

I am here in reference to the proposal to “impose a sales and use tax on veterinary services to increase revenues by \$17.1 million in FY 2016 and \$21.8 million in FY 2017”

As a owner of rescue dogs, a volunteer with SART (State Animal Response Team), local rescues, lost dog recovery groups, a group who helps sick, injured and hungry animals, worked with the ASPCA, and a dog foster, I bring first hand knowledge of what the real world is with caring for pets, the important issues the pet world deals with on a daily basis as well as the difficulty we already face with economical hard times.

I didn't want you to hear only my opinion though, so I reached out to rescues, vets and pet owners. Across the board, hands down, the message was this tax WILL harm our pets. It was best said by Dr. Elliot, an emergency hospital vet, “this tax is a huge concern. Veterinary care is an out of pocket expense, owners already need to make financial choices, now with a tax on top of that, particularly people with limited means, will have a very difficult time caring for their animals. Of course there will be an impact on the clients but the most important thing, there will be an impact on animal health, their response to treatment in sickness and emergencies.”

Some facts.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) states in 2013 CT's dog/cat population was 507,000/796,000 respectfully.

Nationally, 22% cat owners and 30% dog owners couldn't afford to vet their animals. They also state, due to economic turndown in the past few years, one of the highest reasons for surrenders is due to cost of pet care.

Cesar Millan states two significant reasons owners surrender their animals are due to cost of ownership and unexpected health issues which they cannot afford.

I asked rescues, vets and pet owners “if a sales and use tax is passed on veterinary services how will that affect your rescue”.

The response from rescues “more people will surrender their dog or cat”. “this will put an extra burden on our rescue” “less people will

adopt, concern for the extra financial cost", "a majority of the dogs or cats we take into our shelter are not vaccinated or fixed....which leads us to believe the real reason the animal was surrendered is due to cost of care", "the spots taken up by these animals gives us less room to pull from over burdened shelters".

Some rescues who have not yet achieved a 501(3)c status will be tremendously affected. The overhead cost of vetting a dog or cat for adoption is already high. A tax would need to be passed on to adopters, which would hurt adoption rates.

"if this tax bill passes, my rescue will more then likely need to shut down". This from a woman who works all hours finding good homes for pets. From another rescue, "we will adopt less, which means we can save fewer". "about 60% of our surrenders are not spayed or vaccinated, this will only increase with a increase in cost due to taxing".

From vets and vet techs across the state...."We are already seeing a decline in people bringing their pets in for vaccines and neutering due to cost. A tax imposed will surely cause more people not to vet their pets." "If pets aren't vaccinated, this is a health issue, for other pets and humans". "Owners are waiting to bring their pets in for an illness or injury in hopes they will get better". "some owners who's pet has a major illness are opting to euthanize, not because they are giving up, but they can't afford the care". "lack of care is already being seen, this will only increase with the addition of a tax".

As far as pet owners none of them wanted to speak on how it would affect their decision making as these pets are their family. They did agree and stressed I present to you the taxing of veterinary services will make what is already costly a hardship.

I have personally seen the hardship people have undergone with the decisions to not take a sick or injured dog or cat to the vet due to lack of money. Often the owner "waits it out", hoping the animal will get better on its own. Sometimes waiting too long. Or its too late. I have seen the growth of groups who's mission is to help lighten the cost of an emergency vet visit. The group I once worked has been

overwhelmed with requests for help. Can you picture having to choose who to help because there are so many?

Daily in the CT social media world I see people re-homing their dog or cat because they financially cannot care for them. Sadly some of these animals are offered up for free. Many of us in this line of work know that a "free" dog or cat will be used for bait or flipped for money.

In the lost dog world we have seen increased "dumps". While we can't say why a person dumped a certain dog, we can see the lack of care it has received. Again, the assumption being their owners could not afford to care for them.

In the end how successful will this tax be? If we have more people surrendering their pets, which will go into a shelter, possibly a city or town shelter, how will that cost out weigh the gain of a tax? The care of the animal, manpower, possible overtime, cleaning, etc. How successful will these animals be adopted or will they end up euthanized like so many in our state.

I have only skimmed the surface of how this tax will not only burden our shelters, rescues, vets, and owners. The one who it will affect most, mankind's companion. Our best friend. To many, a family member. A veterinary sales and use tax is NOT what we need for our loved, cherished pets.

I ask you to not pass this tax. Please do not add to a problem that we are already dealing with an uphill battle.

Thank you
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