

United Pet Supply, Inc.
The Pet Company Stores
831 Little Britain Road
Suite 300
New Windsor, NY 12553

March 12,2010

To the Chair and Members of the Committee On Environment:

I am the founder and President of United Pet Supply, Inc. My company has been in business for over 30 years and operates twenty-seven (27) Pet Centers in major regional shopping malls in five (5) eastern states, including 2 in Connecticut. I wish to thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to The Committee On Environment regarding SB 397 and my concerns with regard to specific portions of it's content.

Throughout my career, I have worked to advance both the welfare of pet animals and the interests and protection of pet owners. And I support the adoption of legislative and regulatory efforts that take a fair and balanced approach toward these goals .

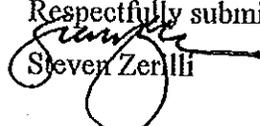
Accordingly it seems only reasonable that any statutory or regulatory mechanism, intended to address concerns about sources of animals offered to pet owners in Connecticut, account for all sources of pets made available to the public. Connecticut's retail pet dealers, currently operate in a highly regulated environment while providing less than 10% of all puppies sold to Connecticut consumers. They are held to strict standards with regard to where they may obtain pets offered for sale, veterinary care and post sale consumer protection. The efficacy of this regulatory structure is demonstrated by the fact that the Department of Agriculture's own records document that fewer than 0.3% of the puppies sold annually by Connecticut pet dealers

result in complaints to the Department regarding health of the pet.. Alternative sources (including shelter and rescue organizations), which provide 90% or more of the puppies offered for sale, or adopted within the state each year, continue to operate in an essentially unregulated manner. These organizations routinely promote pet adoptions to the public involving animals of unknown origin or health history, brought into Connecticut for this purpose. As such, their undocumented history constitutes a much higher risk for the occurrence of issues which are the intended focus of SB 397. I would respectfully urge the Committee to broaden its focus to include all sources for puppies for sale or adoption to Connecticut consumers.

In addition, I am concerned about the inclusion of the term "puppy mill" in the language in SB 397, which I have been advised by the staff of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, has no meaning in law. If the intent of SB 397 is to identify the extent to which puppies sold to, or adopted by, Connecticut consumers originate from unlicensed, undocumented or otherwise substandard sources, a worthwhile and meaningful result can only be achieved by applying objective standards against which these sources can be measured.

To summarize, I would respectfully submit that it is necessary to include all sources of animals made available to Connecticut consumers in the report mandated by SB 397 and to further include language setting forth generally accepted and objective criteria by which these sources can be reasonably evaluated. Conclusions should not be based on less than 10% of relevant data and that data should only be evaluated against objective standards to be meaningful.

I again thank the Committee for the opportunity to present my views on this proposed legislation.

Respectfully submitted

Steven Zerilli