

Richard Schulke: Public Comment Before the  
San Francisco Health and Human Services Committee

November 21, 2002

Chairperson Daly and Honorable Supervisors Maxwell and Leno,

My name is Richard Schulke and I had the honor of serving as chairperson of the San Francisco Animal Control and Welfare Commission for several years. I would like to briefly remind everyone present, why this recommendation was originally made.

Most importantly, words are power and the way words are used in everyday life is powerful. Our society has continued to evolve and many words and phrases from the past are no longer useful, moral or right. This great city has pioneered many new cutting edge concepts and ideas that have been wrongly sneered and jeered at by nay sayers. Not to say that this won't be controversial and will not please everyone, especially those who view this through the green colored eyeglasses of a purely economic view. To allow the people of the city, the choice to call their relationship with a companion animal as a guardian rather than strictly its owner is a small, yet profound change. It will be easy for me and I suspect many, many San Franciscans who feel that their companion animals are members of their family already. Although this semantic and philosophical change, will not change any of the legal definitions or responsibilities of the current code for pet owners, I do truly feel in my heart of hearts that if San Francisco is willing to make the change of language in our code it would be a wonderful and enlightened step to seeing beyond the property value of our pets and honoring the special relationship that companion animals and their families have.

I hope this explains why I whole heartedly endorse this proposal before you and thank Supervisor Gonzalez for having the foresight to bring up this piece of legislation.

Thank You.