



Family Court
Garrahy Judicial Complex

One Dorrance Plaza
Providence, RI 02903

MICHAEL B. FORTE
CHIEF JUDGE

HAND DELIVERED

February 5, 2026

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: 2026 - H 7133

Dear Chair McEntee and
Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I write to comment on 2026 H 7133 entitled "Domestic Abuse Prevention". The Court supports the view that possession of pets and other household pets should be addressed in a domestic abuse protection Order. The Court recognizes that companion animals can be threatened, held hostage and otherwise abused.

The Court recognizes that "companion" animals are important and often treated as "members of the family." The addition of a clear definition of "household animals" as those animals that are domesticated or tamed and kept for companionship or pleasure, adds clarity and enforceability to the bill.

However, we believe that pets can be adequately protected by a Protection Order that grants possession of the pet to the victim, while reserving legal determinations regarding "Custody" for the children of the parties. This important distinction in the language of the bill makes it consistent with the language in R.I.G.L. § 15-5-30 which addresses possession and care of companion animals in divorce or separation proceedings.

The Court respectfully thanks the committee for this opportunity to comment on this proposed legislation.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael B. Forte", is written over a circular blue stamp. The stamp contains the text "Michael B. Forte" and "Chief Judge" below it.

Michael B. Forte
Chief Judge

MBF:nmp