



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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Testimony

In support of H.B. 5027 An Act Prohibiting The Sale of Dogs and Cats Obtained From Substandard Domestic Animal Mills

**Environment Committee
March 15, 2013**

Senator Meyer, Senator Chapin, Representative Gentile, Representative Shabin, and members of the committee. I am here to testify today on HB 5027 - AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF DOGS AND CATS OBTAINED FROM SUBSTANDARD DOMESTIC ANIMAL MILLS. I introduced this bill with Senator McKinney last session and again this session.

Most people would say I'm a strong advocate for animal welfare, a big supporter of animal rescue, and a strong advocate for shelter pets. However, even someone like me, can get caught up in purchasing a pet store puppy. Nearly 20 years ago, when my mixed breed dog I adopted from the humane society was approaching 15, my then 9 year old son wanted a puppy.

I asked him what kind of puppy he'd like. He wasn't sure, so we went to the library, took out some books, and did some research. This was before the age of the internet and before I got involved with rescues. I thought we would go to a pet store and look at the breeds to get an idea; big mistake.

The entire ride there I repeated to my son, we are ONLY looking, we aren't buying a puppy from a pet store because they're from puppy mills.

I thought we'd just look at the puppies, decide which breed he liked, then contact a local breeder or breed rescue. We went to the store, and my son asked to play with the Beagle puppy. As soon as they handed him that floppy eared puppy, it was over.

He fell in love with her immediately and everything I said about us not getting a puppy from a pet store went out the window. Realizing I couldn't convince him this wasn't the puppy for us, I asked detailed questions about where she came from. They said she was from a reputable breeder and could produce her papers and they never sold puppies from puppy mills.

I knew I wasn't being told the truth but I couldn't get my son to let go of that Beagle puppy with as tears began to form in his eyes.

I bought a puppy at a pet store. And not surprisingly, we got what we paid for.

Don't misunderstand, Copper was a cute little puppy who we loved dearly, but she ended up costing us over 16,000 during her 12 years. While she was healthy the first year we had her, she developed strange illnesses soon after and over most of her life. Illnesses that perplexed our vets. Illnesses that were costly and caused a lot of heart break for my family over the years. Compared to my 17 year old dog from the humane society, who only needed annual immunizations over her entire life.

My point is, there are a lot of people who simply aren't aware of the genetic defects and health issues that come from inhumane standards puppy mills practice.

As legislators, we are informed about puppy mills, but many of our residents are not and hand over a lot of money to play a game of roulette.

The language that's written currently for this bill really won't do enough.

The manpower involved in checking to see if a breeder is substandard is difficult. The USDA simply can't keep up with the inspections to protect the breeding dogs, their puppies or the unsuspecting public that purchases them.

Our own Department of Agriculture doesn't have the manpower to track people who file complaints, or those who are so frustrated taking care of a sick puppy; they don't bother or simply give up trying to hold the seller accountable.

Our intent is to stop puppy mill puppies from being sold in the state of Connecticut, but we are concerned about the pushback from the pet store lobby.

I realized that I shouldn't be worried about any lobby that wants to protect a inhumane practice. Currently, there are only 18 pet stores that sell puppies in Connecticut compared to the hundreds of stores operating in our state that don't sell puppies.

Connecticut is a progressive state and I believe we are ready to say we won't participate in this inhumane industry. I believe Connecticut is ready to ban this inhumane practice now.

I'm hopeful the committee will review the language Los Angeles passed in 2012 and use that language for Connecticut.

I thank the committee and am available for any questions.

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Sent from my iPad