

Dear Environment Committee Task Force Members:

We are writing to you from *Shelter Connecticut*, a Facebook page run entirely by volunteers whose mission it is to assist shelters throughout the State of Connecticut — both large and small — network their dogs, so that instead of living out their lives in kennels at no-kill shelters or being euthanized at kill shelters, these dogs are successfully rehomed. During this past year, we have helped find “forever” homes for more than 500 dogs and “foster” homes for hundreds more, and we would like you to know that having considerable experience in dealing with the homeless-dog situation statewide, we join with countless others in the animal rescue community in our support for prohibiting ALL pet shops from selling commercially bred dogs.

Most of the State’s larger shelters are operating at full capacity. Some, such as City of Hartford — which has 17,000 active followers on Facebook — have learned to network their dogs skillfully and faithfully, using good photographs and excellent descriptions. However, many have no idea how to go about it, much less the time to learn or the resources necessary to accomplish it. As a result, dogs in particular are ending up being housed for a period of time, then killed. And while hands-on rescues and their foster networks try to pull as many of these dogs as possible — and social media networkers like *Shelter Connecticut* scramble furiously to publicize the dogs, connect adopters to rescues and shelters, and encourage new fosters to jump in, it’s really quite a mess.

One of the key issues causing this crisis is overpopulation — a problem easily controlled if we would simply make it mandatory that every dog adopted out from a public shelter be spayed or neutered PRIOR to going home.

But there is a second key issue: commercially bred dogs. Allowing Connecticut pet stores to sell dogs from puppy mills and other types of commercial breeders places needy shelter dogs at a terrible disadvantage, adding dramatically to the length of time they must suffer unnatural confinement while waiting to either go home — or be euthanized. In addition, allowing Connecticut pet stores to sell commercially bred dogs effectively sustains a supply chain notorious for the wretched conditions under which they breed and raise their puppies and force their parents dogs to live — conditions which, more often than not, constitute animal cruelty.

The bottom line is this: We have more than enough dogs of all ages in our shelters already, and they are all in dire need of good homes. By banning the sale of commercially bred dogs in Connecticut’s pet stores and encouraging such businesses to feature shelter dogs instead, we can significantly reduce the number of dogs suffering in our State’s shelters — as well as the number of dogs suffering in puppy mills nationwide. As a result, Legislative Bill #SB 445 represents a relatively simple measure that will prompt enormous changes for the better both here in Connecticut and nationwide. We hope all of our lawmakers will vote for it without reservation.

(And loving animals as we do, we also support HB 5416, which prohibits the use of gestation crates in the raising of pigs. Cruelty is cruelty!)

Respectfully submitted by,

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