

February 23, 2011

CGA Environment Committee

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, Environment Committee Members, Interested Legislators,

My name is Barbara St. John and I write in favor of HB5368.

In November 2009 I adopted a dog, Amber, through a rescue organization "SPARE", with contact personnel in Arkansas. I paid a donation of \$250.00 for the dog in advance and had to sign a hold harmless agreement on behalf of the rescue organization. The dog was represented to me as healthy, other than a minor intestinal parasite infection, which was reported to have been treated prior to delivery to me.

The dog was delivered by a commercial trailer company, "Alpha Dog Transport", to a commuter parking lot adjacent to Interstate 84 near Waterbury. Many dozens of dogs were delivered in the same way that day, and I was aware that such deliveries take place weekly at that location and others. The delivery process had the atmosphere of an outdoor event with several intermediaries gathering small groups of their own "clients" for a pre-arrival briefing. Once the trailer arrived a line was formed and dogs and new owners were paired. In some cases I saw money changing hands on the spot. I estimated that over 75 people had dogs delivered to them that day.

When I picked up my new dog I was not informed the dog had any medical problems, though I did notice a sparse coat in areas of her body. Three days later, upon seeing my veterinarian I learned the dog had demodectic mange, and in a generalized form which is costly to treat and may not be curable at all. Now, over a year down the road, the demodectic mange is still under treatment and far from cured.

While I love my dog and I am doing all I can to help her get well, it is clear to me that the rescue organization with which I dealt is focused solely on shipping as many dogs as possible and collecting as many donations as possible. There is no regard for the health of the animals shipped, for other pets new owners may already have or for the financial burden placed upon new owners when they are handed the leash to a new pet with an expensive illness.

I am fortunate to be able to afford the treatment required for Amber, however, it is certainly also true that many others would not be able to do so. In at least some of these latter cases, I suspect sick, imported animals end up back in shelters here and are eventually euthanized. No one is going to adopt a sick animal over a healthy one, especially when the eventual outcome is unknown.

In fairness to animals already needing homes in Connecticut, and to those here now that could be exposed to disease by imported animals, it seems to me that organizations and individuals importing animals into Connecticut should play by the same animal health rules as pet shops and other for profit businesses that do the same. Animal health and consumer protection should come before profits. All arriving animals, regardless of who arranges their delivery, should be examined and owners assured of their health upon arrival. Owners should have recourse when health problems exist. Thank you

Sincerely,

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