

Colette Thompson
New Sweden
LD 962

March 29, 2025

The Honorable Ann Beebe-Center, Senate Chair
The Honorable Tavis Hasenpus, House Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

To the Chairs and Members on the Joint Committee of Criminal Justice and Public Safety

I am writing to express my opposition to LD 962, An Act to Establish the Offense of Aggravated Operating Under the Influence Resulting in the Death of a Pet as the language in the bill includes restitution for emotional distress suffered by the owner which would allow non-economic damages for the death of a pet. While I understand and respect the emotional bond many people share with their pets, myself included, here are important considerations:

1. Pets are currently classified as personal property under the law. This classification provides a clear and consistent framework for ownership, responsibility, and compensation. Allowing non-economic damages, such as emotional distress claims (i.e. loss of love, emotional support, and companionship, etc.), in the event of a pet's death would blur the line between property and sentient beings, creating legal confusion that undermines the legal definition.
2. Allowing restitution for emotional distress related to the death of a pet would set a troubling precedent. If pets were granted non-economic damages, it might pave the way for other forms of property to be treated similarly, creating a slippery slope that could complicate property law in unpredictable ways.

I urge you to carefully consider these potential consequences and oppose any efforts to expand legal claims for emotional distress in pet death cases. While I deeply sympathize with those who experience the loss of a beloved pet, I believe restitution for emotional distress in the death of a pet should not be allowed, as it would ultimately create more problems than it seeks to solve.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my perspective. I trust that you will make the best decision for the well-being of our legal system and the Maine citizens you represent.

Sincerely,
Colette Thompson