

Testimony Concerning HB-5027

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I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB-5027 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF DOGS AND CATS OBTAINED FROM SUBSTANDARD DOMESTIC ANIMAL MILLS. .

I am a registered voter in Wallingford.

It is a pleasure to address this very important issue, because dogs [and cats] are truly our kindred spirits and men and women's best friend. I can cite one canine in particular who clearly saved my life. As a junior high school student in Milford, CT I was a bullied kid before 'bullied kid' entered into the general vocabulary, and it was swept under rugs as a big secret. My family included a rescued comical Beagle mix who came to us with the similarly comical name of Iggie. Iggie had a great sense of humor and loved to play and make people laugh. Since I was at that point a friendless kid, I had lots of time on my hand. We lived very near the beach in Milford, and I would take Iggie for long, long walks; often tearfully because of my loneliness and fear. Were it not for these long walks with my pal Iggie, I doubt I would have been able to survive the two years of junior high school. At one point I was walking Iggie at dusk when I had survived Junior High and was now in high school when a car pulled up parallel to the portion of the beach upon which Iggie and I were walking. It was a car full of kids from a competing high school shouting bellicose threats and carrying sticks and bats, obviously drunk. Iggie sensed the danger and began to growl, and then bark as ferociously as I had ever heard a dog bark. I was amazed at this capability of my dear pal, and I joined her by shouting at my tormentors that I would release Iggie and egged her on by shouting at her to "Sick 'em! Sick 'em girl, sick 'em!" The aggressive kids piled back into their car and left. The next day I read in the local paper that another person had been beaten up a few blocks away, and arrests made.

I could tell many such stories, but I have been blessed with animal family members throughout my life. Here are some facts about puppy mills and pet stores: *

- 1) 99% of puppies sold in pet stores come from puppy mills.
- 2) Nearly 100% of all puppies in pet stores have parasites when they are purchased.
- 3) 48% of puppies being sold in pet stores were ill or incubating an illness at the time of purchase, according to a recent California study.
- 4) 500,000 puppies are born in puppy mills and sold in pet stores every year in the United States.
- 5) There are 35,000 pet stores in America
- 6) Puppy millers can make more than \$300,000 growing puppies every year.
- 7) Puppy mills have been around since the early 1960s.

- 8) Almost every Puppy sold in a pet store has a mother who will spend her entire life in a tiny cage, never being petted, never being walked, never being treated like a dog.
- 9) Female dogs are usually bred 2x a year. At that rate, they usually burn out by age 5, at which time they are put to death.
- 10) About 1 million breeder dogs are confined in puppy mills throughout the country.

Pet stores buy dogs and sell dogs cash and carry without question. Anybody with enough on their debit/ credit card or bills in their wallet will walk out of the store with an animal.

Unfortunately the sad reality is that all too often the folks who leave with a new pet are often not responsible enough to care for that animal and often either neglect or abuse of the animal by the new owners. Often people will have the money on hand to purchase an animal, but not enough resources to provide adequate food, veterinary care, and other routine expenses.

These poor animals often wind up abandoned by the purchaser on the streets, kept so long that they become sickly and suffering, or left at a municipal shelter where they suffer horribly and might be put to death. In other cases the purchaser at a pet store can be one of those people who do exist who will intentionally abuse their animal. As a journalist I covered the sad case of a beautiful dog who was stabbed 29 times with a pocket knife by her own owner, but who thankfully survived and was cared for by a loving veterinarian and placed in a loving home of that vet's choice.

Responsible breeders do not sell to just anybody, they usually get to know those who wish to take on a new pet family member and are selective about the people to whom they sell. They can and do counsel customers on pet care, and make themselves available for follow-up support and advice if problems arise. They are aware of resources available to help with financial difficulties and community support which may enable a family to keep an animal which otherwise might wind up in a shelter or worse. Responsible breeders choose their profession out of love of the breeds they advance and of canines in general.

I was involved with a wonderful woman in my life who I shared a life crisis with when her son died tragically at only 19 years old. She was living alone and having difficulty adjusting following this catastrophe. A friend of hers told her about a puppy, a Pug, at a local pet store about which she was very upset. It seemed that the dog had an eye infection and was not being put on display for sale, but was being held in the back of the store being readied for euthanasia. Mary and her friend were terrorized by this situation. Mary's wonderful friend asked the pet store to give her this animal; she paid for the surgery to have this eye removed and she granted Mary the gift of a great creature who she named Pugsy. Pugsy was so playful and full of love and joy that he was able to assist Mary to adjust to her new life after the tragedy of her son's loss. Mary became physically infirm, ultimately requiring a hip replacement, so I became Pugsy's regular walking partner, and what a joy this animal was for me as well. Had Pugsy been slaughtered by this pet store, I seriously doubt that my friend would be nearly as accepting of her lot in life today as she would be otherwise.

Pugsy, Iggie and dogs who are treated with love give unconditional love in return for the duration of their lives. At present I have two cats I have rescued from lives as strays or ferals, and many people work tirelessly to help animals in dire straits. Those of us, who feel as I do

advocate the adoption of such animals rather than purchase of puppies wherever possible because of the overpopulation of shelters and of strays on our streets and in our neighborhoods. Puppy mills and pet stores use dogs for profit. It is time for a state as progressive as ours to put an end to the import of these terrorized animals. Our state must take the lead in defending the defenseless and to make Connecticut a leader in prohibiting the sale of dogs and cats bred by substandard domestic animal bills and for this Committee, the state House, Senate and Governor Malloy to make this bill law. It is our responsibility:

Genesis 1:25-26 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make **mankind** in our image, in our likeness, so **that they may rule over** the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over **all the creatures that move along the ground.**”