

RE: Testimony Concerning HB 5027

15 March 2013

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 New Milford, and I provide a foster home for Bonnie Blue Rescue dogs that have been rescued from puppy mills and shelters along the east coast of the United States.

The National Mill Dog Rescue was established in February 2007, in honor of a forgiving little Italian Greyhound named Lily. NMDR's Founder and Executive Director rescued Lily from a dog auction in Missouri. Prior to that day, Lily had spent the first seven years of her life as a commercial breeding dog, a puppy mill mom.

During her years as a breeding dog, Lily spent all of her days confined to a small, cold wire cage in a dark, foul-smelling barn. Never was she removed from her cage for exercise or socialization. In her dreary confines, Lily was forced to produce one litter after another with no respite. Like all commercial breeding dogs, she was a veritable breeding machine whose worth was measured in only one way - her ability to produce puppies.

By seven years of age, Lily was worn out. Commonplace in the industry, she had received little to no veterinary care throughout her life, the result of which, for her, was terribly disturbing. Due to years of no dental care<http://milldogrescue.org/About_Us.html>, poor quality food, rabbit bottle watering and no appropriate chew toys, the roof of Lily's mouth and lower jaw, had rotted away. Her chest was riddled with mammary tumors and she was absolutely terrified of people.

After her rescue, Lily spent the remainder of her life as a beloved member of her new family where she received medical care, warmth and companionship. In time, Lily found courage and her disfigured little body educated countless people about the horrors of the puppy mill industry. Lily died, at home, peacefully, in the arms of her loving dad with her family gathered around, in May 2008, fifteen months after she was rescued.

This is not a rare incident, but rather, the norm for dogs and cats living in puppy mills across the United States. There are over two-hundred-eighty five organizations across CT that take in lost/homeless animals. Many of the animals that show up in these shelters started their lives in puppy mills. Many of these shelters are at maximum capacity and are forced to euthanize the animals that they house.

According to the ASPCA, approximately five to seven million companion animals enter animal shelters nationwide each year. Of those, approximately three to four million are euthanized, which equates to approximately sixty percent of dogs and seventy percent of cats). Twenty five percent of the dogs found in shelters are considered purebred or designer breeds.

As of 2012, PetsAdvisor has determined that there are more than 4,000 commercial breeding facilities that are licensed to operate in the United States. There are many more that operate without a license. Retail pet stores sell over half a million puppies each year, of which most are brought in from these

puppy mills. Only twenty-six states have laws that regulate commercial kennels, and that regulation is minimal at best.

It is impossible to determine how many stray dogs and cats live in the United States; however the estimate for cats is close to seventy million. The average number of litters that an adult cat will produce each year is one to two, with the average number of kittens being four to six per litter. The average number of litters that a fertile dog will have in a year is one to two, with the average litter being between four and six. The majority of shelters in CT mandate that companion animals are spayed or neutered prior to adoption. This greatly reduces the number of homeless animals in the state.

Many jurisdictions (i.e. Los Angeles and San Diego) have created ordinances to prevent the commercial sale of companion animals in pet stores. It is time for CT to set a precedent and take a stand for the voiceless. We need to stand up to the owners of the puppy mills and tell them that, under no circumstances, will we allow the abuse to continue. So long as we allow the commercial sale of dogs and cats, the abuse will never end and the overpopulation problem that exists will never be brought under control.

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Picture of Lily after her rescue from a puppy mill

I implore you to pass this legislation and confirm that the State of CT will not sit back and allow our animals to become victims of puppy mills and their blatant disregard for the life and care of those animals. Please don't allow Lily's life, and the lives of so many others, to be in vain.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Respectfully,
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