

GREY2K USA WORLDWIDE



To: Co-Chair James J. Maroney
Co-Chair Michael D'Agostino
Vice Chair John W. Fonfara
Vice Chair Marcus Brown
Ranking Member Paul Cicarella
Ranking Member David Rutigliano
Honorable Members
General Law Committee

From: Christine A. Dorchak, Esq.
President, GREY2K USA

Re: Support HB 6615 – Repeals Statutory Authorization for Live Greyhound Racing

Date: February 16, 2023

My name is Christine Dorchak and I am the President and General Counsel of GREY2K USA. We are a non-profit organization that works to pass laws to protect greyhounds and promote the adoption of ex-racers. On behalf of our thousands of members in Connecticut, I am writing in support of HB 6615, AN ACT CONCERNING DOG RACING.

Dog racing was a failed experiment in Connecticut

Commercial greyhound racing was introduced in Connecticut in 1976, decades after dog racing had first been legalized in other states and just before the industry began a downward spiral. Since 2001, forty-six tracks have closed and there now remain just two tracks nationwide. Though live racing ended in Connecticut in 2005, under current law, owning and operating dog racing tracks is permitted and legal in the state. We would like to see this loophole closed.

Currently, dog racing is illegal in 42 states including all other New England states. However, Connecticut remains one of only eight states in the country where dog racing is still legal. West Virginia, with its two tracks, stands alone as the only state to embrace this unpopular form of gambling. Because the industry is quickly dissolving, Connecticut is viewed as fertile ground and provides an open door for the reopening of its dog tracks, where they once existed and are still legal. The threat of a resurgence of dog racing in Connecticut is real.

Dog racing is cruel, inhumane and illegal in 42 states

Throughout the racing industry, greyhounds are subject to standard practices that are cruel and inhumane such as extreme confinement, drugging, diets based on raw “4-D” diseased meat, and live lure training where dogs are baited with small animals like rabbits and possums to enhance their chase instincts. According to state records and since 2008, more than 10,000 racing injuries have been reported in West Virginia. The most common injury is a broken leg and almost 300 dogs suffered fractures in 2021 and the first half of 2022 alone. Other injuries include

broken necks, paralysis, seizures and death by electrocution. Dog racing is cruel and inhumane and causes real suffering to these gentle hounds. Like dog fighting, it should no longer be accepted or tolerated.

A recent surveillance operation by my organization revealed evidence of live lure training by greyhound breeders in four states, most recently in Colorado. Live lure training, also called “baiting” or “blooding” is the use of small animals to incite an enhanced chase instinct in young dogs. Typically, screaming animals are dangled before greyhounds, dragged in front of them on ropes, or simply set loose to be attacked. Innocent animals, most commonly rabbits, possums and baby pigs, often suffer cruel and terrifying deaths. This practice is an industry standard and truly demonstrates the cruel underbelly of greyhound gambling. Video available at https://www.grey2kusa.org/about/live_lure.php

It should also be noted that thousands of dogs are destroyed each year when they are no longer profitable. The National Greyhound Association does not keep records of greyhounds once they stop performing so these dogs simply disappear from record. Here in Connecticut, when Plainfield Greyhound Park abruptly announced its closure, both local and national media reported that the nearly 1,000 dogs there faced a similar fate. Plainfield was described as a last stop for older and injury-prone dogs, dogs that had little chance of winning elsewhere. The negative publicity was so intense that the *New York Times* published at least three stories on the dilemma and national television commentators also expressed concerns for the dogs. As a result, the governor and then-Attorney General Richard Blumenthal stepped in to require the track to account for each dog and for their orderly release to waiting adopters.

The passage of HB 6615 will ensure that situations like this never develop in Connecticut again. HB 6615 closes a dangerous loophole. It is time to repeal the authorization for dog racing from state code, just as has already been done in 42 other states.

Please contact me with any questions you may have. I may be reached by phone at 781-488-3626 or by email at christine@grey2kusa.org

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Christine A. Dorchak, Esq.
President and General Counsel
GREY2K USA Worldwide