

# Senate Judiciary Committee

*Pete Mulvey 271-4063*

**HB 670-FN**, adjusting the minimum fine for attacks by nuisance dogs.

**Hearing Date:** April 22, 2025

**Time Opened:** 1:18 p.m.

**Time Closed:** 1:25 p.m.

**Members of the Committee Present:** Senators Gannon and Reardon

**Members of the Committee Absent :** Senators Abbas, McConkey and Altschiller

**Bill Analysis:** This bill adjusts the minimum fine for attacks by nuisance dogs.

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**Sponsors:**

Rep. Turcotte

Rep. Kuttab

Rep. Ball

Sen. Rochefort

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**Who supports the bill:** Ann Berry, Lisa Boyer, Daniel Richardson, Eric Pauer.

**Who opposes the bill:** N/A

**Who is neutral on the bill:** Marissa Chase

**Summary of testimony:**

**Representative Len Turcotte**

**Strafford-District 4**

- HB 670-FN adjusts the minimum fine for attacks by nuisance dogs.
- Representative Turcotte explained that the bill was brought forward as a result of a conversation with a constituent who will also speak to the bill.
- Rep. Turcotte's constituent and her daughter were viciously attacked and spent months in rehab as a result of a run-in with a nuisance dog.
  - The financial costs for medical care had been a significant burden.
- Rep. Turcotte noted that each of his co-sponsors also had constituents with similar stories.
- Rep. Turcotte found the existing fines associated with the current statute very low and outdated.
  - The goal of the bill is to increase the fines to act as a deterrent and a penalty.
  - The fines established in HB 670 were set at the maximum for a misdemeanor.
- Rep. Turcotte stated that the bill targeted costs and provided that medical bills endured by the victim be directed toward the owner of the dog.
- HB 670 was amended in the House to reduce the penalty for a first offense down to a warning.

## **Ann Berry**

### **Rochester resident**

- Ms. Berry appeared and spoke in support of HB 670-FN.
- On Christmas morning of 2023, whilst walking their leashed dogs, Ms. Berry and her daughter were attacked and bit by Pit bulls.
- Ms. Berry's dogs and her daughter suffered significant injuries.
  - The medical costs were about \$30,000.
- Ms. Berry maintained that people needed to take responsibility and financial accountability for their dogs and their behavior.
- Senator Gannon asked if their efforts to collect medical costs were looking good.
  - Ms. Berry stated they were not looking good.
- Senator Gannon asked if they had a pending lawsuit.
  - Ms. Berry stated that they did.
- Senator Gannon asked if HB 670 would make payment for medical costs automatic.
  - Ms. Berry stated it would.
  - Ms. Berry noted that the owner of the dog was not paying although they received a judgment for the maximum payment which was limited to \$10,000.
- Senator Gannon asked how her daughter was doing.
  - Ms. Berry replied that she was doing ok and elaborated that \$20,000 worth of costs associated with the attack were her own medical expenses which did not include her lost time at work.

## **Marissa Chase**

### **New Hampshire Association for Justice**

- Ms. Chase stated that the Association of Justice did not take a position on the underlying bill, but suggested a change in language on page two, line two, specifically to add in a new subsection, IV.
  - Ms. Chase noted that she was happy to send an email to the committee with the suggested language.
- Ms. Chase explained that the Association of Justice did not want to inadvertently inhibit civil recovery due to conflicts with another RSA.
- Senator Reardon asked if she would send the suggested language over to the committee.
  - Ms. Chase confirmed that she would.

PM

Date Hearing Report completed: April 24, 2025