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From: kaugaitis@cox.net
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To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: H. 5926

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Hello,

I am in full agreement with the following from the AKC.

Kathleen Augaitis

Greene, RI

Pets and Animals' Legal Status: There is little doubt that dogs are held in exceedingly high esteem throughout modern American society, and providing for the recovery of non-economic damages in cases involving injury to a pet may sound like a good idea that simply reflects the value people place on their pets. However, allowing non-economic damages in such cases will likely result in many harmful unintentional consequences for pet owners and their pets.

AKC is seriously concerned about H. 5926 because non-economic damages are traditionally only allowed in cases involving the close family of people who have died or who have been severely injured. Changing the legal status of dogs as property would ultimately hamstring the ability of owners, veterinarians, and government agencies to protect and care for dogs. Moreover, it is the goal of animal rights activists to give animals the same rights and privileges as people by changing the legal classification of animals from property to "legal beings". Allowing non-economic damages in cases involving pets would be an incremental step toward that goal.

We are also concerned that the bill's broad definition of "caretaker" means that anyone who comes in contact with a companion animal—kennels, groomers, dog walkers, dog sitters, etc.—would be liable for non-economic damages.