

February 23, 2011

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

Re: Testimony Before the Environment Committee on Bill no. 5367, An Act Extending Certain Pet Shop Licensee Requirements that Import Animals for Adoption

Mr. Chairmen and Members of the Environment Committee,

I am here today to testify in favor of Committee Bill No 5368, with clarifying revision and a suggestion for your consideration.

It is gratifying to see that the committee supports standards for licensing and regulating all parties who import animals for adoption. This helps protect both the animals and the persons who adopt them as pets, making them members of their family.

As you know, here in CT, the standards of excellence for puppies and kittens in pet shops has served as a national model. I am pleased to have worked with this committee, the Pet Advisory Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC), the Department of Agriculture, and other interested parties over the years in forming these high standards and expanding on them over time. We are proud that the pet shops in CT who sell puppies and kittens helped develop and are proud to comply with such high standards and requirements.

At this time, the public is protected only if they buy puppies and kittens from pet shops. There is a guarantee with every puppy and kitten sold, which provides the consumer with various options and reimbursements regarding the health of the animals. Pet shop puppies account for perhaps just 10 per cent of all puppies sold in the state. It has long been the pet industry's position that the standards we are proud to abide by should be the same for all puppies and kittens sold, whoever or whatever the source.

This bill would license and regulate entities that import these animals into the state for adoption. This bill would make sure that certain health requirements occur – that any animal offered for adoption would require veterinary examination prior to sale and every 14 days until sold, and the maintenance of these records. Who couldn't support that?

I have two concerns, however. One is to ensure that the brokers pet shops use for the importation of their puppies and kittens into the state are not inadvertently included in this bill. As I said, only pet shop puppies and kittens are so extensively regulated. This is my primary concern. I know PIJAC would be happy to assist in any language clarification that may be required on this.

The other concern is perhaps more a suggestion - why not go one step further and have adopting agencies have a guarantee for the consumer like pet shops do? There are many incidents of adopted animals having parasites, viral or bacterial infections, or other physical ailments, and there is no recourse for the consumer who adopted the animal.

Thank you very much for your consideration.