



128 Dorrance Street, Suite 400
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-7171
Fax: (401) 831-7175
www.riaclu.org
info@riaclu.org

ACLU OF RI POSITION: OPPOSE

**TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO 22-H 7572,
AN ACT RELATING TO ANIMALS AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY –
CRUELTY TO ANIMALS
March 10, 2022**

The ACLU opposes this legislation, which would increase penalties for people convicted of unnecessary cruelty to an animal.

Only four years ago, the General Assembly enacted legislation similar to this bill, codified in R.I.G.L. §4-1-40, and we do not believe there is any compelling reason to revisit that legislation so soon and make the penalties even harsher than they already are. That law already restricts a convicted individual from “possessing or residing” with an animal for up to five years if they commit a misdemeanor offense involving animal cruelty, and fifteen years for a felony.

The penalties contained in this legislation expand that prohibition considerably, and would make it illegal for a person to “harbor, own, possess, exercise control over, adopt, or foster an animal” for *life*, giving the court no discretion to determine the terms of punishment.

What this means is that a teenager convicted of cruelty to animals under this bill would not be able to raise a family thirty years later with a pet of any kind. This type of punishment is unreasonable, inappropriate, and unjust.

Given the more-than-sufficient punishments currently in place for violations of this chapter, we urge rejection of this legislation. Thank you for your consideration.