

## Testimony for the Task Force on Pet Shops

By now, you are probably familiar with the strong case against the sale of commercially-bred dogs and cats: the egregious conditions in which these animals are bred and raised, the weak and often unenforced regulations of the Animal Welfare Act, the public safety risks and excessive costs associated with trying to control the pet overpopulation problem, and the outright deception of consumers. These reasons should be enough to compel Connecticut to institute a ban on the sale of commercially-bred dogs and cats, and to lead a national charge against this unethical practice.

This legislation is an opportunity for Connecticut to be a leader in the fight against puppy mills. While many states already have laws regarding the quantity of dogs a breeder may keep, the age at which a puppy can be offered for sale or adoption, and the amount of space allotted to dogs in breeding facilities, Connecticut would be the first state in the country to take a clear stand against the sale of dogs bred in puppy mills. While some may raise concerns that such a ban would be harmful to small businesses already suffering through these challenging economic times, this legislation would actually provide opportunities for such businesses to flourish. In recent years, we have seen a marked shift in the attitudes of consumers: the organic local food movement, for instance, thrives on consumers' awareness and rejection of unhealthy and unethical food; we have seen an increase in demand for non-toxic cleaning supplies and sweatshop-free clothing. In this climate of conscientious consumer behavior, it seems likely that pet store owners could profit off of taking a principled stand against an industry built on the suffering of dogs and cats and the deception of consumers. Consumers will reward these businesses with their patronage, as Greg Gordon of Dog Patch Pet and Feed in Naperville, Ill discovered after transitioning his business to a pet supply shop where he works alongside local shelters to offer dogs for adoption. In an article from *Pet Business*, Gordon acknowledges that his sales of commercially-bred dogs had declined in recent years, and that many shoppers simply avoided his shop *because* he sold dogs. Since converting to a new business model, Gordon has attracted a loyal customer base, which is more than willing to spend good money on high-end products for their pets. Gordon's shop joins some 2,000 other pet stores around the country that have successfully transitioned away from the sale of dogs and cats with the help of groups like the Humane Society of the U.S., and the sixteen CT stores that currently sell dogs and cats can add their names to this list assured that the conscientious pet-owners of Connecticut will enthusiastically support them in their new endeavors. It is time for Connecticut to come out on the right side of this issue, and to show that a ban on commercially-bred dogs and cats is good for the pet population, good for consumers, and good for business.

Thank you.

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