

April 7, 2015

Good morning. I'm here today to stress the importance of updating and bringing this law current. From my nearly 15 years of experience with for-profit businesses and 10 years of non-profit volunteer work, I believe legal consumer protection involving pets is critical.

I'm a life-long Oregonian who grew up on a small livestock farm near Coos Bay, Oregon, graduated from the University of Oregon, and am currently a Media Director at an advertising agency in Portland working with small and regional businesses. I also recently wrapped up a 5 year term as a board director at a well-respected pet shelter in Southwest Portland and have volunteered for other pet rescue organizations locally and nationally.

As our community continues to change and grow, revised legislation is needed in order to match with our changing times. Just as technology is changing, so is our relationship with pets.

The pet leasing concept is difficult to understand, leading consumers to overlook the fine print: That all decisions involving the pet would be made by a for-profit company including the veterinary care and end of life decisions while buying out the contract would be exorbitant.

In my research and first-hand experience with businesses that engage in renting or leasing pets, corner cutting is common to reduce costs and increase profits. I've seen this corner cutting create an alarming number of significant problems for consumers and their leased pets. I've received numerous emails from people who were not aware that their pet's "health insurance" was in all actuality a pet lease.

When a pet is owned outright, the pet guardian plays a role in making sure the pet is properly treated and receives the right care. The pet owner has the pet's best interest at heart and the ability to act in the pet's best interest. In the leasing scenario, the pet guardian has no legal right to be involved with or make decisions for the pet they are leasing. The consumer leasing the pet takes the pet in when sick and gets the pet back when healthy - but they have no right to control treatment or even see medical records. In addition, end of life decisions are within the lessor's absolute discretion.

A for-profit company does not have the sensibility or obligation and, in fact, is best motivated to not pursue even moderately expensive treatments as that, by definition, affects their bottom line and is therefore not in the best interests of company stakeholders. It is the exact opposite of what we as consumers expect of our veterinarians for our pets. This is why it is critical to include "pet leasing" in the current Oregon law overseeing "pet sales".

Thank you for your time and consideration in updating this law to create fair business practices for those who sell or lease pets to consumers and for providing the same level of legal protection for all pets whether they are sold or leased to consumers by a for-profit company.

Respectfully Submitted,

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