



**To:**           **House Judiciary Committee**  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re:**           **House Bill 5736 – An Act Relating to Animals and Animal Husbandry – Cruelty to Animals.**

**Position:**   **Oppose**

**Date:**       **March 10, 2021**

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Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Joseph Mullin and I am the Assistant Manager, Northeastern States for the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (CSF). I respectfully urge you to oppose House Bill 5736 (HB 5736) – legislation that fails to account for the abilities of different dog breeds to thrive in adverse weather.

Since 1989, CSF has dedicated itself to the mission of working with Congress, governors, and state legislatures to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting and trapping. The unique and collective force of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus, and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses, working closely with CSF, and with the oppose of major hunting, recreational fishing and shooting, and trapping organizations, serves as an unprecedented network of pro-sportsmen elected officials that advance the conservation interests of America's hunters and anglers.

Across the nation, the special roles that dogs play in the hunting community primarily consists of tracking game, pointing and flushing upland birds, and retrieving downed waterfowl. In all respects, dogs serve as a valuable asset to sportsmen and are treated as such. Working with dogs is a cherished part of the hunting tradition for many. Sportsmen and women have a strong attachment to, and affinity for, their four-legged hunting partners and often dedicate significant time and money into the training and upkeep of their dogs’ skills. In Rhode Island, dogs are a regular part of the hunting culture and play a vital role to sportsmen in the field and on the water.

Instituting a 30-minute limit on how long a dog may be “tethered outside and unattended” is perplexing, as many breeds perform quite well outdoors in a wide variety of conditions. HB 5736 makes no attempt to consider and recognize the varying capabilities of different dog breeds to sustain themselves and thrive in adverse weather conditions. Greater time spent outside gives a dog the

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opportunity to acclimate its body to varying temperature changes. When a dog's adaptability to these conditions is lessened as a result of increased time spent indoors, the shock value is even greater to its health and body when it is exposed to a cold morning in the duck blind, cutting through ice, and wading through chest-high water. This bill places an overall blanket constraint on one's ability to allow a dog outside and unattended for a set amount of time, regardless of the breed or special circumstances.

What's equally concerning is the lack of definitions for the terms "tethered" and "outside and unattended." Nowhere in Chapter 4-1-1 of the General Laws is guidance offered into the what these may be interpreted as, though for the sporting community, this definitional void poses to have significant consequences. Personally, I have used a 30-foot check cord while upland hunting, looping this rope around a fence post so that I can keep my dog in one area while running back to the car for a forgotten item. Whether or not this cord, which offers ample room for my dog to roam, is considered "tethered," or whether our hunting together is considered "outside and unattended" is open to interpretation in HB 5736. Similarly, sportsmen and women who are training their dogs will commonly utilize tie-outs – short stakes that are driven into the ground and have 2-foot chains connecting the dogs' collars to the stakes. They are often used to reinforce common obedience commands, preventing the dog from breaking simple orders such as "place" and/or "stay." I have used tie-outs while training my dog, and found them to be an extremely helpful tool. However, HB 5736 would make this practice an absolute impossibility, thus undercutting the interests of not only Rhode Island's sportsmen and women, but those who seek to train their dogs year-round.

CSF fully supports the fair treatment and protection of dogs. Many of our staff members, including myself, own hunting dogs and view them as cherished companions and we exercise great care when they are outside. However, for the reasons stated above we cannot support HB 5736 and respectfully urge the Members of the House Judiciary Committee to oppose this legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this issue. Should you require any additional information on this, or any other sportsmen-related topic, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,



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