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Senator Jennifer Bradley and Representative Lindsay Cross File SB1006/HB989, Appointment of Courtroom Animal Advocates

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Today, **Senator Jennifer Bradley (R-Fleming Island)** and **Representative Lindsay Cross (D-St. Petersburg)** filed [Senate Bill 1006](#) and [House Bill 989](#) for the 2023 Legislative Session.

The bill allows for the appointment of either an attorney or certified legal intern to act as an advocate for the interests of justice in cases of animal neglect or abuse. Laws permitting the appointment of guardians *ad litem* to serve in the interests of children and victims are standard, but no such law currently exists in Florida for animals who are similarly unable to advocate for themselves. **SB1006/HB989** would empower the appointed advocate to monitor the case, aid in fact-finding, attend hearings, and present recommendations to the court.

“This bill is a smart and necessary step in protecting animals that have been subjected to abuse or neglect. For many of us, our pets are family. However, there continue to be horrific instances of animal mistreatment and neglect in our state. These animals deserve a voice and this bill will ensure that there is a trusted advocate that can represent the interests of justice. I’m proud to work alongside Senator Bradley on this

great bill,” said **Representative Lindsay Cross**.

“As an animal lover, I’m pleased to sponsor legislation that allows an advocate to participate in proceedings regarding animal neglect or abuse,” added **Senator Jennifer Bradley**. “These advocates will ensure an informed process and, especially in cases of hoarding, provide helpful resources for the judicial process. I’m proud to support this legislation.”

“The Courtroom Animal Advocate Program will allow for much needed support and assistance to prosecutors and judges in cases of animal cruelty while providing a voice for the animal victims. At the discretion of the presiding judge, the volunteer lawyers will also help alleviate the burden of crowded dockets on both judges and prosecutors by assisting with the animal welfare aspects of each case,” said **Kate McFall, Florida Senior State Director, The Humane Society**.

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