

1 COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
2 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
3 JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

4
5 ERIE INSURANCE BUILDING
6 100 ERIE INSURANCE PLACE
7 ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA

8
9 TUESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2008
10 10:06 A.M.

11 PUBLIC HEARING 593
12

13
14 BEFORE:

15 HONORABLE THOMAS R. CALTAGIRONE, CHAIRMAN

16 HONORABLE JOHN EVANS

17 HONORABLE PAT HARKINS
18

19 ALSO PRESENT:

20 BILL ANDRIG, CHIEF COUNSEL

21 KAREN COATES, CHIEF COUNSEL

22 DAVID McLAUGHLIN, JUDICIARY COMMITTEE STAFF
23

24 Reported by Sondra A. Black
25 Ferguson & Holdnack Reporting, Inc.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

I N D E X

PASSLE HELMINSKI.....6
JODY SCHERSTEN.....20
ERNIE WRIGHT.....26
PAT VAN ZANDT CHRISTIANSON.....29
SANDY GLOBAH.....38
LESLIE KELLY.....48

1 MR. CALTAGIRONE: I'd like to get started with
2 the House Judiciary Committee Meeting on House Bill 593.
3 And some of the staff and probably some of the panel
4 members will be arriving in a little while.

5 I'm State Representative Tom Caltagirone. I'm
6 from Reading First County. I'm the democratic chairman of
7 the House Judiciary Committee. If you would, from my left
8 and we'll go across the panel, and -- if you could
9 introduce yourself for the record.

10 MR. ANDRING: Bill Andring, chief counsel to the
11 committee.

12 MR. EVANS: John Evans, State Representative
13 from the Fifth District Erie and Crawford Counties.

14 MS. COATES: Karen Coates, chief counsel to the
15 committee.

16 MR. McLAUGHLIN: David McLaughlin, judiciary
17 committee staff.

18 MR. HARKINS: Pat Harkins, State Representative
19 from the First District in Erie, in Lawrence Park.

20 MR. CALTAGIRONE: I would like to start off with
21 opening remarks and comments from your State
22 Representative, a member of the committee and a very good
23 friend of mine, John Evans.

24 MR. EVANS: Good morning. I'd like to thank
25 you, Chairman Caltagirone, and the members of the House

1 Judiciary Committee for making the long trip here to Erie
2 to learn more about this very important piece of
3 legislation. I particularly want to personally thank
4 Chairman Caltagirone for his interest in this Bill and for
5 his willingness to come here to Erie to conduct this very
6 important hearing. And I do deeply appreciate your
7 corporation on this, Mr. Chairman.

8 House Bill 593 is legislation that provides an
9 invaluable service to individuals with disabilities.
10 Specifically, my proposal would impose a criminal penalty
11 on the owner or coowner of any dog that injures a service
12 dog. House Bill 593 would make the owner or coowner of a
13 dog that kills, maims, or disfigures the guide dog of an
14 individual who is blind, a hearing dog of an individual who
15 is deaf or audibly impaired, or a service dog of an
16 individual who is physically limited guilty of a
17 misdemeanor of the second degree. So, again, it would be
18 for the owners of -- for those dogs. And it would make
19 that -- the penalty would be raised.

20 Currently the penalty is not very severe at all.
21 In fact, it's been considered a slap on the wrist. And
22 what we're hoping to do is add some teeth to the law to
23 allow -- to recognize that these service dogs fulfill such
24 an important role in our society. And it's time that the
25 Commonwealth comes up to the measure that other states in

1 the nation have already done in this type of legislation.

2 Now, in addition to any other fine or penalty, a
3 person convicted under this new law would be required to
4 make reparations for veterinary cost for treating the
5 guide, hearing, or service dog, and, if necessary, the cost
6 of a replacement dog.

7 These animals cost a great deal of money and
8 undergo extensive training to become a service dog, and are
9 an invaluable asset to those individuals with disabilities
10 who might otherwise have more limited mobility and
11 independence. The abuse or death of one of these animals
12 needs to be taken seriously and punished at a higher level
13 than is previously on the books.

14 It is unconscionable to me that someone would
15 intentionally allow their own pet to hurt, maim, or kill an
16 animal, but unfortunately it does happen. In fact, today
17 we'll be hearing from an individual who's experienced this
18 first hand. We're going to be hearing her story. She's an
19 extraordinary artist, who I've had the pleasure of getting
20 to know while I was at Edinboro University, which is also
21 in my District. Passle Helminski will be testifying later.

22 And she came to me with this issue several years
23 ago. We've been working closely with Chairman Caltagirone,
24 to move this Bill out of Committee. And I'm hoping that
25 we'll be able to, with the information presented today,

1 further educate the members of the Committee and
2 Commonwealth residents statewide who are watching this
3 proceeding that we are having televised today by PCN to get
4 a better understanding of what this legislation is about.

5 Simply, cruelty to animals is a very serious
6 crime. These are living, breathing creatures that others
7 depend on for their safety and welfare, and as such there
8 needs to be consequences for their horrific actions.

9 I'd be happy to answer any questions, and I look
10 forward to the testifiers who will be here this morning to
11 talk about why this Bill is an important measure of ours to
12 consider in Pennsylvania at this time. Thank you very
13 much.

14 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Thank you, John. Are there
15 any questions from the panel?

16 Please come up and join us, John.

17 We'll next here from Passle Helminski.

18 MS. HELMINSKI: Mr. Chairman, I can't thank you
19 enough for having this hearing today. And I have to say, I
20 have to sing Chris Winters's praises publically here,
21 because he worked relentlessly to have this happen. So
22 make sure my good words get back to him.

23 You'll notice that there is -- there is packets
24 up there -- did you -- were the packets passed out? Does
25 everybody have one of my packets?

1 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Yes.

2 MS. HELMINSKI: Don't panic, this is not my
3 whole testimony. When I -- I did research for you -- and
4 I'm going to start by saying, if you turn to my packet,
5 there's a The Team, The Attack, published by the Guide Dog
6 Users. If you don't want to read all their stories, on
7 Page 5 it starts with issues, recommendations, and effects
8 of the law. And on Page 10, I put in parentheses, of The
9 Team, The Attack -- and my poor handwriting, because my
10 handwriting is really poor since my brain injury
11 happened -- it refers to Pennsylvania having this law in
12 place, which we don't have in place right now.

13 It's -- what's in place in Pennsylvania is not a
14 dog-on-dog attack. Representative Brooks passed the law if
15 a person hurts a service dog, then they have
16 more repercussions before, because somebody in her
17 district, who was running for mayor, kicked his guide dog,
18 Inky, to death, and he was found guilty. So she did that.

19 I'll do my -- and after that you have a letter
20 from the Stapled -- the last thing you have is a 4-year-old
21 letter for the Federation for the Blind, too. I had to
22 give equal access to these two wonderful organizations.
23 And I'm a member of both organizations, too, so I could not
24 have it that way.

25 And again, The Team, The Attack was written in

1 2001, so anything you see there is referring to the laws in
2 place at 2001. Ginger, who you see there, is now that --
3 she's married -- she's married to the CEO of Seeing Eye in
4 New Jersey -- Morristown, New Jersey. She is a graduate
5 assistant there. And so I e-mailed her this morning, so
6 she's watching this closely, too. She fought for her State
7 to have this law in place. New Jersey has this law in
8 place.

9 And I thank Pat Harkins. When it comes out of
10 Committee, he's going to amend it further to make it lost
11 wages for people that are working the dog. If my dog is
12 hurt, I can't teach art anymore. So I'm not going to have
13 wages, I'm not going to pay taxes because I'm not working.
14 He's going to also amend it to make it a felony, like it is
15 in most states now. And medical expenses for the handler,
16 too. That's not included in the current version. But I'll
17 take anything we can, and I'll always amend it later. So,
18 again, thank you for having this hearing today.

19 My service dog has been attacked several times.
20 As a matter of fact, six times in the State of
21 Pennsylvania. One time in -- where I live, in John's
22 District; one on time in Harbor Creek; one time in
23 Pittsburgh; in the City of Erie; and in Harrisburg.

24 So I want to only focus on two of the attacks
25 today.

1 At 1:00 p.m., on September 29th of 2002, my
2 service dog was attacked by two small, unleashed and
3 uncontrolled dogs. These dogs were bigger than a
4 Chihuahua. They are about the size of a -- almost a
5 medium-sized dog, like a Bichon. My sister and myself and
6 Ariel were walking on a sidewalk from an appointment to my
7 sister's truck in a parking lot at Kelso Beach, in Erie,
8 Pennsylvania. One dog jumped on her from behind. The
9 other dog jumped on her side, lunging at her throat. I
10 threw my bag on the one dog while trying to undo my dog's
11 leash, because schools tell us to -- don't interfere with a
12 fight. Don't get in the middle of a fight. Try to release
13 your dog so your dog can escape, because these dogs are not
14 trained to fight back. My sister tried to shield my
15 service dog with her own body while she's trying to grab
16 the other dog.

17 I yelled for the owner, who ran out of his house
18 saying, I'm so sorry, while his dogs kept jumping and
19 biting my service dog. I kicked his dog off my dog's hind
20 leg, because there was a wall there by the sidewalk and my
21 dog was trapped by the wall. So she couldn't escape. The
22 owner got one dog, but the other dog wouldn't listen and
23 kept -- kept running around and lunging and biting, and
24 running around, lunging and biting.

25 My sister and I finally made our way back to her

1 truck. We checked Ariel for wounds, we found none. We got
2 her home, we cleaned up all the dog saliva, still found no
3 wounds. But we saw bruises were starting to form on her
4 body. We called the vet. The vet said to bring her in
5 right away. The vet said she has contusions and to watch
6 her, because sometimes puncture wounds don't -- do not show
7 up on animals right away and then I would have to bring her
8 back for more treatment.

9 I found out later from people that live in the
10 neighborhood that his dogs were guilty of attacking other
11 dogs in the neighborhood. I mailed him several copies of
12 my vet bill asking him to pay for it. He didn't respond.
13 So I mailed a certified letter saying that I would turn him
14 into a district magistrate to get my vet bill, and then he
15 would have to pay court costs.

16 On June 3, 2005, a couple parked their car at
17 the end of our lane, in front of our no parking, no
18 trespassing sign, which is in front of our house, to walk
19 their dogs in the woods. I put Ariel on -- out on a run --
20 and I always go out with her when I relieve her -- not
21 knowing that they were parked there or there were dogs
22 that -- or they had their dogs in the woods.

23 The two dogs ran out of the woods and started
24 jumping on Ariel. One dog was a Shar-Pei and the other one
25 was a Newfoundland. So you can understand the size of the

1 dog that was jumping on me and my -- my little Ariel. The
2 dogs had leashes on them, but nobody was holding onto the
3 leash. So -- and Ariel had her lead on her, because we
4 have a pulley system when I put her out for relieving her.
5 I got tangled up in her -- her lead there, and the dogs'
6 leashes.

7 I was yelling for the owners to come and get
8 their dogs. The lady came out and started beating her
9 dogs. And I said, please don't hit me and please don't hit
10 my service animal.

11 The man started yelling at me because his dogs
12 wouldn't listen. So I was informing that he's breaking
13 leash laws, he's now trespassing on my property. He
14 basically told me I should take him to court and sue him.

15 So here I am, in my yard, trying to make it back
16 to my front door, tangled up in this mess. The lady did
17 pick up the Shar-Pei, put her in the car. The Newfoundland
18 knocked me down several times when I was trying to make it
19 to my front door. They never apologized. They threw the
20 dogs in the car.

21 My next door neighbor, Jim Stark, saw
22 everything, came running over. Saw Ariel, said, call your
23 vet. She needs to go to the vet right away. Brought his
24 car over. So I had to pay another emergency vet visit,
25 because when you, you know, call and say you have an

1 emergency, they charge you more money for your vet visits.

2 My vet looked at her, said she has bruises
3 starting to form, watch her for puncture wounds. And he
4 says, watch her gait, because when that large of a dog
5 jumps and bites, it's a possibility that the muscles will
6 be injured and they won't know it till the next day.

7 These are some of the reasons why I've been
8 trying for years to change Pennsylvania Criminal Code 18.
9 Ariel and I are a team for 24/7. As you heard, my dog
10 is -- does not fight back. They're bred and trained not to
11 fight back. Again, our schools tell us to drop our leashes
12 so our dog can escape, which is the hardest thing for a
13 handler to do.

14 These dogs are bred for their job. They're with
15 puppy raisers for a year and then go back to the school.
16 Half of the puppies will not make the cut because of
17 temperament issues or physical issues.

18 The dogs that do make the cut are in training
19 for approximately a year. When training, the handlers will
20 notice that they'll not be good for service work, but they
21 may be a good dog for bomb detecting or drug detecting, so
22 those dogs get washed out again. So approximately half the
23 dogs get washed out again at that point.

24 The remaining dogs are paired up with handlers,
25 they go home. Some dogs cannot handle the stress of

1 working with a handler without a trainer by their side. So
2 they get washed out again.

3 Out of the working teams there are -- that are
4 presently working today, and this is a real, real low
5 estimate, because people are afraid to call the schools --
6 you're supposed to call the schools every time an attack
7 happens, in case they have to send a trainer to reevaluate
8 your dog's personality to make sure her temperament is okay
9 to work safely in public with you. Some people don't call
10 their schools, because they're afraid that the schools are
11 not going to reissue a dog in case this law is -- unless
12 there's a law in place in their state. So it's a real low
13 estimate that a third of the dogs have to retire because
14 they are injured, killed, or maimed or traumatized so bad
15 they can't work in public anymore.

16 So you see at the end report I refer to -- that
17 Florida does have a Criminal Code and all the parts are
18 laws they do have at the end of my testimony. That's what
19 I would hope we would have in Pennsylvania.

20 When I'm in Florida, I know I don't have to call
21 a dog warden. When I'm in Pennsylvania, I have to find out
22 which district I am in, which dog warden I call instead of
23 a police officer. If it is in Criminal Code 18 -- and I'll
24 work until it is in Criminal Code 18 and a felony -- then I
25 know I can call a police officer and the police officer can

1 take charge of the situation. On weekends, the enforcement
2 officers don't work, but police officers work 24/7.

3 Thank you. Any questions?

4 MR. CALTAGIRONE: I noticed in your testimony
5 here -- I don't think many people realize the cost for a
6 trained dog.

7 MS. HELMINSKI: Yes. I glanced over that, I'm
8 sorry. Do you want me to read that for everybody?

9 MR. CALTAGIRONE: That jumped out at me, because
10 I don't think many people realize that --

11 MS. HELMINSKI: I could read it for everybody.

12 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Not just the value of the dog
13 for a person, but the actual cost involved for acquiring
14 one of those dogs, 75,000, 25,000. That's a lot of money.

15 MS. HELMINSKI: Ernie's dog is actually from the
16 school that just -- and Ernie Wright is going to testify.
17 His school in California just upped the value of the dog,
18 because of so much -- the dog is \$75,000. New Hope, which
19 is in Pennsylvania, in Warren, Pennsylvania, just for basic
20 skills for their service animals starts at \$25,000. Leslie
21 has to raise money for -- I think it was -- I think it was
22 \$25,000 for her hearing dog.

23 But it 's -- it's -- it's expensive for the
24 schools. That's why I included from the guide dog schools,
25 their comments, for The Team, The Attack, so you can read

1 that at your leisure. Again, you know, the stories are up
2 to Page 5 on The Team, The Attack.

3 And those are old costs. You'll see the old
4 costs were \$60,000, and in 2001 -- and this came out before
5 September 11th happened. After September 11th a lot of
6 things changed in our Country and a lot of expenses went
7 up. So, yes.

8 And again, in Florida -- my last paragraph, in
9 Florida, they have a Criminal Code -- it is a felony in
10 Florida. The handler will get reimbursed for vet bills,
11 medical bills, lost wages, retraining costs. Sometimes you
12 have to board the dog when the dogs -- you know, in a vet's
13 office, too -- besides vet bills, boarding costs. And, if
14 necessary, replace the cost of the dog. Now the school
15 supplies a free dog for you, then they owe the school the
16 money. And the schools love that.

17 If Leslie's dog gets attacked and dies and she
18 has to raise another \$25,000 for another hearing dog, then
19 they owe Leslie another \$25,000 for her hearing dog. We
20 need our dogs to work to pay taxes. We all vote. So,
21 thank you.

22 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Thank you.

23 MS. HELMINSKI: I get so emotional here. I'm
24 sorry I glanced over that. Thank you.

25 MR. CALTAGIRONE: No. I like dogs, I've always

1 had dogs, and cats also, and I know they're part of the
2 family.

3 MS. HELMINSKI: They are.

4 MR. CALTAGIRONE: And I always say that our
5 pets, and especially our four-legged friends, they give us
6 unconditional love. They're always there for us.

7 MS. HELMINSKI: I mean, the bond between the
8 service animals and the handlers is almost tangible. It's
9 so -- it's so thick of a bond. And, yes, it does take time
10 to have that bond, but in six month's time, you can almost
11 see the bond. Thank you.

12 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Thank you. Questions?

13 MR. HARKINS: One quick point, Passle. If you'd
14 point out how long this has been left to languish. Before
15 we started, you talked to me, you had that document stating
16 how long this fight's been going on.

17 MS. HELMINSKI: I made a -- I brought a copy
18 that was an early release in the newspaper, in Johnston,
19 PA. It was supposed to be called Taylor's Law that was
20 passed. When Tom Ridge was -- first term in office. And
21 she did an early newspaper release saying Tom Ridge is
22 going to have a press conference when this law is passed.
23 It didn't pass.

24 So Bonnie is still fighting the cause. Bonnie
25 is in Lancaster County and she has a dog from Leader School

1 for the Blind. What happened with Bonnie is that she had
2 to walk to a bus stop to take her -- to go to work, and
3 people intentionally let their dogs loose to attack her dog
4 because they thought it was funny. When she called the
5 sheriff, the sheriff's office, who sent some -- the
6 sheriff's deputy thought it was funny, too. So she thought
7 she was not going to stop until this law was passed.

8 Now, Taylor's not with us, anymore; Taylor died
9 of natural causes. But she's still fighting the cause in
10 Lancaster, too. So that's how long this has been going on,
11 since first term of Tom Ridge -- thank you -- as governor.

12 MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Passle, thank you for your testimony today.
14 Don't leave yet.

15 MS. HELMINSKI: I'm not.

16 MR. EVANS: Okay. I wanted to point out that
17 this does seem to be a loophole in Pennsylvania law,
18 because, in Pennsylvania, it is a secondary misdemeanor for
19 a person to harass, annoy, injure, or interfere with a
20 guide dog, hearing dog, or service dog, or kill or maim or
21 disfigure a domestic animal, which would include dogs, but
22 there is nothing for a dog attacking another dog and then
23 the owner of that attacking dog being responsible for the
24 disfiguration -- either killing, maiming, disfiguring a
25 guide dog. And under the proposal of House Bill 593 that

1 we're talking about today, it could be punishable now for
2 the owner of those dogs, up to two years in prison and a
3 fine of \$5,000. So this is a significant measure of the
4 law.

5 And, Passle, I just wanted to ask you before you
6 left, you mentioned the laws in Florida, are you aware of
7 any other states that have similar types of laws on the
8 books to what we're talking here in this House Bill?

9 MS. HELMINSKI: Oregon, New York, New Jersey. I
10 don't know if this is a felony in Ohio. But I know
11 California has it, Washington State. If you -- if you look
12 on Page -- in The Team, The Attack, on Page 10, they're
13 acknowledging states in 2001 so far. At that point in
14 time, when The Team, The Attack was written, 16 states had
15 the law in place.

16 Right now Pennsylvania is one of the 14 states
17 that doesn't have the law in place. So what's wrong with
18 Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania -- can everybody hear me? When
19 I put my other hat on, when -- I'm a rehabilitation counsel
20 member, appointed by the governor legislative chair of that
21 counsel. When I go to DC for the other NRA conference, the
22 National Rehabilitation Conference, we're -- Pennsylvania
23 is known as the leader state for people with disabilities.
24 So let's get it done in Pennsylvania and let's let
25 everybody know that we're working this.

1 And I know that Senator Earl will support it
2 when it goes from the House to the Senate. She has all the
3 copies you have. So thank you. Any other questions?

4 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Yes, Karen.

5 MS. COATES: In the case of the two attacks that
6 you described, what was the end result in terms of any type
7 of punishment, enforcement --

8 MS. HELMINSKI: No punishment happened.

9 MS. COATES: You contacted the dog law warden?
10 Is that currently what the procedure is?

11 MS. HELMINSKI: Right.

12 MS. COATES: What does the dog law warden do, if
13 anything?

14 MS. HELMINSKI: Gives them a warning. Not even
15 a slap on the wrist, a written warning.

16 MS. COATES: Thanks.

17 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much for coming
18 today. My question was simply, do you make a distinction
19 between somebody's intentional conduct and non-intentional
20 conduct in terms of criminal liability for this type of
21 activity?

22 MS. HELMINSKI: I would not; Florida does not.

23 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: In other words, you would hold
24 what we call strict liability, in other words?

25 MS. HELMINSKI: I would. I would. It works

1 very well in Florida. It works well in Virginia. Because
2 when -- when I go for the other NRA conference and I have
3 to stay in the hotel in Virginia and then I go on the
4 metro, you know, ride into DC, work the hill, and then ride
5 back -- I mean, people in Virginia know. When I'm walking
6 with her and they're saying, here comes a service animal,
7 make sure you're dog's under control. Yes, there will be
8 idiots in every state you go to who don't care, but, I
9 mean, most people respect the law and abide by the law.

10 And if Florida can do it and Virginia and New
11 York State and New Jersey, why not Pennsylvania.

12 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you.

13 MS. HELMINSKI: Thank you.

14 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Thank you.

15 We'll next here from Jody Schersten, supervisor
16 Voices for Independence.

17 And for the record, what we'll do is we'll give
18 you copies of all this testimony, so it's formally
19 submitted for you.

20 MR. EVANS: If any members of the press would
21 like written testimony, we have some here for you.

22 MS. SHERSTEN: I do have copies here. Thank you
23 very much for allowing me to come and speak. My name is
24 Jody Schersten, this is my hearing dog at my feet. She was
25 trained in Pilot School in Columbus, Ohio. And we've been

1 together since about 2002.

2 I'm here today to ask you respectfully to pass
3 House Bill 593 regarding protections for service dogs and
4 their handlers.

5 Now, we know that Pennsylvania prosecutes people
6 for attacking dogs. This was happening years ago when an
7 east Erie side man was arrested for beating a puppy to
8 death with a baseball death. He was recently released from
9 a deserved prison sentence.

10 Now, it's my understanding that's what's missing
11 from the Penal Code is language regarding dogs attacking
12 other dogs, dogs attacking humans. And it's my
13 understanding that House Bill 593, if passed, will remedy
14 this.

15 I personally have not experienced the trauma
16 associated with a dog attack, and I hope I never will.
17 The closest incident that I can cite from personal
18 experience was a recent veterinary appointment in which
19 another customer's dog snarled, growled, and barked
20 menacingly at mine. And kind of odd, my dog kind of looked
21 at me -- and she reminded me of a little child, you know,
22 one that kind of looks at you with sad eyes and asks why
23 when other kids are being mean to them. She was kind of
24 looking at me saying, why this dog being mean, mom.

25 Now, nothing came of that incident due to the

1 quick response of the clinic staff. And I really thank god
2 for that, because the dog was a bit bigger than my dog and
3 I was holding a cat in the other other hand. So that would
4 have been a real mess.

5 However, I've become keenly aware of the
6 necessity of House Bill 593 through my colleague, Passle
7 Helminski, who, as I understand, has led this charge for
8 about seven or eight years now, and she's been bringing
9 this to your attention for quite awhile. In my opinion, it
10 shouldn't take seven or eight years to pass something, you
11 know, for the welfare of Pennsylvania citizens.

12 I'm a person that likes to prepare for the worst
13 by doing my part to protect myself. That's why I'm
14 appearing today, to stand together with all these nice
15 people, in supporting the passage of this Bill. And House
16 Bill 593, especially Representative Harkins's amendments to
17 it offers the kind of legal protections we need.
18 Please pass it.

19 Because I want to know if I -- if my dog and I
20 are the victims of such crime that we have the law on our
21 side, spelled out clearly, leaving no room for debate.
22 I want to know that I can call the police and press charges
23 immediately, no debate on who enforces that law. I want to
24 know that I have a shot in court for justice to be served
25 in the case of this kind of a violent act. No debate as to

1 the letter of the law.

2 I want to know that I can have restitution for
3 the thousands of dollars it might take to give my dog
4 medical care or retraining she would need in the event of
5 an attack or, if god for bid, I have to replace her. No
6 debate as to whether or not my loyal servant is more than
7 just the average dog.

8 I want to know that my income won't be
9 jeopardized because I had to take time off to heal both me
10 and my dog. And with the way that medical costs and
11 insurance keeps going up, I want to know that my injuries
12 will be covered as well. No debate as to who pays for
13 that.

14 With the passage of House Bill 593, I will know
15 that I, my faithful companion, along with others in
16 Pennsylvania, will have the law on our side. Thank you
17 very much for your time.

18 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Could you wait if there's any
19 questions.

20 MR. HARKINS: Just one question, is there
21 insurance, or do you have the ability to buy insurance on
22 the dog with the value being so high?

23 MS. SCHERSTEN: There are insurances available.
24 I do have some insurance for my -- my dog. There -- she
25 has had a couple of injuries, ACL replacements. Those were

1 \$800 each leg. That came out of my pocket first and the
2 insurance did reimburse me some of that money.

3 MR. HARKINS: Is the insurance affordable?

4 MS. SCHERSTEN: Ongoing veterinary care, routine
5 costs are not covered by most insurances.

6 MR. HARKINS: I was going to ask, is the
7 insurance affordable?

8 MS. SCHERSTEN: Sometimes. It depends on the
9 income. The particular policy I have is about \$300 a year,
10 which is doable. Again, I still have to cover certain
11 costs that the insurance does not cover. One of the things
12 that, you know, traditional health insurance doesn't cover,
13 things like hearing aides, service dogs, other ancillary
14 types of things that people with disabilities need to get
15 around and be mobile, et cetera.

16 I find, personally, that my dog is much more
17 reliable than electronic devices, because, you know, when a
18 battery goes out, you're done, you know. Your dog is there
19 24/7 to do what you need them to do.

20 MR. HARKINS: Thank you.

21 MR. CALTAGIRONE: I think, Passle, you have a
22 comment.

23 MS. HELMINSKI: There is no insurance you can
24 purchase to cover the replacement cost for the service
25 animal.

1 MS. SCHERSTEN: Correct.

2 MS. HELMINSKI: There is something that the
3 International Association of Assistant Dog Partners, it's
4 called IAADP -- they have a membership that you can get
5 \$1,500 if your dog is injured and is able to go back to
6 work. If your dog is injured, and you're a member of that,
7 and cannot go back to work, they won't repay you. If you
8 have other kind of insurance, you'll get reimbursed, but
9 not the whole amount. But nothing will pay for a new
10 service animal.

11 MR. CALTAGIRONE: So there is no insurance --

12 MS. HELMINSKI: No.

13 MR. CALTAGIRONE: -- that you can buy right now
14 to cover that.

15 MS. SCHERSTEN: Correct.

16 MS. HELMINSKI: I was told -- I talked to Erie
17 Insurance about travelling in a car with my dog, because
18 Progressive has this ad, you know, your buddy will be
19 covered. So now your insurance has -- soon will have --
20 your buddy will be covered if it's travelling in a vehicle
21 insured by Erie Insurance up to \$500.

22 And I asked them about insurance for working
23 dogs, service dogs. And they said, well, you're going to
24 have to change all the regulations for insurance companies,
25 period. I said, okay. Where do I get started in

1 Harrisburg on that.

2 So that's my next question for you. I'm glad
3 you asked that question.

4 MR. CALTAGIRONE: We're judiciary, not
5 insurance.

6 MS. HELMINSKI: So you're gonna have to direct
7 me to my next venue in Harrisburg, please, please, so I can
8 work on that next.

9 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Any other questions from the
10 panel?

11 Thank you for your testimony. Appreciate it.

12 MS. SCHERSTEN: You're welcome.

13 MR. CALTAGIRONE: We'll next hear from Ernie
14 Wight, Chapter President, American Council of the Blind.

15 MR. WRIGHT: Good morning. As they said, my
16 name is Ernie Wright, and I am president of the local
17 chapter of the Pennsylvania Counsel of the Blind. I'm not
18 new to blindness and disability issues, because I'm on
19 several committees; one in Harrisburg and a lot of them
20 locally.

21 This crime of injuring or killing service
22 animals needs to be severe so people are more careful near
23 service animals. If another dog attacks a service animal,
24 then the owner doesn't have his dog under control.

25 These animals are very valuable to the owners,

1 because the animals help them on a -- on a daily basis to
2 compensate for their disabilities. The service animals --
3 the service animals direct the disabled person to safety,
4 places, or make them aware of their environment or help
5 them perform various tasks of -- or doing -- or doing the
6 tasks for them. Some service animals even help the
7 disabled to get them to work. So that's a very important
8 issue here.

9 The severity of the crime will make offenders
10 realize the severity of their actions. Offenders should
11 pay for any veterinary fees, because they can be very
12 costly. Not quite as expensive as for us, but we have
13 insurance; the dogs don't. If the dog dies or can no
14 longer work, they should pay the replacement cost and
15 training costs.

16 These dogs are very expensive. The seriousness
17 of the -- I'm sorry, I missed a line here. Are very
18 expensive and a necessary -- and a necessity to the
19 owner -- I guess I should have printed this larger. This
20 will also impress on offenders the seriousness of this
21 crime.

22 Now, I myself, as an owner of a guide dog,
23 have -- have not had anything as serious as was previously
24 described. However, I have a neighbor that has two
25 beagles, and I don't know if any of you know how beagles

1 are, but they love to bark. And they'll put them out and
2 that's all they do is bark. And it gets annoying to my
3 dog, it's annoying to me. But if I had my dog out there
4 for some reason, she can't concentrate. If I have her out
5 there to relieve her, she doesn't relieve, because it's
6 bothering her. Also, she doesn't want to stay out on her
7 run very long if these dogs are barking. Now, I realize
8 that these issues don't -- aren't involved here, but what I
9 would like to say about that is that's bad enough.

10 But it would make me feel better -- excuse me --
11 to know that this law is in place, because I'll know that
12 this law is in place and if something ever does happen,
13 then I would have some recourse.

14 Are there any questions?

15 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Panel members -- by the way,
16 for the panel members, if you just pull your mikes back a
17 little bit when you ask any questions, it will help PCN get
18 the full message across when they replay this.

19 Questions, panel members, staff? You did an
20 excellent job. Thank you very much.

21 MR. WRIGHT: Thank you.

22 MR. CALTAGIRONE: I must comment, your family
23 members that you have with you, they're so well trained. I
24 think it's a testament to the people that work with those
25 animals to get them to be as calm as they are and as loyal

1 to each of you as they are. That's very impressive.

2 MR. WRIGHT: Yes. I'm constantly getting
3 comments from people in public about how laid back they are
4 and how good they are to not violate what they shouldn't,
5 as far as making noise and other things, and I'm very proud
6 of that fact. But I don't care what school you go to, they
7 are well trained.

8 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Yes, they are. Thank you.

9 We'll next hear from Pat Van Zandt Christianson,
10 director of Therapy Dogs United.

11 MS. CHRISTIANSON: Good morning. Thank you for
12 inviting me today.

13 My name is Pat Van Zandt Christianson, and I'm
14 executive director of the Erie-based nonprofit called Dogs
15 United. It is certainly my pleasure to join you all this
16 morning to talk to you about the proposed legislation,
17 House Bill 593.

18 I would like to start this morning by asking all
19 of you to imagine a loved one, a child or grandparent,
20 being viciously attacked by a dog. I'm sure you'll agree
21 it's a scary thought. Now, imagine it is you yourself as
22 the victim, the victim of a vicious attack by an
23 uncontrolled, loose, or roaming dog. Certainly more of a
24 scary thought.

25 But now I'd like to ask you to imagine yourself

1 by putting on a blindfold, or better yet, close your eyes
2 forever. Your eyesight is gone or it is severely
3 diminished. You are classified as blind or visually
4 impaired. Oftentimes vulnerable to the outside world when
5 you are without the assistance of your highly trained guide
6 dog, which is commonly referred to as a seeing eye dog.

7 Perhaps you are hearing impaired. Maybe your
8 mobility is limited and you rely on a service dog to help
9 you connect with the outside world. But what if your world
10 is under attack and you can't even see it coming or you
11 can't hear it coming or you simply aren't mobile enough to
12 get away.

13 More than one-third of all guide dog teams are
14 attacked by loose or uncontrolled dogs. The National
15 Seeing Eye Advocacy Council warns that even a family pet
16 can endanger a guide, hearing, or service dog team. People
17 who are blind, hearing impaired, or physically challenged
18 are forced to face an attack without the ability to use
19 their sight or their body to protect themselves. Since a
20 service dog is often described as an extension of the
21 handler's body, both the dog and the human are then put in
22 jeopardy.

23 An attack on a service dog can certainly be
24 devastating. Some dogs die. And expenses for the dogs
25 that live are insurmountable. Veterinary care, retraining

1 of the handler or retraining the service dog can cost
2 hundreds of thousands of dollars, not to mention the
3 personal trauma and the possible loss of mobility for the
4 person the dog lived to serve can be severe. Major
5 emotional setbacks for any person, again expensive. The
6 national average cost for a guide dog can range from 10 to
7 \$25,000. Guide Dogs for the Blind, Incorporated, in San
8 Rafael, California, estimates the average cost for training
9 a service dog and its handler is \$50,000. And as you heard
10 today, that can cost as high as \$75,000.

11 Unprovoked attacks may make it impossible for
12 the guide and service dog teams to continue working. It
13 can make a blind, hearing impaired, or disabled person
14 fearful for their life, and forever fearful of future and
15 unprovoked attacks.

16 Guide dogs are special. Some may say, they're a
17 breed apart. As you see lying here today, they are gentle,
18 docile creatures. Such dogs are specially chosen. They
19 are raised and trained for blind citizens in the United
20 States. A seeing eye dog increases the visually impaired's
21 ability to travel independently to work or school or
22 anywhere they desire. Just as you depend on your vehicle
23 to get from place to place, the blind rely on their guide
24 dog.

25 Signal dogs for the hearing impaired serve a

1 similar purpose. And for those with limited to no
2 mobility, an assistance or service dog means returning to a
3 more normal pace in a fast-paced world that is often out of
4 reach and sometimes difficult to grasp.

5 When threatened, a guide or service dog is
6 highly unlikely to fight back. They are chosen for their
7 docile demeanor. Guide and service dogs are the most
8 even-tempered dogs imaginable. Forcing a guide dog to
9 protect himself from another animal means he is removed
10 from his job, which is to guide and protect his handler.
11 That is his No. 1 job.

12 Of the 10,000 guide dogs working in the United
13 States, again studies show that an estimated one-third of
14 those working dogs have come under attack. That is one out
15 of every three guide dogs. The majority of these reported
16 attacks were made by an unleashed dog.

17 Unprovoked attacks may make it impossible for a
18 guide dog to continue to work, and it is likely to make a
19 blind person fearful of subsequent incidents. Once
20 attacked, guide dogs can become aggressive toward other
21 dogs; although highly unlikely, it is possible. They can
22 become afraid, fearful around other dogs. And when and if
23 that happens, a guide dog is forced to be retired.

24 Likewise, the safety of a guide or service dog
25 team depends largely on the service dog's ability to

1 concentrate on his or her work. When distracted from these
2 duties, the dog and its handler are instantly vulnerable to
3 harm.

4 Any dog, regardless of size and breed, can pose
5 a threat to a guide dog team. A neighborhood dog that
6 enthusiastically runs freely in the street, or even a
7 well-meaning neighbor who unknowingly brings a leashed dog
8 over to visit a guide dog can all interfere with a guide
9 dog's ability to do its job. They're obstacles a working
10 dog should not face. Even a playful puppy can interfere.
11 And far too many dog owners do not practice reasonable pet
12 ownership. That is why I strongly support House Bill 593.

13 And I strongly urge the panel that I sit before
14 today to take this bill out of committee and bring it to
15 the floor for a vote. It is urgent that Pennsylvania
16 passes the legislation that is necessary to protect our
17 most vulnerable citizens and their constant companions who
18 work to make a difference in the lives of thousands of
19 Pennsylvania citizens. Please help us to protect our
20 friends' and neighbors' lifeline to the outside world, a
21 guide dog, a signal dog, or an assistance dog. All working
22 dogs who potentially put their lives on the line every day
23 to serve the greater good. Thank you.

24 Do you have any question?

25 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Yes, I'm curious, are there

1 certain breeds of dog that are better to be trained for
2 guide dogs than others, and how long does it usually take
3 to train such a dog?

4 MS. CHRISTIANSON: It can take years to train a
5 dog. Studies show that a Golden Retriever or a lab or a
6 German Shepherd are the three most common that excel in
7 working in service.

8 It takes years. They start as a puppy, 8 weeks
9 old, to be put in a foster home to be started to be trained
10 to do their work. I'm not sure the exact time it takes
11 when you work with the dogs, but it takes at least a month,
12 if not longer -- Passle, for you --

13 MS. HELMINSKI: If you're a newbie --

14 MR. WRIGHT: Three weeks if you're coming for a
15 replacement dog.

16 MS. HELMINSKI: Three to two weeks once you get
17 your dog, but it takes a year, if not longer, for your dog
18 to be ready to be a service dog. This isn't something that
19 you say, hey, I have a great dog, I'd like to be a service
20 dog. They are very well trained from the time they are an
21 8-week-old puppy.

22 MR. CALTAGIRONE: They start them as puppies, of
23 course.

24 MS. HELMINSKI: They usually have a line of dogs
25 there that are specially bred -- breeding of service dogs

1 is typically what they do. You'll find a breeder of one of
2 those three breeds that are the most common and they
3 breed --

4 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Do we have breeders in
5 Pennsylvania?

6 MS. HELMINSKI: We do.

7 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Where are they located? I'm
8 curious. Do you know what counties or what areas --

9 MS. SCHERSTEN: I know my school in Columbus,
10 Ohio has puppy raisers here, and Sandy is a puppy raiser
11 for CCI of Ohio.

12 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Will she be testifying?

13 MS. SCHERSTEN: She's going to read somebody
14 else's testimony.

15 MS. HELMINSKI: Leslie's dog is in training,
16 too, and she's going to testify also.

17 My particular school does seven breeds of dogs.
18 So most common dogs are the Labs and Golden, but there are
19 seven breeds of dog they use based on temperament, health
20 wise, ready for work -- can you say that for me.

21 MS. CHRISTIANSON: Yes. Temperament, health
22 wise, size of the dog --

23 MR. CALTAGIRONE: I'm sure the --

24 MS. CHRISTIANSON: What Passle was saying is
25 there are seven different breeds chosen, and they choose

1 them based on temperament, size of the dog. A chihuahua
2 would be ruled out, too small. You need to have a dog -- a
3 lot of people who have MS use service dogs as well to help
4 steady them, like a Great Dane or Golden --

5 MS. HELMINSKI: They use guide dogs --

6 MS. CHRISTIANSON: And they also use the German
7 Shepherds --

8 MS. HELMINSKI: For Parkinson's they use Great
9 Danes --

10 MS. CHRISTIANSON: And for Parkinson's they use
11 Great Danes.

12 MS. HELMINSKI: There's a special school in
13 Philadelphia that trains them, because they're big enough
14 that when people start listing --

15 MS. CHRISTIANSON: She's saying Great Danes will
16 help steady people.

17 MS. SCHERSTEN: And surprisingly, there are Pitt
18 Bulls, Rottweilers that are surprisingly docile, you
19 wouldn't expect a Doberman Pinscher to be a good --

20 MS. HELMINSKI: My school places Doberman --

21 MS. CHRISTIANSON: Rottweilers are included in
22 seizure dogs. You have to include seizure alert dogs, if
23 you have epilepsy -- all considered service dogs -- they
24 should be.

25 MR. CALTAGIRONE: John.

1 MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Pat, thank
2 you for your testimony. Just a quick question.

3 MS. CHRISTIANSON: Yes.

4 MR. EVANS: Tell us briefly about Therapy Dogs
5 United and the demand for therapy dogs. Is there a supply
6 and demand issue where you have clients who are unable to
7 receive a service dog because of the lack of numbers?

8 MS. CHRISTIANSON: Our agency typically works
9 with like a therapy dog. It is different than a service
10 dog in the fact that it is not recognized by the American
11 Disabilities -- by the ADA. But we use our therapy dogs,
12 in a large sense, the same way that a service dog would be
13 used. And the demand far outweighs the supply that we have
14 at this point. We simply can't get enough dogs for the
15 people that we have. I have people that have epilepsy that
16 say, I need a seizure alert dog. You can use a dog for
17 someone with emotional difficulties in the psychiatric
18 industry.

19 Training the dog is so extensive that it takes
20 such a long period of time, and then the compatibility and
21 that can take years. And imagine someone with a need and
22 imagine someone's service dog being put out of commission.
23 And I have a need right now, so I do have the demand.
24 There is a shortage of dogs that are, you know -- that
25 people who need them far outweighs the number of dogs that

1 we have right now in the State of Pennsylvania.

2 MR. EVANS: Those of us on the committee greatly
3 appreciate your testimony this morning. You've articulated
4 it very well and had some powerful arguments for this
5 legislation. So thank you very much.

6 MS. CHRISTIANSON: Thank you.

7 MR. CALTAGIRONE: We'll next hear from Buddy
8 Brannan, guide dog user.

9 MS. GLOBAH: Good morning. My name is Sandy
10 Globah (phonetic), and I am a puppy raiser volunteer with
11 K-9 Companions For Independence. And I do know Buddy
12 Brannan, who is unable to be here today because of
13 sickness, and I am very happy to be able to read this for
14 him.

15 Buddy has been a guide dog user since 1996, and
16 Chet, his current guide dog, has been working with him
17 since 2003.

18 On Saturday -- on a Saturday in 2004, Chet was
19 attacked by another dog. His wife, Melanie, and him were
20 walking home from having lunch when very suddenly a large
21 dog burst through the door of a tattoo parlor and jumped on
22 Chet. Fortunately, while I was panicking, Melanie had the
23 presence of mind to help Chet. As she hit the other dog
24 with her cane -- they are both vision impaired -- she
25 yelled for someone to come and get their dog.

1 When the dog's owner came out, Melanie really
2 let them have it -- while I carried on and panicked and
3 rooted to the spot -- telling the owner that she needed to
4 keep her dog under better control. The owner just said
5 that the dog never left the store. And Melanie pointed out
6 that he was very clearly outside the store and on my dog.
7 The dogs were separated and we went on our way. This
8 encounter lasted no more than a minute. Fortunately Chet
9 was not hurt, and he continues to enjoy his work.

10 But imagine just for a second what I'm feeling
11 as this dog attack is happening right next to me. Here I
12 am walking down a public street when I'm suddenly very
13 surprised to find a big dog jumping on my dog right next to
14 me. Since guide dogs are specifically chosen in part for
15 their nonaggressive temperaments, Chet's naturally going to
16 be inclined toward not to fight back, unless he doesn't
17 have a choice, and by then it could be too late anyway.

18 Follow the surprise by panic, what can I do.
19 We're taught in school, first, not to get in the middle of
20 a fight; and, second, to let our dogs go so they can at
21 least have a chance. This is contrary to my natural
22 instinct to hang on to Chet to protect him. So there's the
23 conflict going on as well. Then there's the fear for your
24 dog and the feeling of complete helplessness and
25 powerlessness to do anything. After all, here's the one

1 being that I spend more time with than anybody else, and
2 probably includes my wife, and he's in danger. You can't
3 imagine how all of this, all in the space of a minute or
4 less, really shakes you to the core of your being.

5 The only person I could call for any assistance
6 was animal control, which I did on Monday. The police
7 couldn't help me because no crime was committed.

8 I was lucky and Chet wasn't hurt, but what if he
9 was hurt? What then? Of course, there would be the vet
10 bills, but that's just the start. Even assuming all the
11 physical injuries are healed, and even if there were no
12 physical injuries and an attack could affect a dog enough
13 that he is unable to safely work, causing an early
14 retirement. In Chet's case, a possibly eight-year working
15 life could have been shortened to just one year.

16 Applying for a successor dog, a suitable
17 replacement must be found, which takes some time.
18 Depending on available dogs and the guide dog's handler
19 needs, this could take many months. Then, once a suitable
20 match is found and a class date is scheduled, the guide dog
21 handler then must attend a three-week training session in
22 order to learn to work with the new dog. And upon
23 completion of this course, just as with any relationship,
24 it takes several more months for a new team to jell.

25 But we aren't just talking about needlessly

1 disrupting someone's life here. Not only is the guide dog
2 and handler potentially missing work for the first time, it
3 takes to go to guide dog school, training a guide dog isn't
4 cheap. According to the Seeing Eye, the school where I was
5 matched with Chet, it costs \$50,000 to train a seeing eye
6 dog team. The \$150 I pay for this training myself is a
7 drop in the bucket. That's 50,000 that could have been
8 avoided.

9 Understand that these dogs are bred specifically
10 for this work. They're raised from puppies to be
11 well-behaved and comfortable in public, and their training
12 is very specialized. Not just any dog can do this work,
13 for various reasons, temperament, health, willingness to do
14 the work and so on. Even with the specialized breeding,
15 raising, and training, more than half of the dogs that
16 start out don't make the grade.

17 For these reasons it is imperative that service
18 dog users are afforded more protection under the law. The
19 impact a dog attack can have on us is much more than just a
20 dog attack . If your pet dog is attacked, your family will
21 be upset and face very large vet bills. If my guide dog is
22 attacked, I face the same things and more. I would have
23 more trouble getting the rest of the way home. My entire
24 life and livelihood could be affected for a very long time,
25 and a training program would have to spend a great deal of

1 money if a dog attack resulted in an early retirement.

2 Of course, these things wouldn't change with
3 more legal protection, but with stiffer penalties for dog
4 attacks caused by malice or carelessness, would come more
5 care and vigilance of all dog owners.

6 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Excellent. You answered a lot
7 of the questions. Thank you for your testimony. And I do
8 appreciate you handing these out --

9 MS. GLOBAH: Are there any questions about
10 those?

11 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Well, you know what, I'd like
12 to have -- I don't know if we're going to have enough for
13 other members. Whatever we have left, what I'd like to do
14 is, I'm going to prepare packets for the other members of
15 the committee, the judiciary committee, so that when we get
16 back to Harrisburg, I'll make sure that they get copies of
17 all of the testimony. And if you would happen to have any
18 more of these, I would like to include these brochures in
19 those packets that we'll prepare. If that's not too much
20 of an inconvenience.

21 MR. McLAUGHLIN: I have extras, Tom.

22 MR. CALTAGIRONE: You have extras, okay.

23 MS. GLOBAH: Would you like a brief overview of
24 the K-9 Companions for Independence? I am a puppy raiser
25 volunteer. I do work with the dogs that -- my husband and

1 I do, actually. Would that be perhaps all right if I just
2 gave you a little bit of information?

3 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Sure. Appreciate that.

4 MS. GLOBAH: We just want you to know that we
5 are puppy raisers for K-9 Companions for Independence. We
6 are volunteers. What we do is, we are the people that pick
7 up those puppies at 8 weeks of age, and we train those dogs
8 by teaching them 30 commands and socializing them at
9 appropriate times. And we also then, after that time
10 period, turn the dogs over for advanced training, and they
11 go into advanced training for six to nine months.

12 But perhaps you would just like to hear the
13 mission statement of K-9 Companions --

14 MR. CALTAGIRONE: I'm just curious, how do you
15 know -- how can you select dogs -- you know after working
16 with the puppies I'm sure, right?

17 MS. GLOBAH: Uh-huh.

18 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Do you get a feel for that or
19 do you get a sense that they either can or can't do this
20 kind of work?

21 MS. GLOBAH: Many times. I would like to tell
22 you that my husband and I have raised five K-9 Companion
23 puppies. Our first three dogs have all been placed. We
24 have one in Kentucky, at a hospital, and he goes to work
25 every day with a recreational therapist. We have one in

1 Indiana with a young man in a power wheelchair, who is
2 going to college, and the dog takes his braces off and will
3 be going to college with him. And then we have one that is
4 in Ohio with a young man who is autistic, and this dog will
5 be going to school -- middle school with this young man.
6 We have our release dog, who I'm proud to say is a therapy
7 dog. The dog was released because of a prey drive. And
8 then we have -- currently we have a small puppy, who is not
9 quite three months of age. If he was a little older, I
10 would have brought him today, but because he is not, you
11 know, age-appropriate and trained, he's home.

12 But -- but my husband and I spend a lot of time
13 with these dogs. And then, as I said, we turn them over to
14 advance training.

15 And the mission statement for K-9 Companions is
16 to -- it is a nonprofit that enhances the lives of people
17 with disabilities, and that's physical or mental
18 disabilities, 5 years of age and up, by providing highly
19 trained assistance dogs and ongoing support to ensure
20 quality partnerships.

21 But as I said, we've had five dogs, and we are
22 very proud to say that three of our dogs have been placed.

23 I do want to say that the dogs definitely are
24 never trained to, you know, be a protection or protective
25 towards the person that they are teamed up with. It is

1 just not the demeanor of the dog or the programs.

2 Would anyone have any questions about K-9
3 Companions?

4 MR. EVANS: Just very briefly, are they trained
5 that if an altercation happens that the owner is to release
6 the leash and let the dog run? That was mentioned in some
7 earlier testimony.

8 MS. GLOBAH: Right. You know, I don't know for
9 a fact, and I couldn't tell you exactly, but that, I think,
10 would probably be the best thing. But I could not see
11 these dogs doing that, you know.

12 We do have a dog that was placed -- a K-9
13 Companion dog that was placed here in Erie, and I'm very
14 happy to say that I work with this woman and young man who
15 has the dog. He is a down syndrome student at McDowell,
16 and the dog really, you know, is great companionship for
17 this dog -- for this young man.

18 MR. EVANS: Well, we commend you for what you're
19 doing in the community. I know raising dogs, and once you
20 have the puppy for awhile it's tough to release it to
21 another owner, you do have some attachment. So I know
22 that you're dedicated in what you're doing. You're doing a
23 wonderful job and helping others in your mission.

24 MS. GLOBAH: Well, we're always looking for more
25 puppy raisers.

1 But let me say that seeing someone who needs
2 that dog to give them that independence and to help them
3 through their lives to be just as independent as you are is
4 more important than keeping that dog for ourselves.

5 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Mr. Chairman?

6 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Sure.

7 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Ma'am, just one question, is it incompatible
9 with the training regimen for what these dogs do to also
10 train them to defend themselves in the result of attack?

11 MS. GLOBAH: I do believe that that would be
12 more of a distraction. And when you have a person that is,
13 you know, needing that dog, you know, 100 percent of the
14 time, to have a dog that would be trained to have to
15 protect itself, you're talking about a dog that would be
16 distracted and not giving attention to that person who
17 really needs them.

18 MS. HELMINSKI: That's correct. Very well put.

19 MR. McLAUGHLIN: Thank you. Obviously my
20 question was born out of ignorance and not anything else.

21 MS. GLOBAH: Thank you for letting me speak.

22 MR. HARKINS: Just one question, how many years
23 of service do you generally get out of the dog?

24 MS. GLOBAH: All right. That's a good question.
25 The years of service is between eight and 10 years.

1 We have a very good friend who is a doctor in
2 Columbus, Ohio, who has a service dog, and her dog right
3 now is 6. She takes her dog to work every day with her
4 to the hospital, where she works with young children with
5 orthopedic problems.

6 But the time is probably at least eight to 10
7 years.

8 And then, when that dog retires, if they cannot
9 keep the dog, they immediately go to the top of the list
10 for a successor dog, but they may keep that dog as, you
11 know, a retired pet at that time, or it is given to someone
12 who is on a waiting list to take care of these retired
13 dogs.

14 MS. HELMINSKI: Sandy has also brought a DVD --
15 tell them.

16 MS. GLOBAH: I gave it to them.

17 MS. HELMINSKI: She also brought a DVD where you
18 see the doctor working her dog.

19 MR. CALTAGIRONE: I do thank you.

20 MS. GLOBAH: Thank you.

21 MR. CALTAGIRONE: And thank you for your
22 testimony.

23 We'll next hear from Leslie Kelly, deaf and hard
24 of hearing specialist, the Center for Independent Living in
25 South Central, Pennsylvania.

1 MS. KELLY: Good morning. Thank you for having
2 me. Again, my name is Leslie Kelly, and I'm from Altoona.
3 I loved my drive up here this morning. I also work for the
4 Center of Independent Living for People With Disabilities.

5 I've had a service dog -- I have had a service
6 dog, a hearing dog, for eight and a half years and I have
7 never had a problem. But I was always on the look out for
8 the other dogs, because of where I worked at.

9 I need to tell you right now I have a young dog
10 that is in training to become my hearing dog. That's
11 Wendy.

12 On October 11th, I was walking my service dog,
13 who was wearing her service jacket, and my consumer, who
14 was also deaf, was walking with me, as I noted a large
15 German shepard was barking something awful and acting very
16 aggressive from a nearby parked truck. My service dog, who
17 I remind you is still in training, noticed the other
18 aggressive dog and she -- I'm sorry -- my service dog, who
19 I remind you is in training, noticed the other aggressive
20 dog and became very uncomfortable. The driver's side
21 window of the truck was open a little. What I didn't
22 notice across the street was the passenger side window was
23 completely down.

24 As I and my consumer was walking by, the people
25 across the street, that were coming out of the Public

1 Welfare building near the parked truck, were yelling at me.
2 I didn't know what they were saying, as I am a deaf woman
3 and so was my consumer who was walking with me. When I
4 walked across the street, people were trying to block the
5 passenger side window because the German Shepard was trying
6 to get out of the window. A security guard -- a security
7 officer realized what was happening and he came out of the
8 building and held the dog back and motioned for me to go.

9 Service dogs are trained not to fight because of
10 them being service dogs. They wouldn't even harm a bird or
11 a rabbit. Wendy, my service dog, is in training, not sure
12 what to do, whether to keep walking or what. We went into
13 a building nearby for our safety and waited until the owner
14 of the dog came out of the welfare building and left.
15 If that aggressive dog had gotten out of the truck, I don't
16 know what would have -- you know, I know it would have
17 harmed my dog. I know that.

18 I unintentionally had hurt Wendy by jerking the
19 lead. It was a quick reaction that I had, because I was
20 telling my dog to leave him, which means keep going and not
21 watch the dog in the truck. When I had pulled on her
22 gentle lead, I could have snapped her neck. I was caught
23 between trying to keep myself and my service dog safe and
24 worrying about the aggressive dog getting out of the truck
25 and harming my service dog. We were lucky, but my point

1 is, how many of us not so lucky.

2 Not to hear and see another dog barking, we
3 don't know whether it's going to be okay or not. If I was
4 vision impaired, my service dog is my eyes, and it seems so
5 little to ask for this bill when it goes a long way to
6 protect the safety of all service dogs. I don't believe
7 that's a lot to ask. To have a service dog killed or
8 injured to the point where it can't work anymore would be a
9 great injustice to the person whose life depends upon the
10 service dog. The service dog and humans are trained
11 together as partners and they learn what to expect from
12 each other. Please help us make Pennsylvania a safer State
13 for the service dog by passing House Bill 593. Thank you
14 so much for letting me share my comments on this.

15 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Thank you. Questions from the
16 panel?

17 MR. EVANS: We just want to, on behalf of the
18 panel, thank you for your testimony and travelling all the
19 way from Altoona today to present your very important
20 testimony on this Bill.

21 I would like to mention that, as of today, we
22 have 33 cosponsors, and possibly more who have yet to
23 officially be on this legislation. But we're very
24 encouraged by the support we've received not only from the
25 committee, but other legislators in Harrisburg. And it's

1 my hope we'll be able to bring this Bill up for committee
2 vote before we end our fall session this year. I'm hoping
3 the Chairman will consider that as we move forward.

4 MR. CALTAGIRONE: Thank you all. We do
5 appreciate -- you have a beautiful, beautiful area up here,
6 I'll tell you. It's been quite a while since I've been in
7 Erie, but you have a beautiful area with wonderful people.
8 Thank you all. We'll adjourn the hearing.

9

10 (Hearing adjourned at 11:19 a.m.)

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25