

Kess, Quinn

From: [REDACTED]
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Nancy Silverman
Puppy Love, LLC
37 Lake Ave Ext
Danbury, CT 06811
[REDACTED]

My husband and I have been retail puppy storeowners for 17 years, employed dozens of people over the years and paid about a million dollars in taxes. Puppies are my life because that's all we sell and personally breed. I don't know about birds, fish or even kittens but I know a lot about puppies. When I first told my 87-year-old father about the proposals to close puppy stores in Connecticut he asked "why?" I told him that not all stores are the same and not all breeders are the same and that they are worried about some bad breeding facilities. He said: "well there are some bad doctors, lawyers, contractors etc and it sounds like the same situation as in every industry." He then said shutting down puppy stores reminded him of prohibition. Mostly because there will always be a strong demand for puppies. "Prohibition," he said, "encouraged a whole culture of underground liquor manufacturers. There were gangs, and crime because shady people knew there was a demand for something and an opportunity to make money without any over site or regulations."

Over the years I've seen some horrendous unlicensed breeders and these will without doubt flourish if this law is passed. It will be open season for dog breeding behind the scenes. Dogs will be bred in basements in garages, in attics. There will be no oversight, no licensing of these underground breeders the way there is now. There will be no inspections, no stores with veterinarians who monitor the puppies weekly or bi-weekly the way it is now.

There will be no assurances for a customer looking to buy a puppy from an ad in the paper, or internet, that these puppies have had any vaccinations, any vet check ups or that they will be covered by any warranties whatsoever. Life after pet stores would be "anybody's game." Money hungry underground "breeders" would be free to do absolutely anything involving poor housing and feeding, no vet care and treating the dogs and puppies anyway they see fit, as well as treating the customers anyway they choose. They'd be preying on people desperate for a puppy. Why would anyone think that abolishing and prohibiting something that there is a demand for by families, singles, couples and seniors is a good thing? I know there is a tendency to highlight one family or one incident where someone may have had a problem with a particular puppy, but what live baby doesn't occasionally get sick or have problems? Ask a pediatrician or a day care worker or a teacher?

Ask if children in nursery schools, day care or maternity wards get sick with colds, coughs and another ailments. This is no different than what happens with puppies. Young living things don't have fully developed immune systems and they pass things back and forth. No one would dare to put the blame on

the hospital where the baby was born or the doctor that delivered that child or especially not the parents if it got sick after being born!

Any living being can get sick. Do we think just because it was purchased that it is not supposed to be a normal live animal with all of the vulnerabilities of any other live animal? Advocates of a pet store ban choose to dramatize the problems rather than the thousands of good stories! They say people can go to breeders- like breeders are immune to having problems with their dogs. One customer of ours said she had gone to a top AKC breeder and her dog died at 5 of a congenital illness.

Puppy Love has sold well over 15,000 puppies over 17 years to people who have continued to find us as repeat customers. Would they choose to revisit a store that has nothing but problems? Our customers have sent neighbors, co-workers, friends and family. I have seen children dump the contents of their piggy banks on the counter to help buy the puppy. Now I have the privilege of selling to those same children as adults and to the children of former customers who are now starting out and want a dog of their own. They also refer their family, friends, neighbors and co-workers to buy puppies. We hear it everyday.

Activists often say there are plenty of dogs to adopt. We are in no way against adoption and rescue. But there are circumstances where adoption is not appropriate or desired and people should have the right to find the puppy and breed they desire - certain circumstances like having young children or a family with allergies would encourage someone to seek a

particular breed. The whole idea of closing stores because there are rescue dogs is really like saying you can't have your own child because there are children that need to be adopted. But in a free society cannot be mandated. So what is the solution that would prevent unlicensed unregulated breeders to sell dogs to the public desperate to find a puppy?

A lot of precautions have already taken place! The solution is to realize that breeding dogs in an acceptable way is not only possible but is being done all over the country. Connecticut stores can only buy from licensed breeders. They are regulated by the USDA and stores are already regulated and licensed.

Requirements to buy from licensed breeders is good but we should include in state breeders as well. There can be substandard in-state breeders as easily as anywhere in the country. It is naive to think that a local breeder is automatically better just because they are local.

Our vets visit the store not only once but twice a week. We provide all necessary vaccinations on a timely basis - we educate customers about the responsibilities of pet ownership - We don't pay on commission, and we go the extra mile of checking up on puppies when they go home and always being available for customer inquires. We should not be closed down and our thousands of customers should not be punished by not being able to buy a puppy of their choice from a store of their choice.

Anyone who thinks owning a pet shop is either easy or a way to get rich quick is very naive and fooling themselves in a big way! Trust me! Please don't punish us or our customers by passing this law and lets think of better solutions that are reasonable and practical. We need to allow this very important freedom of choice to continue and we need to prevent a predictable nightmare of unregulated breeding in the future.

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12/2/2013

To The Connecticut Task Force:

I'm Jeff Morton, Owner and President of Shake A Paw Pet Stores in New Jersey. I added a "Rescue and Adoption Center" inside my 8000sq ft. retail pet store in Union, New Jersey last year. It is set up as a separate business model, a New Jersey Non-Profit Corporation. I obtained New Jersey State Certifications as an Animal Control Officer and a Animal Cruelty Investigator to accompany my Rescue business. My store is licensed as both a Pet Store and an Animal Shelter.

My pet store still sells puppies, so no local animal shelter will work with me to source animals. The local shelters and animal rescues never liked us, and always refused to partner together to try and place unwanted dogs. Now, they dislike me even more because now I'm in THEIR business. I also have the financial resources to do "Rescue" business on a larger level than most rescues, i.e. I have a building, employees, veterinary staff, insurance, etc. I'm now a bigger threat to them since I'm now infringing on their business, and their customers. Pet Stores and Shelters are both in competition for the consumer who is looking for a dog. In order to be in the non-profit animal shelter business, I need dogs to sell. Let me repeat that, IN ORDER TO BE IN BUSINESS, I NEED DOGS TO SELL (sorry, rescue and adopt).

I have on occasion bought some dogs with medical or appearance issues, problems that are severe enough that pet stores cannot sell them. These issues including grade 3 patella's, grade 2 heart murmurs and ugly 18 week old mixes no one else wants. But I am BUYING these dogs in order to SELL/RESCUE/ADOPT them for my non-profit. Keep in mind that these animals are of a far lesser quality than we normally purchase, but they receive the same care as my regular pups. I also accept surrenders from the general public, but that is 1 or 2 dogs per month on average. I have 25 cages dedicated to this business, but as of today, my Adoption Center is empty.

In order to fill it, I need to go BUY some rescue and adoption dogs. Shelters will NEVER share dogs with us, why would they?? They need dogs to sell/rescue/adopt, just like we do. We are competitors in business, both looking to tell our story to the consumer who is looking to obtain a new dog.

I have realized that it's all in the marketing; it's the story that we put behind any particular animal. But both BUSINESSES, For-Profit and Non-Profit, need dogs to sell. Both businesses buy dogs to sell. I find it very ironic that a puppy from a commercial breeder is a very good opportunity for a good story for a non-profit, but the same exact puppy is really frowned upon in a pet store. Same pup, different story.

I was amazed to read that 14,000 "rescue" dogs were imported into Connecticut, free from regulation and local oversight. In addressing the issue in your state, since both businesses and rescues buy and sell dogs, then all laws and regulations should apply to everyone. The product, if you will, is still a canine! If a pet store can't buy from a particular breeder in North Carolina, than neither can the rescue. If the pet store is required to comply with the various laws, so should the rescue. Both shelters and stores are businesses, both buy and sell dogs, and enforcing the laws that are already on the books will protect the dog buying consumers in Connecticut.

I would have loved to be in Connecticut for this hearing, but I am unable to make it. Thank you for allowing me to share my experience.

Jeffrey Morton, President