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Standing Committees
Transportation, Ranking Member;
Behavioral Health;
Finance;
Government Oversight;
Public Health Policy;
Economic & Workforce Development

Michele Grim
State Representative

Before the House Government Oversight Committee

House Bill 443 – Alter law governing the regulation of pet stores

Sponsor testimony provided by Representative Michele Grim

April 16, 2024

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey and my fellow members of the Government Oversight committee, thank you so much for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 443. I would also like to thank my joint sponsor, Representative Sara Carruthers. House Bill 443 is a simple piece of legislation that would return the authority of pet store regulation to local governments.

Around two-thirds of people have pets in their homes and around half of us, including me, have a dog. Yet only about 30% of pets come from shelters and rescues. Tragically, an estimated 3 million adoptable dogs and cats are euthanized in American shelters every year.

Instead of encouraging and promoting adoption from local shelters, the General Assembly preempts local law regarding the regulation of the sales of dogs in pet stores. Under the watch of statewide law, retailers, such as Petland have notoriously engaged in the purchasing of puppies from puppy mills and sold these unhealthy pets to unsuspecting families.

These business practices are bad for the dogs and bad for the families who must go through the emotionally and financially trying process of managing these sick animal's healthcare needs. In January of 2023, The Humane Society of the United States shared that three Ohio families will be filing suit against Ohio Petland retailers. All three families purchased puppies that soon displayed signs of long-term health issues, even though they were assured that these pets were healthy at the time of purchase. Petland, and other pet supply retailers, are known to openly purchase unhealthy puppies from notorious breeders such as Blue Ribbon Puppies without fear of consequence.

Local communities have a right to determine what business practices they deem acceptable or not – such as partaking in the puppy mill trade. The repeal of Ohio Revised Code section 956.23 will return that right back to communities and allow them, not the state, to determine what is right for their community.

Toledo was the first municipality that took steps in 2013 to pass a law forbidding retailers to sell dogs or cats. For my community this was an important stance to take and state preemption of their local authority took that choice away from them. This bill is not imposing requirements on our state or municipalities – but again, gives our communities **a choice** regarding the business practices taking place in their own backyard.

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Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey and my fellow members of the Government Oversight committee, thank you so much again for the opportunity to share testimony regarding House Bill 443. Representative Carruthers and I would be happy to take any questions the committee may have.