



AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB<sup>SM</sup>

**Stacey Ober, J.D.**  
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Community Outreach  
New England Region

February 4, 2019

The Honorable Christine Cohen, Senate Co-Chair  
The Honorable Michael DeMicco, House Co-Chair  
300 Capitol Avenue  
ATTN: Environment Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200  
Hartford, CT 06106

**RE: American Kennel Club Request Amendments to SB 21, an act concerning the report of the taskforce on the humane treatment of animals in municipal and regional animal shelters**

Dear Chairs Cohen and DeMicco, and Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee:

Founded in 1884, the American Kennel Club (AKC) is a recognized and trusted expert in health, breeding, training, and responsible dog ownership. We represent over 5,100 dog clubs nationally, including 52 clubs in Connecticut. The American Kennel Club strongly supports and actively promotes a wide range of programs to educate the public about responsible dog ownership and breeding practices. We respectfully write to request amendments to SB 21.

As written, the bill would extend the work of the task force on the humane treatment of animals in municipal and regional shelters to January 1, 2020. The charge of the taskforce includes laudable goals such as developing recommendations for the establishment of standards for the humane treatment of animals and of rules and responsibilities for volunteer groups working with such shelters and animal control officers. However, the taskforce report does not appear to include recommendations for animal rescue organization standards. This may be a serious omission or due to the lack of a statutory definition for “shelter” in Connecticut, which is in need of clarification in the proposed legislation.

Historically, rescue groups were run by committed breeders, kennel clubs, or other experts who carefully vetted a small number of dogs that came into their possession and matched them with appropriate homes. In fact, national breed clubs within the AKC operate the largest network of these rescue operations across the United States. Yet, over the past decade, the United States has become a dumping ground for foreign dogs imported from Turkey, several countries in the Middle East, China, and Korea, as numerous shelters and rescues have moved toward a retail rescue business model. According to the National Animal Interest Alliance, imports number an estimated one million dogs annually. Under this system, it is difficult to substantiate whether a dog coming into the state is legitimately in need of re-homing, bred for the retail rescue market, or a random-source foreign animal imported and transferred directly to the public or an animal shelter for eventual transfer to the public; and whether it has met appropriate health clearances.

As a result, the United States has experienced an increase in instances of dogs with rabies, canine flu, screwworm, brucellosis and a variety of other infectious diseases related to irresponsibly-imported pets. The American Kennel Club is greatly concerned about increasing documented incidences of the importation of unhealthy, random-source pets into the United States, particularly for transfer, where public and pet health may be inadequately protected.

The American Kennel Club supports efforts to better understand the impact of dogs being imported into the United States. We also support efforts to ensure that all dogs imported are fully immunized, and free of infection, parasites, and contagious diseases through health certificate review and inspection by a qualified veterinarian, where appropriate.

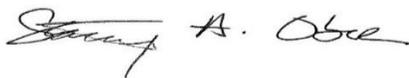
The American Kennel Club believes that dog owners should be responsible for their dogs. We support laws that: establish a fair process by which specific dogs are identified as “dangerous” based on stated, measurable actions; impose appropriate penalties on irresponsible owners; and establish a well-defined method for dealing with dogs proven to be dangerous. Three Connecticut cities have adopted new dangerous dog ordinances over the past few years. Therefore, the taskforce could provide recommendations for standardizing shelters’ process of evaluating a dog’s temperament prior to re-homing.

Please consider the following additions to the taskforce:

1. adding a seat on the taskforce for the Connecticut state veterinarian.
2. expanding the report to include recommendations for the licensure of municipal and regional shelters and rescue organizations.
3. standardizing the methods used for evaluating the temperament of dogs prior to re-homing and validating health certificate records of animals imported into the state.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns and suggestions. It would be my pleasure to work closely with you in this regard. I can be reached at (919) 816-3348 or [Stacey.Ober@akc.org](mailto:Stacey.Ober@akc.org).

Sincerely,



Stacey Ober, JD  
Legislative Analyst and Community Outreach Coordinator, New England  
AKC Government Relations

CC: The Honorable Martin Looney, Senate President and Bill Sponsor – SB 21  
Members of the Environment Committee  
Laurie Maulucci, Pres., Connecticut Federation of Dog Clubs and Responsible Dog Owners