

Testimony of Allison Allen
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In Opposition to House Bill No. 5118
An Act Concerning Certificates of Origin for Dogs Sold by Pet Shop Licensees
Environment Committee
February 22, 2010

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and fellow Environment Committee members, I thank you for this opportunity to express my **opposition to the proposed changes to Raised Bill #5118 (An Act Concerning Certificates of Origin for Dogs Sold by Pet Shop Licensees)**.

I have been involved in animal welfare in this state for 20 years and 3 years ago joined with a growing group of dog advocates to form the Westport Coalition Against Puppy Mills, a grassroots group that came together after a new puppy store in our area opened claiming not to sell puppy mill puppies. Realizing this was highly unlikely, we began to research the source of the puppies sold by this store as well as others throughout the state. Our research has proven without a doubt that many if not all CT pet stores sell puppies from what you and I would deem a puppy mill, and that some of these "breeders" have received significant fines and even gone to jail. This is information the people of CT would want to know, but without Certificates of Origin, filed in a central agency and readily available via the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), it will remain impossible to identify the breeders of any pet store puppies where a store uses a broker/middleman.

Last year, hundreds of animal advocates throughout the state strongly supported the original bill – the Puppy Mill Law – which was intended not only to make much needed improvements to the puppy lemon law, but also to provide increased transparency on the sources of puppies sold in pet stores by mandating these Certificates of Origin, including their filing at the Department of Agriculture within two days of sale. **I'm surprised and quite frankly baffled that it was decided to revise this new law even before it has been put into effect and less than a year after it was voted (practically unanimously) into law. Please do not forget all the support the original bill received last year.**

Pet stores work hard to cover up the source of their puppies. This is not an industry that will police itself. Stores that sell puppies have a lot to hide and have been getting away with deceiving the public for years. I have spoken to former pet store employees who state they have seen stores doctoring the paperwork. Store owners have not proven to be trustworthy enough to become the only entities that will house certificates of origin. Pet stores that sell puppies require greater oversight - not less.

These proposed changes go against the increasing demand for transparency from consumers in any number of areas. As an example, the USDA this past year, started making USDA inspection reports for commercial breeders available online as they recognized the growing public demand for this information and probably could not keep up with FOIA requests, so they put everything online. The country is moving forward to raise awareness about puppy mills and the connection to pet store puppies. I respectfully urge you not to let CT go backwards, when there is growing national momentum to finally turn the corner on this issue.

Westport Coalition Against Puppy Mills has been contacted by approximately 100 puppy purchasers who have purchased sick puppies. We've helped many of them research the "breeders" of their puppies and when we provide it, they are very angry that they were duped into buying a puppy mill puppy. This information must be more readily available.

Our group has been working for 3 years to provide much needed transparency and be part of the solution. I can't understand why the only state agency responsible for monitoring CT pet stores proposes they do less. I understand budgets are being cut, but I will volunteer to go to Hartford at least once a month if help is what they need to maintain Certificates of Origin and better serve the public.