

February 27, 2026

Esteemed Chairs Rahman and Kavros Degraw,
Members of the Planning and Development Committee:

On behalf of the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG), I write in **support** of Raised Bill No. 5393, *An Act Concerning Dog Licenses*. This bill represents a common-sense modernization of Connecticut's dog licensing system. It aligns licensing practices with the state's broader digital transformation efforts, reduces administrative burden, and makes compliance easier for residents, while maintaining rabies vaccination requirements at the time of licensing.

I. MODERNIZING THE LICENSING CYCLE

The proposal to move from annual to three-year licensing is a sensible reform. Connecticut previously extended renewal cycles for both driver's licenses and motor vehicle registrations, moving away from shorter renewal periods toward multi-year terms. Those changes reduced paperwork, lowered transaction volume, and eased pressure on state offices, without adverse public consequences. Dog licensing can follow the same logic. A three-year cycle, which reflects the rabies immunity conferred by modern vaccines, reduces administrative churn for staff while preserving vaccination verification requirements. It modernizes the renewal cadence without weakening public health safeguards.

II. APPLYING THE PROVEN DMV DIGITAL MODEL

The Department of Motor Vehicles' transition to online renewals and digital services has improved user experience while reducing in-person demand on government offices. HB 5393 extends that same modernization model to dog licensing. Allowing electronic issuance and renewal through the Department of Agriculture reduces friction for residents and decreases reliance on paper certificates and in-person visits during business hours. In a world where residents can renew driver's licenses, register vehicles, and conduct numerous transactions online, dog licensing should not remain dependent on manual, paper-based processes.

III. REDUCING FRICTION IMPROVES COMPLIANCE

Under the current system, residents typically must:

1. Visit a veterinarian for vaccination;
2. Receive a rabies certificate;
3. Bring that documentation to city or town hall; and
4. Complete the licensing transaction in person.

This multi-step, paper-dependent process creates unnecessary friction. Compliance often breaks down not because residents oppose licensing, but because the process is inconvenient. An electronic system that permits digital submission and renewal meaningfully reduces that friction. Simplifying compliance generally increases participation. When barriers are lowered, participation rises. Improved compliance is not merely an administrative benefit—it has fiscal implications.

Higher licensing rates are likely to result in increased license fee collections for both municipalities and the state. By making it easier to comply, the system may expand the pool of licensed dogs, strengthening both public health oversight and municipal revenue stability.

IV. A LOGICAL NEXT STEP: LICENSING AT THE POINT OF VACCINATION

As the Department's electronic licensing system matures, the legislature may wish to consider an additional modernization: authorizing licensed veterinarians to serve as deputized licensing agents at the point of vaccination. Veterinarians are already the certifying authority for rabies vaccination. They are the natural compliance nexus. Allowing licensing to occur concurrently with vaccination, much like automobile dealers issue registrations at the time of sale, would create a significant compliance boost. Bundling vaccination and licensing into a single transaction would:

- Increase licensing rates;
- Improve rabies compliance tracking;
- Reduce municipal counter transactions;
- Eliminate procedural drop-off between vaccination and registration; and
- Potentially increase license revenue through higher compliance rates.

This bill does not yet authorize that step, but it creates the digital infrastructure that makes such integration feasible. It lays the foundation for a more seamless, compliance-oriented system in which residents can meet their public health obligations efficiently and conveniently.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM, NOT DEREGULATION

Importantly, HB 5393 does not eliminate licensing, reduce vaccination requirements, or diminish enforcement authority. It modernizes the method by which licensing occurs. This is administrative reform—not deregulation. As this bill advances, it will be important to ensure:

- Seamless data sharing between the Department of Agriculture and municipalities;
- Timely access to licensing records for animal control officers;
- Clear revenue reconciliation procedures; and
- Careful attention to municipal fiscal impacts.

With thoughtful implementation, this reform can improve convenience for residents, reduce administrative workload, increase compliance, and potentially strengthen revenue collection, all while maintaining the integrity of Connecticut's public health framework.

VI. CONCLUSION

HB 5393 applies a proven modernization model to a historic licensing system. It reduces paperwork, lowers transaction burdens, and creates the foundation for significantly improved compliance by aligning vaccination and licensing processes. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support Raised Bill No. 5393.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francis Pickering". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Francis R. Pickering
Executive Director