

Mr. Chairman, Committee members, my name is Scott Johnson. Along with my brother, and my father, I am one of the founders of Critter Cabana, a pet store that would be destroyed by this bill. Our 2 successful stores in Newberg and Wilsonville are the sum of the efforts and struggles of my family of the last 15 years.

I believe there are two goals at the heart of this bill: shut down puppy mills and increase shelter adoptions. As pet store owners, we share these goals and I would like to express why I believe this bill is so misguided. The first goal, shutting down puppy mills, is predicated on two myths about pet stores that must be addressed directly.

The first myth is that all pet store puppies come from puppy mills.

Here's the facts: We source puppies from local families. Part of our vetting process for breeders is doing what we call a "home check" which means visiting the breeders home and seeing the conditions the puppies and the parents are coming from. If breeders won't let us do the home visit, then we won't get their puppies. This means that the puppies we get are never, EVER coming from puppy mills. Our breeders are universally small scale, family breeders. Most of them have only one or two litters per year, and none have over five females. They aren't "production" facilities meeting quotas for us like a factory. They are caring people who love their dogs and love raising puppies. We would never buy from a puppy mill.

Here's the second myth: responsible breeders would never sell to pet stores.

Here's the facts: The breeders most drastically affected by the bill are those who are already the most disenfranchised. For example, many of our breeders are elderly and struggle using online markets and smart phones to exchange information and pictures. When they do venture on to technology, they find an abundance of scammers who prey on them, causing fear and danger. We offer security, transparency and convenience through one smiling face. We get the entire litter right at eight weeks old and we provide full time care to the puppies for as long as it takes them to find homes. Imagine how nice that is for the disabled 80 year old widow whose life joy has been breeding poodles.

I've met breeders everywhere between Yakima, La Grande and Medford. In these rural areas are often some of the most big hearted people with amazing dogs who simply have a difficult time because they live in small, isolated communities. Locals from our area struggle to make a ten hour round trip to visit these breeders, creating a gap between good breeders and good people, a gap we fill nicely.

We also do 100% of new family screening, coaching and education - something that is extremely difficult, especially for our minority Spanish speaking population. This minority population happens to have a great culture around dog breeding, and are some of our best partners.

What we do is enable breeders to experience the joy of raising puppies without stressful nitty-gritty minutia. Understanding this requires compassion for the struggles of a small, soft-spoken, group of people: Oregon dog breeders... many of whom are poor, isolated, elderly, disabled or people color. Partnering with a pet store is the only responsible choice they have and some may even struggle to survive without us.

Beyond these beneficial securities we offer to the generally disenfranchised, we also vaccinate, worm, groom, vet check, perform fecal exams, microchips, medicate as needed, give a one year health guarantee, offer a low pressure environment for endless bonding time with multiple breeds of puppies, of which the selection can change on a day to day basis. Literally, no breeder can offer all these perks.

I would also like to say our customers are not fools who have never thought about adopting from a shelter before. Adoption is a moral imperative of today - and our clients are conscientious members of the community. These are thoughtful people who have weighed their options and chosen to get a puppy because they feel it's the best option for their family situation. We are a beloved community outlet for breeders and clients who value the footwork involved in networking the two worlds of breeding and adoption.

I respect the heart behind this bill. But the cross-hairs are pointed at the wrong target. This bill is not pointed at puppy mills. It's pointed at loyal, upstanding Oregonians. It's pointed at me, my family, my employees, our partner breeders, and our local communities who know us and just want to go somewhere they trust to meet the newest member of their family.

Scott Johnson  
Critic Cabana  
Owner  
503.682.9812