

Wendy Packman, JD, PhD

Professor Emerita of Psychology at Palo Alto University

2578 16th avenue

San Francisco, CA 94116

SB260: Labor and Employment – Leave with Pay -- Bereavement Leave
Finance Committee SUPPORT FOR SB260

Madame Chair, Vice Chair and members of the Finance Committee:

I understand that a bill has been proposed for employers to offer bereavement leave to include the mourning of Pets

[SB260, Family Bereavement Act.

View Link Here: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2020RS/bills/sb/sb0260F.pdf>]

This is, indeed, excellent news. I am in support of this bill regarding the benefits of bereavement leave following the loss of a beloved companion animal.

A. Personal Statement

I am Professor Emerita of Psychology at Palo Alto University (Palo Alto, California). I am trained as both a clinical pediatric psychologist and an attorney. My research focuses on populations that are vulnerable, and, often, ignored. Unfortunately, the death of a pet may not be fully recognized or validated by spouses, friends, or acquaintances as a significant bereavement. As a result, grievors are often isolated and left without societal support. The focus of my research is *continuing bonds* – the way we stay emotionally connected to those who have died. The phenomenon of continuing bonds (CB) has only recently been labeled as such in the pet bereavement literature (Carmack & Packman, 2011; Packman, Field, Carmack, & Ronen, 2011). I conducted and published the first systematic studies of pet loss and continuing bonds. In our initial pet loss study we examined and quantified the type of CB expressions that occur among bereaved pet owners. The results confirmed that individuals experience dimensions of CB following the death of their beloved companion animals; the majority of bereaved pet owners maintain ongoing, meaningful ties with their deceased pet. I am the primary investigator of an ongoing international cross-cultural study examining the continuing impact of a pet's death. excerpts from some of my studies:

Excerpts from recent studies:

Because the human-pet relationship constitutes an attachment bond, a similar response to separation and loss of a pet has been found to that following the loss of a human attachment bond (Field, Orsini, Gavish, & Packman, 2009; Packman et al., 2011). Indeed, the grief following the death of a pet manifests itself in similar ways to that experienced after human loss in terms of sleep disruption and social and psychological challenges (Archer & Winchester, 1994; Carmack & Packman, 2011; Quackenbush, 1985). Gerwolls and Labott (1994) assessed whether the loss of a pet was different from the

loss of a human companion (parent, child, or spouse). At 2 and 8 weeks post-loss, the grief scores (Grief Experiences Inventory) of those who had lost a pet were similar to those who had lost a human companion. At 6 months post-loss, there were no statistically significant differences in grief scores between the two groups.

Packman, W., Carmack, B.J., Katz, R., Carlos, F., Field, N.P., & Landers, C. (2014). Online survey as empathic bridging for the disenfranchised grief of pet loss. *Omega*. 69(4) 333-356

In order to illustrate the similarities in the incidence of different types of CB expressions in pet loss with human loss, we show a comparison in Table 2 with a spousal loss sample involving the loss of a husband between 1 and 2 years previously (Field, 2010). The mean grief symptom score for the spousal sample (M.2.16, SD.81) was not significantly different from the mean grief score in the pet sample (M.2.32, SD.84, ns). This justified comparing the two samples on the CB measures.

Both groups are similar in many ways. First, in terms of relative frequency of endorsement, there is remarkable correspondence between the two samples. For example, both samples have high endorsement of reminiscing with others, focusing on fond memories, and use of the belongings of the deceased. Both groups correspondingly have low endorsement for everyday choices and intrusions. Second, the paired t-test results comparing comfort with distress ratings indicated that participants in both groups reported CB as significantly more comforting than distressing for most of the CB expressions

Packman, W., Field, N.P., Carmack, B.J., & Ronen, R. (2011). Continuing bonds and psychosocial adjustment in pet loss. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 16:4, 341-357, DOI 10.1080/15325024.2011.572046

We investigated continuing bonds (CB) and a range of psychosocial outcomes among 4,336 recently bereaved pet owners recruited through online and in-person support venues. The present study, to the best of our knowledge, is the largest evaluation of experiences related to recent pet loss, and may be particularly relevant to those most likely to seek support following the loss of a pet. Bereaved pet owners reported using a wide range of CB and associated levels of comfort and distress. Similar to our pilot work on this topic (Packman et al., 2011), the top three endorsed CB in terms of frequency were fond memories, reminiscing, and use of deceased pet's belongings for comfort.

Descriptive data provide an important contextual framework to understand our findings. Most importantly, this was a very recently bereaved sample (all within one year, and the median time since death was 4 days). As might be expected given this sample's recent losses, participants reported a high level of grief severity (M = 3.5, SD = 0.85), as compared with results using the same grief measure from our pilot study for this pet loss project (Packman et al.,

2011; $M = 2.3$, $SD = 0.84$), previous work on pet loss (Field et al., 2009; $M = 2.15$, $SD = 0.82$), and previous work on recent human loss (Filanosky, 2003; $M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.07$).

Habarth, J., Bussolari, C., Gomez, R., Carmack, B., Ronen, R., Field, N.P., & **Packman, W.**, (2017). Continuing Bonds and Psychosocial Functioning in a Recently Bereaved Pet Loss Sample. *Anthrozoos*, 30:4, 651-670

Bibliography:

Field, N.P., Orsini, L., Gavish, R. & **Packman, W.** (2009). Role of attachment in response to pet loss. *Death Studies*, 33(4), 332-355.

Packman, W., Field, N.P., Carmack, B.J., & Ronen, R. (2011). Continuing bonds and psychosocial adjustment in pet loss. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 16:4, 341-357, DOI 10.1080/15325024.2011.572046

Packman, W., Carmack, B.J., & Ronen, R. (2012). Therapeutic Implications of Continuing Bonds Expressions Following the Death of a Pet. *Omega*, 64(4) 335-356.

Packman, W., Carmack, B.J., Katz, R., Carlos, F., Field, N.P., & Landers, C. (2014). Online survey as empathic bridging for the disenfranchised grief of pet loss. *Omega*. 69(4) 333-356

Packman, W., Bussolari, C., Katz, R., Carmack, B.J., & Field, N.P. (2016). Post-traumatic growth following the loss of a pet. *Omega*. DOI: 10.1177/0030222816663411

Packman, W., Kelley, E., Rudolph, B., Long, J., Wallace, J., Hsu, M., Carmack, B. & Field, N. (2017). Projective drawings following pet loss; Clinical utility and predictive findings. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*. 34(19) 1-9.

Bussolari, C., Habarth, J., Kimpara, S., Katz, R., Carlos, F., Chow, A., Osada, H., Osada, Y., Carmack, B.J., Field, N.P. & **Packman, W.**, (2017). Post-traumatic growth following the loss of a pet: A cross-cultural comparison. *Omega*. DOI: 10.1177/0030222817690403

Habarth, J., Bussolari, C., Gomez, R., Carmack, B., Ronen, R., Field, N.P., & **Packman, W.**, (2017). Continuing Bonds and Psychosocial Functioning in a Recently Bereaved Pet Loss Sample. *Anthrozoos*, 30:4, 651-670.

Schmidt, M., Naylor, P. E., Cohen, D., Gomez, R., Moses, J. A., Rappoport, M., & **Packman W.** (2018). Pet loss and Continuing Bonds in children and adolescents. *Death Studies*.

Bussolari, C., Habarth, J., Phillips, S., Katz, R., & **Packman, W.** (2018). Self-Compassion, Social Constraints, and Psychosocial Outcomes in a Pet Bereavement Sample. *Omega*. DOI: 10.1177/0030222818814050

Books and Book Chapters:

Carmack, B.J. & **Packman, W.** (2011). Pet Loss: The Interface of Continuing Bonds Research and Practice. In R. Neimeyer, D. Harris, & G. Thornton (Eds.) *Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society: Bridging Research and Practice* (pp. 273-284). New York: Routledge.

Packman, W., Bussolari, C., Katz., R., & Carmack, B.J. (2016). Continuing Bonds Research with Animal Companions: Implications for Men Grieving the Loss of a Dog, In L. Kogan and C. Blazina (Eds.) *Men and Their Dogs: A New Psychological Understanding of Man's Best Friend* (pp. 303-320). Springer

Bussolari, C., & **Packman, W.** (2019). Therapeutic continuing bond interventions with bereaved pet owners. In L. R. Kogan & P. Erdman (Eds.), *Pet loss and Mental Health Care Providers – The Essential Handbook* University Press.

Examples of my research and presentations in the area of bereavement and loss:

Packman, W., Horsley, H., Davies, B., & Kramer, R. (2006). Continuing bonds and sibling bereavement. *Death Studies*, 30(9), 817-841.

Ronen, R., **Packman, W.**, Field, N.P., Davies, B., Kramer, R., & Long, J. (2009). The relationship between grief adjustment and continuing bonds for parents who have lost a child. *Omega*, 60(1), 1-31.

Field, N.P., **Packman, W.**, Ronen, R., Pries, A., Davies, B., & Kramer, R. (2013). Continuing bonds in death of a child. *Death Studies*. 37:10, 889-912, DOI:10.1080/07481187.2012.692458

Field, N.P., Strasser, J., Taing, S, Horuchi S., Chhim, S., & **Packman, W.** (2014). Prolonged grief following the recent death of a daughter among mothers who experienced distal losses during the Khmer Rouge era: Validity of the prolonged grief construct in Cambodia. *Psychiatry Research* .<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2014.05.014i>

Presentations

Pet Loss and Continuing Bonds; Virtual Data Collected from the Virtual World;
The 10th International Conference on Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society. Invited Speaker: Hong Kong, June, 2014

Child Bereavement- Clinical issues and Interventions;
Community Health Awareness Council (CHAC) Mountain View, March, 2014, 2015

Wendy Packman: Open to Hope Foundation : Invited submissions on coping with pet loss.
<http://www.opentohope.com/>.

Thank you for the opportunity to write this and thank you for your consideration. I ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT on SB 260.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wendy Packman".

Wendy Packman, JD, PhD
Professor Emerita
Pacific Graduate School of Psychology
Palo Alto University
Director, Emerita, Joint JD-PhD Program in Psychology and Law
1791 Arastradero Road
Palo Alto, CA 94304
email: wpackman@palou.edu