



**PET INDUSTRY JOINT
ADVISORY COUNCIL**
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March 20, 2019

RE: House Bill 2804-5 Limits Consumer Choice, Not in Best Interest of Oregon Animals

Dear Chairman Barker and Members of the House Committee on Business and Labor:

As an organization that routinely supports legislative efforts to advance the welfare of animals, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) appreciates the opportunity to share our views and expertise on HB 2804-5 regarding a ban on the sale of dogs and cats in Oregon's pet stores. PIJAC and our members across Oregon respectfully request that the Committee on Business and Labor take no action on the bill as written.

We in the pet care community don't just care about animals, we provide care for them on a daily basis. For many years PIJAC has provided a highly respected animal care certification program intended to ensure that employees are well trained in the care of the animals they sell; a program that is widely utilized not only by persons in the commercial pet trade but also shelters and humane societies throughout the country and one that has even been adopted as a statutory standard in some states. PIJAC has worked closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on effective implementation of the Animal Welfare Act for pets since its inception over 50 years ago, and has joined hands with state agencies to ensure adoption and enforcement of appropriate regulatory standards. Our association has long been recognized as the voice for a responsible and humane pet trade.

As such, we offer an unmatched depth and breadth of experience on legislative efforts to verify and certify the health and well-being of animals sold as pets from the time they are born all the way until they are taken home and made a part of families. Our members have a responsibility to the animals themselves, not to mention their customers. They work with families to find the ideal pets for their individual situations because that is the single best way to ensure lifelong pet relationships. Pet stores also have a significant incentive to adhere to the highest standards of care and sourcing; they are dependent on their reputation and positive word of mouth to stay in business.

Respectfully, PIJAC requests that no action be taken on HB 2804-5 as written because it will not do what its supporters say it will. Nationwide, roughly 4% of all dogs brought into homes each year come from pet stores. A ban on the sale of dogs and cats in Oregon pet stores will have a minimal effect on breeders, but it will have disastrous consequences for several small, local businesses. Additionally, we are concerned that the bill limits consumer choice and inhibits the ability of the state to provide consumer protections in the pet selection process. These are bedrock principles of responsible pet ownership and we believe they must be carried out in Oregon.

A blanket, statewide sales ban limiting consumer choice is a simplistic, unwise and unproven reaction to well-intended concerns regarding animal health and safety. This ban would not address breeding practices, good or bad. Instead, it paints all breeders with a broad brush and fails to distinguish between those who breed responsibly and those who put profits before pet care. This will only serve to marginalize Oregonians' voices in the broader discussion of animal health and welfare.

HB 2804-5 also takes away consumer choice. Responsible pet ownership begins with choosing the best pet for your specific circumstances. Often there are considerations like allergies, energy level, presence of children in the home, and temperament that create the need for a specific breed of dog or other type of pet. Shelters and pounds are ill-equipped to assist families with this process, as the animals they can offer are necessarily limited to those they take in.

While PIJAC fully supports legislation that would prevent illegal breeders from breeding and selling unfit animals, HB 2804-5 will not achieve that goal in Oregon.

If the purpose of this proposal is to encourage tighter restrictions on the sources of animals coming into Oregon, PIJAC would welcome the opportunity to work with the state to raise the bar to ensure proper animal sourcing that protects dogs and cats. For instance, common sense solutions would require that animals come from only USDA licensees or breeders who are so small that they are not required to be licensed by the USDA. Additional approaches to sourcing that are currently working in other states require that the USDA licensed breeders supplying animals to pet stores not be cited for critical non-compliance issues or other items that directly impact animal health. These inspection reports could travel with the animal and be made available to the customer.

PIJAC also recommends that before enacting such restrictive legislation, Oregon policymakers should ensure that consumer protections in existing pet warranty law are being enforced. According to the American Veterinary Medicine Association, 22 states including Oregon provide legal recourse to people who purchase animals from pet stores, which are later found to have an illness or medical condition. These protections in Oregon include replacement of the animal, a refund of the purchase price, or reimbursement of veterinary expenses, up to the purchase price of the animal. In this way, pet stores are already further incentivized to work with quality breeders to ensure that the animals they offer are healthy and well-bred.

PIJAC views HB 2804-5 as an unwarranted and unnecessary legislative solution to a public policy problem that has been misrepresented in Oregon. If it were to become law, small businesses who rely on the ability to provide a dogs or cat with specific qualities to their customers would be forced to close.

PIJAC would welcome the opportunity to work with the sponsors of this legislation and the members of the committee to craft public policy with protects animals, consumers, and small businesses without limiting pet choice in Oregon.

PIJAC is thankful for the opportunity to raise these significant concerns and respectfully reiterate our request for the committee to take no action on HB 2804-5 as written. We would welcome the chance to discuss these items with you at greater length. PIJAC has a long history of collaborating to ensure that regulations and legislation are both workable and meet their intended goals, and we would be happy to lend our expertise to address these concerns.

Sincerely,



Mike Bober
President, Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council