



Monday, February 10, 2009

To: Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and Members of the Environment Committee

From: Laura "Peach" Reid, Owner & President of Fish Mart, Inc.

Re: S.B. 499, AAC a Pet Lemon Law

S.B. 783, AAC the Importation of Animals For Adoption

H.B. 5493, An Act Establishing a Dog and Cat Lemon Law

H.B. 5801, An Act Prohibiting the Sales of Dogs Obtained From Puppy Mills

While Fish Mart does not sell puppies or kittens, we are the Northeast's largest regional supplier of tropical fish, small animals, birds and reptiles to retail pet stores, and I am proud to tell you we are celebrating our 35<sup>th</sup> year in business. With all the taxes, insurances, regulations, laws, exorbitant electricity rates and other expenses and responsibilities imposed on us, coupled with the economic downturn, I hope this is not our last year, nor the last year of any other CT pet shops.

The CT pet industry provides many jobs - salaries and employee benefits; pays social security and medicare taxes, pays sales tax, property tax, income tax, unemployment insurance, and workers compensation insurance, among many other expenses that keep our economy rolling.

I have been appearing before this committee for over 20 years, nearly always about pet shop puppies and kitten legislation. I am very pleased to see that this year, you are considering extending the rules and regulations that pet shops have to other sellers or adopters of puppies and kittens. This approach will protect more animals, more consumers, and will even bring in revenue in the form of sales taxes and license fees.

The statement of purpose of SB 499 - to deter the sale of pets with illnesses or disabilities and to reimburse pet buyers for related health costs - could be easily accomplished by requiring kennels, shelters, adoption agencies and private breeders to be subject to the same laws and regulations that only pet shops already abide by. There is already a Lemon Law - it is effective, but it only applies to pet shops right now. I hope you change that!

This may be a good time to tell you that in 2007, the Department of Agriculture received just 28 complaints about thin or sick pet shop puppies. The state inspectors found that fully 25% (7) of these complaints were invalid, had no merit. The industry calculates that approximately 10,000 puppies are sold by pet shops annually. The valid complaint rate is 0.0021% of sales. For the many years I have been doing this analysis, this tiny percentage of sick puppies in pet shops stays about the same. My point here is that pet shops need no further regulation - it is the other sources of puppies that require them. I suppose I should also make the point that because puppies are living creatures, some WILL get sick,

despite everyone's best efforts, just like us humans will get colds, or viruses, or even bronchitis from time to time.

SB 783, concerning the importation of animals for adoption, is a bill that could regulate those agencies, such as the North Shore Animal League, that set up shop at pet stores or other sites, in their trailer/ busses, and adopt out puppies at a price tag of \$75 or more. Nobody knows where these puppies were bred or raised, there is certainly no signage requirement of same, there are no required records showing they see a vet every 14 days, there is no health log, there is no health guarantee or warranty for the buyer. All of this and more is supplied to buyers at pet shops. The language in this bill, however, has to include the VEHICLES that agencies such as just mentioned use. "Animal isolation facility" cannot refer only to a building or structure as currently written. For the "adoption import permit", I recommend you include a NON-PROFIT organization as another in the list of entities.

In regards to HB 5801, I think defining a puppy mill as a sub-standard breeding facility is good. I also approve of the conditions cited. I would like to know if this is only for in-state breeding facilities and/ or kennels.

Finally, HB 5493. First, and again, we already have a so-called Lemon Law, and it has many provisions, but only for pet shops, so I agree with including kennels. I think it should be expanded to also include shelters and adoption agencies, too.

Under no circumstance do I personally agree with the proposal to reimburse a consumer with twice the amount of money they paid for an animal, whether from an illness at the time of sale (remember, these puppies are vet-checked every 2 weeks starting day 1 at a pet shop, so 99% of the time, they are NOT ill at purchase); or from a congenital or hereditary nature. Right now, a full refund or replacement is available within 2 weeks of sale in the case of illness or death, or \$200 for veterinary expenses in the case of illness if determined to be present.

In proposing fines for pet shops or kennels that are "unsanitary" "inhumane" and "unsatisfactory manner," these terms are clearly subjective, and require clear definition.

I do agree with the posting of the current guarantee policy.

Thank you all for your consideration of my comments.