

From: [Patricia Kepler](#)
To: [DeJong Annola](#)
Subject: Testimony in support of SB 610
Date: Tuesday, March 26, 2013 7:59:04 PM

Dear Committee members:

I write to you today in support of SB 610. I have been a guide dog handler since 1995 and in that time have been the witness of several unprovoked dog attacks upon my guides.

The first, just a few months after returning home with my first guide, Liesel. We were in a marked cross walk. As Liesel and I entered the busy intersection a dog leaped out of the back of a truck, grabbing her by the throat. The owner of the dog got out of his truck, grabbed his dog and took off, leaving me in the middle of a street, during rush hour, blind, disoriented, and with an injured guide dog. Witnesses provided me the license plate number of the man that took off and a description of the dog. I was told by authorities, however, that there was no intent to harm my dog, so there was no action that could be taken.

In 2003, I had just gotten off the city bus on my way home from work, when a neighbor opened their front door, intentionally letting their dog out the front door to take care of its business. The dog ran across the street and attacked my guide. I will never forget the sound of those running paws coming at us, not knowing if my dog, or I was its target. The sound of the snarling and the impact as it flung itself on my guide was horrifying. I screamed and kicked out, trying to get the dog away from mine. A passing car stopped to offer assistance and let me know when the owner took her dog back into the house. This neighbor habitually let their dog out front to "take care of business" in other peoples yards and while allowed to run loose, victimized my dog several times. I contacted the Washington County Sheriff, and someone did go to speak with the owner. The deputies response to me was that the owner was belligerent in his right to allow his dog to run free. He advised me to file a suit and that he would provide a statement, but again, there was nothing he could do because there was no intent for his dog to hurt mine. Chance had to retire at the young age of 5 due to these repeated assaults and I needed to take time away from work and my family and return to train with a new dog. I could no longer walk freely in my neighborhood. I could not risk the safety of another guide. I could not safely walk to the bus stop to get to work. I had to instead, become dependent upon Tri-Met Lift paratransit services, a much more costly mode of transportation. These attacks, cost me time away from family, cost the community in subsidizing my more expensive form of transportation, and cost my beloved dog his career.

Do you remember the story of the little dog that was killed on a Tri-Met bus? Both owners claimed their dogs were "service" animals, but in truth, at least one was not. More recently a driver was assaulted for simply asking a person if their dog was a service animal. This problem has become so severe that Tri-Met has dedicated police to patrol for unauthorized dogs. My dog has been lunged at by untrained dogs on crowded trains several times. Buses and trains have narrow aisles and are often crowded, lack of enforcement to service animal laws puts not only my guide at risk, but other passengers as well.

I know some are hesitant to toughen this law. What is the harm if a few more people bring their dogs with them? How serious can this problem be? But I have worked at an independent living center for 10 years now and assure you that this is an important bill. I would like to see it expanded a bit to discourage doctors from recklessly signing their name to statements assuring the public that these dogs are legitimately trained. I

have seen people come in to our offices with service cats, birds, and even chickens. I have taken multiple calls from folks wanting to know if we can write something that would allow them to take their pets into businesses. I have encountered people with ill-mannered, untrained dogs that proudly show me notes their doctors have written informing store owners that this person is being accompanied by a "service animal". These are doctors, not dog trainers and their casual use of their pen is aggravating this problem. For the sake of my guide, and all legitimate service dogs, I strongly urge you to support SB 610.

Sincerely,
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