

19

# New York State Humane Association

PO Box 3068 Kingston, NY 12402 (845) 336-4514

www.nyshumane.org

## Statement of Susan C. McDonough

### **Re: The Impact and Implementation of the 2015 - 2016 State Budget for the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets.**

Good afternoon,

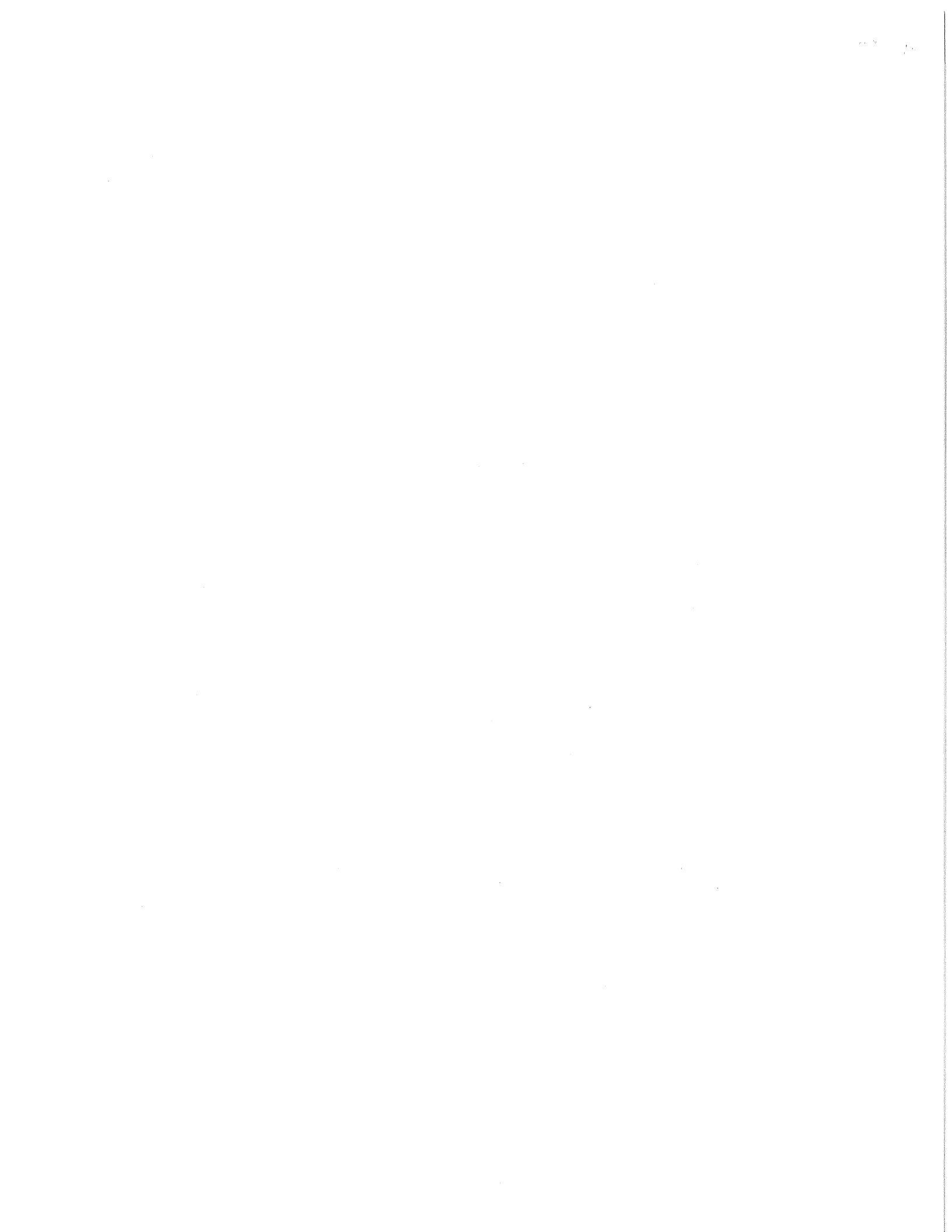
Thank you for the opportunity to be here today and for allowing me to speak about the impact of the 2015-2016 State Budget regarding programs and initiatives related to agriculture and animal protection in New York State.

My name is Susan McDonough and I am Chair of the Animal Cruelty Committee for the New York State Humane Association (NYSHA). I am also a former New York State Trooper, retiring after 26 years of service as an Investigator in the Bureau of Criminal Investigation. Throughout my career, I patrolled the rural parts of this state and investigated countless cases of animal cruelty.

It is no secret that news of animal cruelty generates some of the greatest public outrage and call for action. However, not only animal lovers should be concerned about these offenses. Animal cruelty is also a very serious "bridge crime." Most of the known serial killers, including Jeffrey Dahmer, Albert DeSalvo (aka the Boston Strangler) and David Berkowitz (aka the Son of Sam) all began by torturing animals before escalating to violence against humans. It is critical that animal cruelty be treated as the serious crime that it is and that these cases are properly investigated and the appropriate laws are enforced.

In New York State, police are mandated to enforce Article 26 of the Agriculture and Markets Law (which encompasses the majority of New York's anti-cruelty laws), however, currently law enforcement training focuses on Penal and Criminal Procedure Laws, not provisions related to animals. Therefore, we strongly feel that the Penal Law is a more appropriate location for animal cruelty statutes. Moving these statutes out of the Agriculture and Markets Law would put these crimes on par with other offenses, and help to streamline training, and the maintenance of statistical data.

For several years, many organizations, including The New York State Association of Chiefs of Police, the New York City Bar Association and the Humane Society of the United States have joined NYSHA in supporting legislation that would move the animal cruelty statutes into the Penal Law. Despite the fact that bills have been repeatedly introduced in both houses of the State Legislature, (most recently A352/NO SAME AS), we are greatly disappointed that they have failed to move through the state legislative process. Consequently, if these statutes are going to continue to reside in the Agriculture and Markets Law, we would respectfully request



that members of the New York State Legislature allocate much needed resources to helping support the efforts of law enforcement in regard to handling animal cruelty cases. This should include standardized training for both Law Enforcement and Dog Control Officers statewide.

For over 15 years, NYSHA has been conducting anti-cruelty law workshops for police officers and providing additional support on individual cases they face in the field. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, we are only able to reach a fraction of the police officers within this state. Those who have had the opportunity to participate in our trainings indicated that the information learned enabled them to further their investigations into cases of domestic violence, child and elder neglect and abuse, animal fighting, drug trafficking and the illegal possession of guns.

In 2013, both houses of the New York Legislature passed a bill (A1657-E/S3537-D) that would have required the State Department of Agriculture and Markets to establish and implement a training program for Dog Control Officers. In addition to matters involving dangerous dogs and licensing, Dog Control Officers are also relied upon to assist law enforcement in the handling of cruelty cases. Since this bill was not signed into law, we are now seeking funding through the New York State budget process to implement such an initiative.

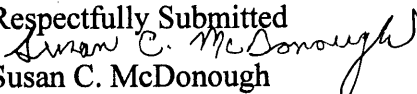
We respectfully request that members of the Legislature include funding in the 2015-2016 State Budget to implement standardized training for Law Enforcement and Dog Control Officers across New York State. NYSHA recommends that the funding for training be phased into the budget for the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets over a two year period.

According to data from the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services, there were nearly 63,000 sworn law enforcement officers as of 2013. In addition, according to the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, there are 600 Dog Control Offices in the state. We estimate that the cost for training would be \$50.00 per person (including development of curriculum materials and instructor time). Therefore, NYSHA respectfully requests that \$3.180 million be phased into the New York State budget for the Department of Agriculture and Markets over the next two years:

<b>63,000 Police Officers Statewide x \$50.00</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>\$3,150,000</b>
<b>600 Dog Control Officers Statewide x \$50.00</b>	<b>=</b>	<b><u>30,000</u></b>
		<b>\$3,180,000 (\$1,590,000 per year)</b>

Despite the fact that animal cruelty statutes reside in Agriculture and Markets Law and the agency oversees regulations impacting animals, the agency does not provide training for law enforcement to best understand and most effectively enforce these laws. Other agencies such as the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Department of Health have their officers or investigators. The State Police, County Sheriffs and local Police are charged with enforcing animal cruelty statutes. Therefore, NYSHA respectfully requests that all law enforcement and Dog Control officers are provided the proper training to perform their duties.

After many years of working on animal cruelty cases, we strongly believe that funding for standardized training is needed and will help ensure the best possible outcome for the people and animals of New York State.

Respectfully Submitted  
  
Susan C. McDonough

