

Johnson, Krista

From: Wes Fisher <Wes@petadvocacy.org>
Sent: Friday, June 3, 2022 3:26 PM
To: Wes Fisher
Subject: Comments From the Pet Advocacy Network Regarding Bans on the Sale of Pets in Pet Stores
Attachments: Pinellas Pet Sale Comments from Pet Advocacy Network.pdf
Categories: SENT TO BOARD REPORTERS, DOWNLOADED

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Hi,

I wanted to share the attached letter detailing the Pet Advocacy Network's general opposition to local pet sale bans. I would be happy to discuss alternative ordinance language that our association routinely supports that promotes animal welfare and allows stores to remain in business.

Best,

Wesley Fisher
Senior Director, Government Affairs
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June 3, 2022

RE: Comments in Opposition to Local Bans on the Sale of Certain Pets by Pet Stores

Dear Members of the Pinellas County Board of Commissioners:

On behalf of the responsible pet care community, we ask that you not enact a ban on the sale of pets by pet stores. Such a ban, which prevents stores from selling dogs or cats or sometimes mandates that pet stores must source dogs and cats from rescue organizations, creates an infeasible business model that has proven to close pet stores. In fact, when California enacted a similar policy statewide, 93% of pet stores selling dogs and cats in the state closed permanently. We welcome the opportunity to discuss sourcing regulations that would allow pet stores to continue to do business while ensuring animals sold by pet stores in Pinellas only come from responsible breeders.

Founded in 1971, the Pet Advocacy Network represents the interests and expertise of retailers, companion animal suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, pet owners, and others involved in the many aspects of pet care across the United States. Our association works to promote animal well-being and responsible pet ownership, foster environmental stewardship, and ensure the availability of healthy pets through our work at the state and federal levels—including the United States Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

All of us in the responsible pet care community don't just care about animals, we provide care for them daily—and are dedicated to ensuring that appropriate care of animals is the primary focus of any law or regulation. As such, we offer an unmatched depth and breadth of experience regarding legislative efforts to verify and certify the health and well-being of pets from the time they are born all the way until they are taken home and made a part of families.

Everyone agrees that bad breeders who mistreat or neglect animals need to be put out of business. However, those who seek to stop bad breeders by targeting responsible pet stores with retail pet sale bans are misinformed. That is why prohibitions on the retail sale of dogs and cats are not the answer to stopping unscrupulous actors and substandard, unregulated, unlicensed high volume dog breeders.

While well-intentioned, retail pet sale bans will not stop bad breeders who are unregulated, unlicensed and are not held accountable to any animal care standards. What bans will do is harm highly regulated pet stores and eliminate a transparent and trusted source of pets that provides purchasers with legal protections, and drive prospective pet owners to unregulated, unlicensed, and potentially unscrupulous pet sellers.

The fact is that pet stores and the licensed breeders they work with are a highly regulated, best-in-class source of pets that are inspected regularly, provide veterinary exams, and keep detailed records of the condition and care of their animals: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) established and enforces humane care standards under the federal

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government's Animal Welfare Act that regulate the transportation, purchase, sale, housing, care, handling, and treatment of animals for use as pets.

- Breeders with five or more breeding females that are not USDA-licensed are prohibited from selling to pet stores.
- USDA-licensed breeders are routinely inspected to ensure they are complying with humane standards for veterinary care, shelter, food, and clean water.
- Pet stores are also regulated by state laws regarding animal care and warranties and are required to keep records related to the health, veterinary care, and source of the animals they sell.

Beyond the legal requirements, our members feel a responsibility to the animals themselves. They work with families to find the ideal pets for their individual situations because that is the single best way to ensure successful lifelong pet relationships and keep pets from being surrendered to shelters and rescues. Pet stores are a valuable and transparent option for prospective pet owners. They provide the peace of mind and the opportunity for families to personally interact with and choose a pet that will be the best fit for their circumstances that was raised under federal and state care standards, has a detailed medical history, and in many cases, is protected by a consumer warranty¹. Pet stores also have a significant incentive to adhere to the highest standards of care and sourcing because they depend on their reputation, and positive word of mouth to stay in business.

The best option for pet ownership for some families are the pure- or purpose-bred puppies offered by pet stores. They may need a specific breed due to health considerations – 30 percent of Americans suffer from pet allergies.² Or, with young children, they may not be able to take on the behavior risks of bringing a dog with an unknown history into their home – 47 percent of rehomed dogs are relinquished because of pet problems, including aggressive behaviors³. If a future pet owner needs or wants a specific breed due to such common circumstances, their options will be severely limited without pet stores.

A pet sale ban will boost the unregulated black market for pets. Without pet stores to personally interact with and select their new pet, families may turn to online sources, where they could fall victim to the “puppy scams” that have surged in recent years—tricked into sending unrecoverable money for a nonexistent dog. While there are reputable and responsible online sellers, the Better Business Bureau has stated that fake online puppy sellers and puppy scams have dramatically increased by 39 percent since 2017⁴, and up to 80 percent of sponsored online ads for puppies may be fake.⁵ Victims of these puppy scams often have no legal recourse because they purchased from a source without regulatory oversight and without a purchase warranty to protect them.

¹ American Veterinary Medical Association. <https://www.avma.org/advocacy/state-local-issues/resource-guidance-pet-purchase-protection-laws>

² Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. <https://www.aafa.org/pet-dog-cat-allergies/>

³ ASPCA, Pet Statistics. <https://www.aspc.org/helping-people-pets/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistics>

⁴ BBB Alert: Beware of Puppy Scams This Holiday Season – Findings by BBB Reveal a Surge in Complaints and Scam Reports. (n.d.). <https://www.bbb.org/article/scams/18964-scam-alert-beware-of-puppy-scams-this-holiday-season>

⁵ Puppy Scams: How to Protect Yourself from Fake Online Pet Sellers. (2017, November). <https://www.bbb.org/article/scams/14213-puppy-scams-how-to-protect-yourself-from-fake-online-pet-sellers>



With a pet sale ban, future pet owners could also fall victim to bad breeders who don't adhere to care standards and sell puppies with diseases or genetic defects. Without the legal recourse of a warranty, such as those offered by many pet stores and required in many states, families are left with huge veterinary bills. In California, for example, veterinarians saw an increase in consumers purchasing sick dogs from unregulated sources shortly after the state implemented a ban on the sale of dogs, cats, and rabbits at pet stores in 2019.⁶

The past two years have been incredibly challenging, particularly for small business owners. These days, our government should be doing everything in its power to support responsible small businesses, especially those that are regulated. A retail pet sale ban would not impact bad actors, but it will punish law-abiding pet stores, often small, local businesses that depend on establishing life-long relationships with pet owners to sustain their businesses because they can't compete with the volume pricing that online or big-box retailers are able to offer. These local businesses are committed to the health, safety, and wellbeing of the animals they provide to families.

Rather than penalizing law-abiding and responsible pet store owners, the way to put bad breeders out of business is to evaluate, improve, and increase enforcement of federal and state animal care laws, including setting and enforcing sourcing restrictions and strong and uniform standards of care. The Pet Advocacy Network also recommends that before enacting such restrictive legislation, states enact consumer protections in the form of pet warranty laws. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, 22 states in the country provide legal recourse to people who purchase animals from pet stores that are later found to have an illness or medical condition. These protections often include replacement of the animal, a refund of the purchase price, and/or reimbursement of veterinary expenses, generally up to the purchase price of the animal. In this way, pet stores are further incentivized to work with quality breeders to ensure that the dogs they offer are healthy and well-bred.

We appreciate your consideration and would welcome the opportunity to work together to find ways to meaningfully address bad breeders. By working together, we can make sure that pet owners continue to have reliable access to healthy animals to love as pets now and in the future.

Sincerely,

J. Wesley Fisher
Senior Director, Government Affairs

⁶ ABC 10 San Diego <https://www.10news.com/news/team-10/puppy-dies-four-hours-after-sd-family-buys-it-vets-say-new-law-may-be-part-of-the-problem>

Johnson, Krista

From: parcka@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 6:59 PM
To: Justice, Charlie
Subject: NO Puppy Ban

Categories: DOWNLOADED, SENT TO BOARD REPORTERS

CAUTION: *This message has originated from outside of the organization. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.*

Why are we wasting time trying to make legitimate businesses go out of business?

The real problem is uneducated backyard people with their pitbull mixes. Please check with the humane society to see that most of the dogs there are pitbull mixes of some sort. These are not being sold in the puppy stores.

Many people have gotten good quality dogs from puppy stores. Let's go after a real problem.

Rabbits? We have over a million people in Pinellas County and we're getting worked up over 300 pet rabbits that need a new home? Really?

Please stop the madness and work on real problems, not the hysterical housewife problems.

Regards,

Tom Williamson
Palm Harbor