



18 March 2019

House Committee on Business and Labor
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 2804 Support

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

I am a local small business owner in Portland. I am a humane and science-based dog and cat trainer and behavior consultant, and a puppy and kitten class teacher. My areas of expertise are puppy development, kitten development, and treating adult animals with severe phobias, fears, and aggression. I work in conjunction with a local veterinarian and donate time to a local rescue. I truly see the entire spectrum of companion animal guardianship.

Local pet stores that sell puppies and kittens are notorious among the science-based animal behavior community for selling animals irresponsibly to unwitting consumers that do not understand their needs, for their potential to become an eventual burden to rescues, and for their propensity do permanent damage to these animals during important developmental stages. Not wanting to judge blindly, I visited pet stores that are local to me in Portland to see if puppies and kittens really are being harmed in such ways. I was disturbed by what I saw.

I saw puppies that were transported, manhandled by strangers and children during their first critical fear period -- a period lasting from nine to eleven weeks of age where traumatic or scary events can cause permanent phobia, fears, or fear-related aggression towards those contexts and demographically designated people (such as children). I saw puppies laying in urine soaked litter or in cages with no bedding at all. I saw people frightening puppies with fast, unpredictable movement. I saw puppies with no place to hide. I saw puppies with no water or water that was filled with urined soaked litter. I saw puppies with no enrichment items. I saw workers pass by puppies with no clean water and ignore that fact. I saw puppies in confined spaces with no place to escape should a fight occur between the puppies. I met store workers that lie about the sourcing of their animals, that tell customers that their mixed breed designer dogs (such as

Maltipoos and Chiweenies) are the product of happy little accidents at a very good dog owners house. I met store workers who could not tell me exactly where the puppies were from. I saw signs that said some that the puppies were not vaccinated, yet, they were in a store where dogs come and go in close proximity of them. I saw puppies housed next to each other without opaque barriers between them -- which can cause a nasty behavioral issue called barrier frustration. I saw puppies that do not have enough space. I spoke with store employees that could not define socialization, yet they were touting the fact that their puppies were thoroughly and properly socialized, which is not true. As an professional that works in animal behavior, I know that the average consumer does not understand how detrimental what happens in pet stores selling puppies is to the canine developing brain on a neurochemical level. These consumers are buying puppies that come with a behavioral deficit at best, or with behavioral damage at worst. Dogs such as these may require extensive behavioral rehabilitation to be safe dogs as they get older and bigger. Or their guardians may decide to pass them on to unwitting rescues as the pet stores do not take the dogs back, despite the fact that the damage they do is largely their own fault and the fault of the poor breeders they source from.

I also saw or discussed cat and kitten sales with these same pet stores. They said that they usually source their cats from shelters and donate the money back to the shelter -- showing that the sale of rescued animals is, in fact, a paradigm that works for these retail stores. It is not ideal to house cats together in a small space because they are a territory-based semi-domesticated species, however, this is what I saw in a local pet store.

I am not opposed to responsible animal breeding, but I do know, given the fragility of animals during their early developmental stages, that responsible breeders do not source to pet stores. All animals in a pet store are not coming from responsible breeders.

It is in my best interest as a dog and cat behavior professional to not say anything about puppies and kittens sourced from pet stores because these animals end up being my clients, which I charge hundreds of dollars to help or to sit in my classes. But ethically and from the perspective of someone that is tasked with protecting public safety through responsible animal ownership, I know that it is not ethical at all to supply the public with pet store animals sourced from low-quality breeders.

I kindly and ask you all to support H.B. 2804. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Mia Bonadonna, CCS, CPDT-KA
Mega Hearts Dog and Cat
MegaHeartsDogAndCat.com
503/780-0060