



**Statement of
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In Opposition to A State Sales Tax on Veterinary Services (SB-877)
Joint Committee on Finance, Revenue and Bonding
March 15, 2019**

Senate Co-Chairman John Fonfara and House Co-Chair Jason Rojas, honorable members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee.

CT Votes for Animals is a grass roots animal advocacy organization representing 3,000 citizens across the State of Connecticut. CVA members care deeply that Connecticut provides a safe and humane environment for all its animals. CVA speaks up for animals as a reminder to the public that a compassionate world is good for all and one in which we should all want to live.

CT Votes for Animals is strongly opposed to Governor Lamont's proposal to tax veterinary services for the hundreds of thousands of pets and their owner/guardians in the State. It was just a brief 4 years ago when then Governor Malloy proposed the same sales tax. It is astonishing that the budget office heard none of the cries by thousands of CT residents who said don't tax my pet's health care.

While it might seem to make common sense apparently it bears repeating. The overwhelming majority of pet owners consider their pet "family". Indeed for some their pet is their lifeline, for isolated seniors and others it is their trusty companion. Do not be confused. Pets are not a luxury and the medical services they require are not discretionary.

Veterinary medical care is critical for the health and safety of all animals. Services run the gamut from inoculating against communicable diseases, spay and neutering to control animal over populations to medical services for the treatment of illnesses, palliative care for a sick animal in distress. And very few residents carry health insurance for their pets. While it is a growing area, in reality, pet insurance is just too expensive for most of Connecticut's pet owners.

Today, many pet guardians juggle the costs associated with caring for their pet. Adding even more to their expenses, risks people walking away from getting necessary medical care for their pet. Unlike some of the other services targeted in the Governor's bill, medical care for animals is not discretionary and it certainly is a not a luxury. It is a necessity and oftentimes a difficult cost for owners to meet. Imposing a sales tax on medical services for animals is an additional burden to

Connecticut residents that will have negative consequences. And for those in most economic distress the additional costs will only give further reason to avoid or reduce those services. It also means that some animal owners will be forced to make very difficult decisions: forego treatment, skip vaccinations, or decline diagnostic tests, even though these services may prolong life or reduce suffering.

CT Votes for Animals wants to emphasize that the proposal before you is about taxing ***medical services for sentient beings***. And this tax can and will have a negative impact in the on-going health of animals. CT Votes for Animals strongly urges you to remove this tax from those you consider. In the immortal words of Mahatma Gandhi “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.”