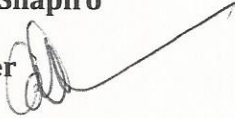


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TO: Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

cc: Attorney General Josh Shapiro

FROM: Cathleen Palm, Founder 

DATE: January 30, 2017

RE: Support for Senate Bill 176

The Center for Children's Justice (C4CJ) urges your support for Senate Bill 176.

By supporting this legislation you will reinforce that Pennsylvania understands the correlation between child maltreatment and animal cruelty. Senate Bill 176 is also an important, yet initial, step to Pennsylvania intentionally acting to prevent and effectively intervene with abuse against children and abuse against animals. Senate Bill 176 seeks to:

1. Add an animal control officer or humane society police officer to the list of persons, within Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), legally required to report suspected child abuse; and
2. Require social service employees, who have formed "a reasonable suspicion that an animal is the victim of cruelty," to report this suspicion "to an agent of a society or association for the prevention of cruelty to animals incorporated under the laws of this Commonwealth."

The vote on Senate Bill 176 in your committee occurs in the same week that Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro provided a powerful illustration of how abuse against a child can also be an indicator of abuse against an animal and vice versa.

Shapiro unveiled findings of a "horrendous case" of sexual abuse against a child – abuse that began when the child was just 9 years old and continued over a period of years.¹ According to Shapiro, the coordinated cross-jurisdictional efforts of law enforcement resulted in the arrest of three Pennsylvania suspects "charged with an array of sexual offenses against the underage victim." Law enforcement officials also were able to extradite another suspect from Virginia. Criminal charges filed in Pennsylvania against these

¹ https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/Media_and_Resources/Press_Releases/Press_Release/?pid=3020

suspects are extensive and include child rape, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse and child pornography.

A fifth man connected to the Pennsylvania child sexual abuse case faces criminal charges in Virginia related to bestiality² and animal cruelty.³ According to the media, “multiple images of bestiality” were discovered as part of the investigation. This Virginia man and the suspect extradited from Virginia reportedly shared a “sexual interest” in dogs and young boys.⁴

Frustratingly, this is not the only example we can offer to underscore the importance of Senate Bill 176.

Just last month, three young children – ages 4, 5 and 6 – were rescued from a Dauphin County home where authorities have said they were being imprisoned and denied food. Two of the children were so desperate for food that they faced imminent death. After the children were rescued, animal humane officials then rescued 18 cats, 1 dog and a number of other animals from the home that were reported as having experienced “various stages of neglect.”⁵

In 2016, The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reworked the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) system adding Animal Cruelty to the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) as a Group A offence and as a Crime Against Society. The National Sheriffs’ Association was among the organizations that pursued the change citing that “there is a scientifically proven connection between animal cruelty and child abuse, domestic violence, other interpersonal violence, and juvenile delinquency.”

NIBRS was implemented by the FBI in 1989 to provide more comprehensive incident specific crime details. Historically animal cruelty crimes were reported by law enforcement to the FBI through a catch all “other” category. This practice made it difficult to track the scope and types of crimes against animals, who was perpetrating such crimes and to permit study about co-occurring crimes against animals and humans. The FBI’s UCR reporting changes took effect January 2016 and now requires reporting of the following crimes against animals:

- Simple/Gross Neglect (failure to provide food, water, shelter, veterinary care, or intentionally or knowingly withholding food or water)
- Intentional Abuse and Torture
- Organized Abuse (dog fighting and cock fighting)
- Animal Sexual Abuse (bestiality)

Thank you for your continued efforts to protect Pennsylvania’s children and to effectively work to address the correlation between abuse against children and abuse against animals.

²<https://eapps.courts.state.va.us/gdcourts/criminalDetail.do?formAction=newSearch?ts=1485793521589&clientSearchCounter=3&localFipsCode=087>

³<https://eapps.courts.state.va.us/gdcourts/criminalDetail.do?formAction=newSearch?ts=1485795727127&clientSearchCounter=3&localFipsCode=087>

⁴ <http://www.philly.com/philly/news/Police-Bucks-man-abused-child-as-part-of-animal-costumed-sex-ring.html>

⁵ <http://fox43.com/2016/12/30/paws-rescues-animals-from-halifax-neglect-home/>