611 was referred to Committee on Appropriations on April 25.

Connecticut – [HB 5215](#) would establish a taskforce, including a representative of AKC, to develop recommendations for legislation to address the epidemic of domestic dog attacks in the state and to expedite appeals of animal control officer orders and minimize the time impounded animals are held at taxpayer expense. AKC testified in support at the public hearing on February 15 and requested that CFDRDO be added to the taskforce. The Environment Committee voted favorably on March 1 with a commitment to add additional taskforce members in a House floor amendment. AKC is working with CFDRDO to get them included. The bill is on the House calendar.

Maine – [LD 679](#) would require a tenant to designate an authorized person to retrieve an animal from the tenant's rental unit in the event of the tenant's death or incapacitation or the tenant's abandonment of the animal. The bill also requires the landlord to surrender the animal to an animal shelter, an animal control officer or a police officer if the authorized person fails to retrieve the animal. The Joint Committee on Judiciary scheduled a hearing for March 23 and on April 5 voted the bill ought to pass, [as amended](#). It has been carried forward for consideration.

Maine – [LD 1121](#) would provide that the Commissioner of Public Safety develop programs to train animal control officers rather than the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. It also would require the Commissioner of Public Safety, rather than the Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to certify all animal control officers who successfully complete the training programs. On April 3, testimony by the Maine Animal Control Association indicated that training is lacking to properly prepare animal control officers for dangerous situations they encounter and cross over to law enforcement matters. It was voted down by committee on April 18.

Maine – [LD 1216](#) would establish the Animal Cruelty Task Force to provide a coalition of trained professionals available to animal control officers in the field to assist with and

enhance the enforcement of animal cruelty laws. At the April 3 hearing, the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry offered that the current Animal Welfare Advisory Council could provide this support if their authority were amended. It was voted down by committee on April 18.

Maine – [LD 1234](#), introduced March 21, would require the Department of Public Safety to reimburse authorized handlers of retired law enforcement dogs that were used in service by the State Police up to \$5,000 per year for health care expenses of their dogs. It was assigned to the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety and AKC submitted testimony in support for the April 20 public hearing. It was voted ought to pass as amended on May 10, but the new text is not yet posted.

Maine – Referencing AKC's Canine Good Citizen program, [LD 888](#) provides a system to allow a trained dog and handler to accompany a witness in courtroom appearances and other interactions where criminal justice is administered. An [alert](#) was issued and on March 15, AKC testified in support during the Judiciary Committee's public hearing. On March 22, the judiciary explained that judges currently enjoy discretion and could allow a courthouse facility dog, but that the policy may not have been widely understood. The judiciary is now creating a specific policy to be made available. The committee voted "ought not to pass" on April 13.

Massachusetts – [SB 1056](#) would, among other provisions, require a minimum of 100 square feet per dog for outdoor enclosures and ban the kenneling of any dog outside unattended for more than 5 hours or from 10pm to 6am. AKC opposes the measure as introduced. [An alert](#) was issued regarding an April 4 hearing before the Joint Judiciary Committee to consider SB 1056 and other re-filed animal bills of concern.

Massachusetts – On April 4, AKC testified in support of [HB 1480](#) and [HB 1481](#) at the Joint Judiciary Committee hearing. These bills would establish a commission to study the misrepresentation of service animals and issue penalties for those who intentionally misrepresent their animal as a service animal.

Massachusetts – AKC issued [an alert](#) noting the Joint Committee on Agriculture scheduled a public hearing on [SB 491](#) for May 15. This bill would establish an animal advisory board that meets quarterly to guide the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture (MDAR) on issues relating, but not limited, to shelters, animal control officers, animal inspectors, and training and best practices. AKC is opposed to SB 491 because of its overly broad scope and the limited representation on the proposed board.

New Hampshire – [SB 268](#) would allow for pre-hospital treatment and transportation for police canines injured in the line of duty. The Senate Committee on Judiciary heard testimony from AKC and other supporters on March 7 and immediately voted the bill favorably from committee. The Senate voted it favorably on March 16. AKC and many others testified in support before the House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee on March 29. [An amendment](#) was added before favorably releasing the bill to the House. It passed the House on May 4. Learn more in this [update](#).

New Hampshire – [HB 258](#) would establish a certification for animal chiropractors. Amendments were approved and unanimously adopted at an executive session on March 8. Details are [here](#). The House chamber voted the bill favorably on March 16. It was referred to the Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee for consideration on April 13 and voted inexpedient to legislate on May 11.

New Hampshire – [HB 249](#) would establish regulatory standards for the pet insurance industry. It has been referred to the House Committee on Commerce and Consumer Affairs and a public hearing occurred on January 31. On February 28, the committee held a hearing on [an amendment](#) to allow restaurant owners to keep their dog on the premises. The bill was then voted favorably and passed the House chamber on March 22. After an April hearing, the Senate voted for passage of the bill on May 11.

Rhode Island – [HB 5918](#) is a refiled measure that would create an ownership procedure for pets in divorce and separation proceedings based on the best interests of the animal. This act would not apply to assistance/service animals. AKC worked with the bill sponsor to substitute “ownership” for the word “custody” and submitted House Judiciary Committee testimony consistent with that request for the March 22 public hearing. It is being held for study.

Rhode Island – [HB 5864](#) would define and prohibit “captive hunting” for domestic or wild animals in enclosed areas. AKC is working with the bill proponent to clarify the text and ensure no negative consequences for legal field trial activities. Testimony seeking an amendment has been submitted for the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources for a March 9 public hearing. The Senate filed a mirror bill, [SB 607](#), that was heard on May 17. The committee recommended the measure be held for further study.

Rhode Island – [HB 5114](#) would permit the family court to award custody of household pets to the plaintiff in a domestic abuse complaint, including the enforcement remedy of a restraining order or other injunctive relief. AKC expressed concerns about using the

legal term “custody”, given the three types of child custody at the February 14 hearing. It is being held for study.

Rhode Island – [HB 5207](#) is a re-filed bill that would establish an animal abuser registry and require pet sellers to check the registry before transferring an animal to avoid fines. Everyone can agree that animals deserve a life in a safe, caring, and healthy environment. However, registries can be easily evaded and no evidence suggests they are effective at reducing the rate of subsequent offenses. AKC believes a better use of the State’s resources would be to focus on and utilize enforcement activities that are proven effective and provided this testimony on February 14 before the House Judiciary Committee with other stakeholders. The bill is being studied.

Rhode Island – Elimination of the sales tax for taxi and pet services, such as grooming and boarding, would occur if [SB 83](#) were enacted. AKC supports the bill, and it has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee.

Vermont – [HB 472](#) would make a variety of changes to agricultural programs. AKC and the Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs testified before the Senate Finance Committee on May 2 requesting an amendment that would provide an accounting of what is expended by 13 state agencies each year to fulfill their animal welfare responsibilities. Gathering this data would inform future policy considerations on centralizing animal welfare functions. The Senate Agriculture Committee was consulted and instead of adopting an amendment, has decided to request the research be performed by the University of Vermont.

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