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Sen Meyer, Rep. Gentile, Sen. Chapin, Rep Shaban, and members of the Environment Committee, I am Tim Phelan and I am President of the Connecticut Retail Merchants Association and I am pleased to submit testimony today in favor of SB 445, "AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE ON THE SALE OF CATS AND DOGS FROM INHUMANE ORIGINS AT CONNECTICUT PET SHOPS".

As you know CRMA is a statewide trade association representing retailers that has some of the world's largest members and state's main street merchants, including a number of pet store owners that would be impacted by this bill.

Specifically we feel this bill, written in response to the recommendations of the Task Force Concerning the Sale of Dogs and Cats at Connecticut Pet Shops from Inhumane Origins, represents a thoughtful and balanced approach to the issue of inhumane breeding conditions. It is clear that the Committee considered the entire body of the Task Force's work in crafting this legislation, and we strongly encourage its passage as written.

We are also pleased to note that some of the solutions that were proposed during the Task Force's public hearings which ignored the economic realities faced by small businesses were rejected in favor of a more focused approach to breeding standards. And we applaud your efforts to strengthen the state's existing warranty law, though we would have preferred to see the inclusion of language that would allow retailers to seek a second veterinary opinion or some kind of arbitration when warranty claims are made.

You know as well as anyone the challenges faced by retailers of all types in the current economy. An abrupt change to the fundamental conditions under which they do business – especially one mandated by legislation that does nothing to help retailers with the transition – is likely to be catastrophic. For this reason, we encourage you to reject any amendments that would seek to append a sales prohibition or a forced adoption of a new retail model.

We support the goal of improving the conditions under which all dogs and cats are raised and sold, and we believe Senate Bill 445 as written helps to accomplish this.

Thank you for your consideration.