

March 20, 2019

Chairman Jeff Barker
House Committee on Business and Labor
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2804 Support

Dear Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2804, which would stop the sale of puppies and kittens at pet stores. I come to this issue with a few decades of animal welfare experience, from working at Willamette Humane Society in Salem, and returning later to serve on their board and eventually as board president. I was a member of the board of directors that founded Fences For Fido ten years ago, and I continue to be involved with the organization today. I also work managing editor at Spot Magazine – a 15-year-old publication that covers everything pet in the Northwest.

I speak today on behalf of myself and of Fences For Fido.

I work closely with owners of pet-related businesses, including pet-supply stores. While it's long been common knowledge that the large chain stores such as PetSmart and Petco do not sell puppies and kittens, it's important to emphasize here today that the overwhelming majority of locally-owned and independent stores do not either. They operate successful and profitable businesses, they employ people, and they operate in a humane, socially responsible way that promotes pet health.

When I approached store owners to ask their opinions on this bill, their first reaction was surprise and disbelief that this issue is still a matter of debate. They know that Oregon lawmakers have done a commendable job of ending puppy-mill cruelty in our state. They know the practice of selling puppies and kittens in stores is widely considered an outmoded and less responsible model than one that promotes rescue and adoption. And they know that their customers who buy puppies and kittens want to have a personal relationship with the breeders, meet the breeding pair, and learn about the overall health and welfare of the animals – which, the AKC recommends to all members of the public looking to add a puppy to their family.

So those of us who have been on the front lines of animal welfare, who have watched our state become a national model for protecting animal welfare and ending high rates of shelter euthanasia, we support HB 2804. It makes sense. It is fully aligned with public sentiment and with the prevailing practices of the owners of the businesses directly impacted.

Respectfully,
Michelle Blake
Salem