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10 February 2023

Oregon House Committee on Business and Labor
Sent via Email

Re: Support for HB 2915 – Prohibits retail pet stores from offering to sell or selling dogs or cats, with exceptions

Honorable Chair Holvey, Vice-Chair Sosa and esteemed Representatives:

On behalf of Best Friends Animal Society and our Oregon members, supporters and partners, I am pleased to offer support for House Bill 2915 to restrict the sale of inhumanely bred companion animals in Oregon's future pet stores. We urge you to join more than 460 cities, counties and states throughout North America that have enacted sensible and effective legislation to prevent pet stores from selling commercially bred pets, and instead allow for the adoption of pets sourced from shelters or rescue groups, while also allowing responsible breeders to continue selling directly to the public.

Pet mills, particularly puppy mills, are a serious problem in the U.S. These facilities, which supply nearly 100% of commercial puppy stores, are cruel and inhumane breeding factories in which profit takes priority over the health, comfort and welfare of the animals.

Although the USDA regulates most commercial breeders, the minimum federal standards do not ensure a safe or healthy life for pets. These types of kennels can legally have more than a thousand dogs in one facility, and these dogs are allowed to be confined to cages only six inches larger than their bodies 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 pet stores even after being cited for serious violations at their facilities. In other words, having a USDA license does **not** guarantee humane or ethical breeding.

Because the focus is solely on profit, commercial breeding operations typically 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 can result in pets being surrendered to overcrowded, taxpayer-subsidized shelters. Thus, this is not just an animal welfare issue but a consumer protection concern that has a direct impact on local taxpayers.

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 communities take the initiative to halt the supply of pets imported from substandard commercial facilities, there can be no hope of preventing these unnecessary deaths.

Pet stores rely on commercial pet mills and their distributors to supply their pets because ethical breeders won't sell to pet stores for two simple reasons: it's not financially viable and they don't sell to

third parties. They want to know where those pets are going. They want to meet the people who are going to care for that animal. And that's why the pledge never to sell a pet to a pet store can be found verbatim in every reputable breeder's code of ethics, including virtually all of the parent breed clubs promoted by the American Kennel Club, as well as the national cat fancier associations.

Ethical breeders 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 the pet to the breeder if things don't work out at any point over the pet's lifetime. These sensible provisions cannot apply when animals are sold through pet stores.

Also concerning is the fact that 21 states have been hit by an outbreak of a strain of bacteria (Campylobacter) that is linked to puppies sold through puppy stores. Campylobacter is resistant to antibiotics and contagious to humans. Oregon residents should not be exposed to this serious public health threat — particularly now, when public health is so vulnerable.

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.

Further, many pet stores are frequently accused of predatory lending by offering financing upwards of 160%, creating a serious and unexpected financial strain on the consumer, sometimes resulting in an obligation for ongoing payments for a pet that is deceased.

Pet stores that sell commercially bred pets can choose to be part of the solution rather than the problem by phasing out the sale of animals 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, as hundreds of pet stores across the country already do with great success.

Pet stores that have transitioned from selling companion animals 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, HB 2915 would not prevent any current or future pet stores from doing business, and would alleviate a significant burden on local shelters and rescue groups 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 fair, reasonable and effective measure to protect consumers, pets and taxpayers throughout the state. We have been proud to work with elected officials across the country to enact humane pet sales legislation, and I hope you will not hesitate to contact me if there is anything we can do to help realize this important effort.

Respectfully,



Elizabeth Oreck

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