



18 March 2019

Oregon House Committee on Business and Labor
Oregon State Capitol

Re: Support for House Bill 2804-6

Chairperson Barker, Vice-Chairs Barreto and Bynum, and Committee members:

On behalf of Best Friends Animal Society and our Oregon members, I am pleased to offer support for House Bill 2804-6 to restrict the retail sale of dogs and cats in Oregon pet stores. We encourage you to join more than 300 municipalities (as well as the entire states of California and Maryland) that have made the change to prohibit pet stores from selling commercially bred pets, and instead allowing for the adoption of pets sourced from shelters or rescue groups.

Puppy and kitten mills are a serious problem in the U.S. These facilities, which supply nearly 100% of retail pet stores and online retailers, are cruel and inhumane breeding factories in which profit takes priority over the health, comfort and welfare of the animals.

Although the USDA regulates these breeders, the minimum federal standards do not ensure a humane life for animals. These types of kennels can legally have more than a thousand dogs in one facility, and those dogs are allowed to be confined to very small cages for their entire lives, breeding continuously in order to produce as many puppies as possible for the pet trade. And USDA inspection reports show that many USDA-licensed breeders continue to sell animals to local pet stores even after being cited for serious violations at their facilities. In other words, having a USDA license does **not** ensure responsible breeding.

Further, with the USDA no longer making inspection reports available to the public, there is no way for pet stores or consumers to know if the puppies for sale have come from breeding facilities with serious violations of the Animal Welfare Act. Therefore, the idea that pet stores are sourcing from federally regulated breeders doesn't carry much weight. It doesn't protect consumers or animals.

Pet stores rely on high-volume commercial pet mills – and their distributors – to supply their stores because reputable breeders won't sell to pet stores for two simple reasons: it's not financially viable and they don't sell to third parties. And this pledge never to sell a puppy to a pet store can be found in every reputable breeder's code of ethics, including virtually all of the parent breed clubs of the American Kennel Club.

Because the goal is to make a profit, pet mill owners cut all possible corners to keep their overhead low, at the expense of the health and well-being of their animals. For the unsuspecting consumer, this frequently results in the purchase of a pet facing an array of immediate veterinary problems or harboring genetic diseases that surface down the line. This creates a financial burden on the consumer and results in many of these animals being surrendered to overcrowded, taxpayer-subsidized shelters. Thus, this is not just an animal welfare issue but a consumer protection concern.



Responsible breeders do not sell their animals in this manner. On the contrary, they encourage potential buyers to visit the home where the animals were bred, they conduct an interview to be sure the match is the best one for both the buyer and the animal, and they require a contract that requires the buyer to provide good care, to spay and neuter the animal, and to return him/her to the breeder if things don't work out. These sensible provisions do not apply when animals are sold through pet stores.

Also concerning is the fact that 17 states have been hit by an outbreak of a strain of bacteria (Campylobacter) that is linked to pet shop puppies, which is resistant to antibiotics and contagious to humans. Oregonians should not be exposed to this serious public health threat.

Those who benefit most from companion animal sales in pet stores are the retailers themselves. While they may profit from the practice of buying these pets at a low price from commercial brokers and then selling them at a high price (typically without first spaying or neutering them), it is the taxpaying public who pays for animal control to house and kill unwanted animals in the community.

It makes little sense to continue manufacturing dogs and cats while so many are being killed for lack of space. Public education has been effective, but until states take the initiative to limit the supply of pets being imported from mostly out-of-state, substandard commercial facilities, there can be no hope of preventing these unnecessary deaths.

Pet stores supplied by mills can choose to be part of the solution rather than the problem by phasing out the sale of commercially bred pets in favor of other common revenue streams such as pet product sales, grooming and day care, and by offering space for animal rescue organizations to adopt out animals from those stores.

Pet stores that have transitioned from selling milled dogs and cats to offering rescued pets for adoption have found this animal-friendly model to be both viable and embraced by the communities in which the stores are located. Therefore, a restriction on the retail sale of pets would not preclude pet stores from doing business, but would, in fact, alleviate a significant burden on local shelters by increasing pet adoptions. Further, **it would not prevent anyone from purchasing a pet directly from a private breeder.**

Best Friends and our Oregon members thank you in advance for taking a compassionate, common sense initiative to address the pet mill problem and for setting a positive example for the rest of the country to follow. We have been proud to work with the majority of municipalities throughout the U.S. that have enacted similar legislation, and we would be pleased to help Oregon do the same.

Thank you for your consideration of this important reform.

Respectfully,

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