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Sponsor Testimony

HB 573

Before the House Finance Committee

May 24th, 2016

Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Ryan, Ranking Member Driehaus, and members of the House Finance Committee: thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 573.

House Bill 573 is to regulate the sale of dogs from pet stores and dog retailers and to require the Director of Agriculture to license pet stores. There are few things as sacred as the special bond between pets and their families. Most Ohio families consider their dogs to be “part of the family”. In Ohio the protection of our pets is not a partisan issue and it certainly is an issue that should bring us all together. A few years ago, Ohio enacted one of the strongest anti-puppy mill laws in Ohio. Today, our great Department of Agriculture is enforcing new standards to ensure that breeders are responsible and that pets are safe.

Today, I am sponsoring the next logical step in the protection of our pets, which also assists a thriving industry in Ohio, neighborhood pet stores. Currently there is not a cohesive pet store buying standard in Ohio. In fact several pet store owners I have spoken to have requested that the legislature adopt a statewide standard for sourcing so that wherever and whenever a pet store opens and operates in Ohio, a strong universal standard will exist.

Currently, a few cities have pieced together various sourcing rules for the sale of puppies, yet none of these efforts have helped to ensure that pet stores adhere to the highest standards. This legislation will create a first of its

kind statewide buying standard that will be the strongest in the nation. Just last week the Governor of Arizona signed into law a very similar piece of legislation and now it is Ohio's turn to take the lead in the Midwest.

This legislation was created after working with Ohio's pet stores, the Ohio Department of Agriculture, The Ohio Farm Bureau, and the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association to just name a few. I truly believe that this legislation which has broad and diverse support protects companion puppies and balances the needs of a successful industry in Ohio employing hundreds if not thousands of Ohioans.

Key highlights of the legislation include:

1. A statewide buying standard for all pet stores that only allow them to source from breeders who have no direct violations from the USDA for the past two years or no indirect violations for the past 2 years.
2. Pet stores will have to provide a full list of information about the puppies they sell to each customer to include where the puppy was born, all breeder information and verified health certificates from an accredited veterinarian.
3. A universal buying standard in place of diverse local ordinances ensures that pet stores with multiple locations can operate seamlessly across the state. There just shouldn't be 10 different standards in 10 different cities.

In order to ensure that pet stores in Ohio are able to operate under one state standard which ensures accountability and protection of our companion pets, Ohio will also be able to reduce the number of internet sales of dogs by bad breeders.

I plan to work over the summer with interested parties and I welcome the participation of any of you, my colleagues, in the process. I anticipate having a substitute bill this fall for the further consideration of this committee. Once again, Chairman Smith and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on behalf of HB 573. I would be happy to answer any questions.