



**PET INDUSTRY JOINT
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

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**TESTIMONY OF
PET INDUSTRY JOINT ADVISORY COUNCIL
HB 5148
BEFORE THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Good afternoon Senator Kennedy, Representative Albis and Esteemed Members of the Environment Committee

I'm Laura "Peach" Reid, President and Owner of Fish Mart, a wholesale tropical fish and pet distributor in West Haven, servicing retailers throughout the northeast with aquarium fish and pets for 42 years. I'm also on the Board of Directors of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC), the national pet trade organization representing all segments of the pet industry. Our primary mission is to promote responsible pet ownership, animal welfare and environmental stewardship as part of a coordinated effort to ensure the availability of pets and defend the right of consumer choice. I have served as PIJAC's CT State Coordinator for some 30+ years as a volunteer, working primarily on dog and cat issues, but over the years, on all animal matters, not only in CT but nationally.

I/ we readily support HB 5148, as it is a correction/ clarification to the intent of the original bill, (to provide that any person who advertises commercial kennel services shall be required to include their license number in such advertisement).

Because we are correcting the intent of this bill, I would like to ask your consideration in correcting the intent of another bill that was passed in 2014, now PA 14-77, an act concerning recommendations of the task force on the sale of cats and dogs from pet shops. During those proceedings, it was stated that "no reputable breeder will sell to pet stores." Though that was refuted by others on the task force, including a breeder, that false statement led to the mandate that pet shops could not sell any CT-bred animals unless they were USDA licensed (of which there are none in CT, because apparently no hobby breeder has more than 4 breeding female dogs or cats, in which case they would have to become USDA licensed). It just doesn't make sense that pet shop owners, who can easily inspect local hobby breeders' animals and environmental conditions, cannot purchase these animals to sell at their businesses. After all, these small-scale breeders fit right into our state marketing campaign as "Connecticut grown."

My concern for animal welfare brings me to another important issue that's been talked about for some years. Mandatory micro-chipping. You may have seen the recent Channel 3 expose on the huge increase of imported dogs coming in from out-of-state. In 2014, the last statistics currently available, 177 unlicensed and unregulated importers who chose to register with the state reported adopting/ selling 19,913 animals (presumably all dogs) – all of which are from out of state, except the 140 from out of the continental United States. By comparison, 12 licensed, inspected, heavily-regulated pet

shops with consume guarantees sold some 5,000 puppies, about a quarter as many. Some make the claim that pet shops are responsible for overpopulation of pets and overpopulation of shelters. If all importers had to micro-chip and register the new owners, again as pet shops do, the sources of these animals could always be identified.

Besides last week's comment to WFSB by Ray Connors, head of CT's Animal Control Division, that he and the animal control officers want to see tougher rules for importers and clear regulations for rescues statewide, like neighboring MA and RI, here's a final quote just made this month by the state Veterinarian of neighboring Rhode Island,

"In New England, we don't deal with our own unwanted dogs, we deal with other states' unwanted dogs," says State Veterinarian Dr. Scott Marshall. "A big driver is people are looking for puppies and there are not a lot of puppies in shelters and pounds. There's some evidence that the rescue groups are a new model for the pet shop industry." In many instances, he says, we've supplanted pet shops, "a well-regulated industry with a lot of state and federal regulations, and shifted those animals into other channels with less oversight and a lot less transparency."