

# STATE OF MAINE

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## **MAINE PROSECUTORS ASSOCIATION** **SHIRA BURNS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

September 16, 2025

RE: Fighting Inhumane Gambling and High-Risk Animal Trafficking Act, H.R. 3946 / S. 1454

Dear Representative Golden / Senator King,

On behalf of the Maine Prosecutors Association, I write to express our strong support for the FIGHT Act (Fighting Inhumane Gambling and High-Risk Animal Trafficking Act, H.R. 3946 / S. 1454). This urgently needed legislation would give federal authorities, as well as state and local prosecutors, the tools necessary to prevent, investigate, and punish organized animal fighting operations that cause untold suffering and undermine public safety.

Maine has been touched firsthand by the brutality and scope of such operations. For example, in September 2022, an alleged dogfighting ring in South Carolina was found to be keeping 275 dogs in horrendous conditions—many chained to barrels or in makeshift pens without adequate food, water, shelter, or veterinary care. These dogs exhibited severe scarring, abscesses, and lacerations, and were exposed to the elements. Several of those rescued were eventually placed in Maine shelters, including three young dogs, Spirit Bear, Oliver, and Brandon, where they had to be rehabilitated for adoption.

This case illustrates how systemic and far-reaching the problem is, and why stronger federal tools are essential. The FIGHT Act would address critical gaps by banning simulcasting and gambling related to animal fighting, prohibiting the shipment of mature roosters through the mail, allowing forfeiture of property used in these crimes, and establishing a private right of action to hold offenders accountable.

As prosecutors, we see every day the consequences of laws that are less than robust—cases where cruelty escalates, and where many animals suffer because enforcement is under-resourced or structurally hampered. The FIGHT Act would strengthen our capacity to intervene earlier, prosecute more effectively, and deter would-be offenders with certainty.

We are grateful that Maine's congressional delegation has historically shown leadership on this issue. You supported the FIGHT Act in the last Congress, and we are pleased that Senator Collins and Representative Pingree are already cosponsors this session. We respectfully urge you to once again add your name in support, and to use your influence to help move this vital legislation swiftly toward passage. Maine's example of taking in rescued animals, caring for them, and rehoming them demonstrates clearly how much is at stake. But we cannot have responsive compassion alone; we need preventive power.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and your dedication to both animal welfare and public safety.

Sincerely,

*Shira S. Burns*

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