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Dear Members of the Ohio House of Representatives,

My name is John Stottele. The Family Puppy is a family owned and operated business that has been matching puppies and families for more than 18 years while maintaining an A+ BBB Rating. My wife and I own The Family Puppy in Franklin Park Mall, Toledo, Ohio. We opened the store at the request of the mall. They said their number one request was for a pet store that sells puppies.

We were honored to be asked, and thrilled to launch a store in Ohio. After six months of negotiating we signed a long term lease, invested more than \$100,000 in construction costs, and opened in November 2013. Just three months after we opened, the Toledo City Council passed an ordinance, in January of 2014, to ban pet stores from selling puppies and kittens unless sourced from shelters or 501c3 rescues. After a lot of debate and attempted education the city council did grandfather our store in... with restrictions. These restrictions have proven to be detrimental to our business. The Toledo City Council arbitrarily, with no science or health rationale, tied our hands limiting us to only sell puppies that have received a rabies vaccine 7 days prior to receiving them into the store, making them 13 weeks old minimum. Breeders sell puppies at 8 weeks of age, so it makes it difficult to get puppies to sell at this location. The city council also imposed a tax of \$50 for each puppy and kitten we sell. We have paid this tax to the city, nearly \$10,000 annually. Because of these restrictions the store is not profitable. We have spoken with the mall landlord about breaking our lease, which of course, they will not allow without major cost to us. Bans like this and the Grove City ban are wrong and prejudicial and no pet store would be able to survive with such bans.

Here is the question I ask anyone that thinks a pet store ban will solve the problem of substandard breeders: "Why allow the cities the ability to trade a highly regulated industry for an unregulated one? Is this what is best for families?"

**Wayne Pacelle, CEO of HSUS, in his own words said:** "Of the dozens of puppy mills that The HSUS has assisted in closing down over the past five years, the vast majority were selling puppies online and escaping any federal oversight because a loophole in federal Animal Welfare Act regulations exempts Internet sellers. Because large-scale dog breeders who sell animals to pet stores are regulated, but breeders who sell directly to the public are not, there has been a massive migration of breeders to the latter sales strategy within the last decade or so. If they could sell dogs and escape any federal oversight, why not get in on that act and continue to cut corners on animal care?"  
<http://www.humanesociety.org/news/blog/2013/usda-puppy-mill-victory091013.html>

**ASPCA says the same thing!** "While facilities that breed puppies for commercial resale through pet stores are required to be licensed and inspected under the AWA, breeders that sell directly to consumers, whether via the Internet, newspaper classifieds or other outlets, are exempt from any federal oversight." <http://www.aspc.org/about-us/press-releases/aspc-a-plauds-usda-rule-expanding-regulation-puppy-mills>

In the recent 8 years we have developed a great partnership with a group of breeders in Northern Indiana. They are all in good standing with Indiana Board of Animal Health, USDA APHIS and AKC, as well as being self inspected by us and with their own colleagues. We know them personally; we have been in their kennels and homes regularly. We continually strive to provide our client families the very best puppy choice: a happy, healthy and well socialized member of their family. We are continually improving the welfare and lifestyle of our breeding parent dogs including physical and social well being.

We believe that kennel raised dogs have the privilege of playing with other dogs on a daily basis, unlike many of Ohio family pets that live at home alone most of the day, because our society encourages workaholics! Our breeder's dogs and puppies get to run in an exercise playground that is a minimum of 45' x 45'. This has proven to raise a very well socialized group of adults and puppies. We require our breeders to do things that we are known for as a leader in the pet industry. I have sent you an email with details of our breeder requirements outlining: **EXERCISE, SOCIALIZATION, VETERINARY CARE, GENETIC TESTING, BREEDING PRACTICES, KENNEL DESIGN and INSPECTIONS.**

Furthermore, we have built the Toledo store with 40% of our in store kennels available to shelters and rescues to hold "Meet and Greet" events in our store. These kennels have remained empty for 2 ½ years because the rescues have not taken us up on our offer. We also have championed an adoption program, and have placed over 11,000 unwanted kittens that were spayed/neutered thereby lessening the burden of kittens in the shelters. Two years ago we began offering the owners of the litter free spaying of their mother cat to end the unwanted breeding!

As we have experienced firsthand, in Toledo, local municipalities have no knowledge of how pet store bans affect good ethical businesses. Pet store bans take away the most regulated source of puppies for their constituents. HB166 combined with the Ohio High Volume Breeder regulations, will give solid direction and leadership, establishing Ohio as a responsible, model, state. Your YES vote on HB 166 will provide transparency and protection and will stop city councils from passing ordinances that put good pet stores out of business!

I ask you for your support and YES vote on HB 166 and together we will bring solutions that will actually work to prevent the sale of puppies coming from substandard breeders. Supporting this bill will ensure that puppies being sold through pet stores are coming from responsible breeders. HB 166 will furthermore ensure that pet store breeders are the most regulated of all sources of puppies available to Ohio residents. We believe this is a great advantage for your constituents.

Thank you for your support,  
John and Debbie Stottele