



**TESTIMONY OF
PET INDUSTRY JOINT ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON HB 2915, ESTABLISHING A PET SALE BAN
BEFORE THE
HOUSE BUSINESS & LABOR COMMITTEE**

February 13th, 2023

The Pet Advocacy Network appreciates the opportunity to offer our views and expertise on HB 2915, which would prohibit the sale of dogs, cats and rabbits in retail pet stores in Oregon.

As the advocacy voice of the responsible pet care community, The Pet Advocacy Network represents the interests and expertise of retailers, companion animal suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, pet owners and others involved in the many aspects of pet care throughout the state of Oregon and across the United States. Our association works to promote animal well-being and responsible pet ownership, foster environmental stewardship, and ensure the availability of healthy pets through our work at the state and federal levels—including the United States Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Pet Advocacy Network routinely advocates on legislative and regulatory proposals to advance the public interest-of protecting public health and the safety, health and availability of companion animals.

All of us in the responsible pet care community don't just care about animals, we provide care for them on a daily basis—and are dedicated to ensuring that appropriate care of animals is the primary focus of any law or regulation. As such, we offer an unmatched depth and breadth of experience on legislative efforts to verify and certify the health and well-being of pets from the time they are born all the way until they are taken home and made a part of families.

Respectfully, the Pet Advocacy Network requests that you reject HB 2915. Everyone agrees that bad breeders who mistreat or neglect animals need to be put out of business. However, those who seek to stop bad breeders by targeting responsible pet stores with retail pet sale bans are misinformed.

While well-intentioned, retail pet sale bans will not stop bad breeders who are unregulated, unlicensed, and are not held accountable to any animal care standards. What bans will do is harm highly-regulated pet stores, eliminating the most transparent source of pets that provides purchasers with legal protections, and driving prospective pet owners to unregulated, unlicensed and potentially unscrupulous pet-sellers.

The fact is that pet stores and the licensed breeders they work with are a highly-regulated, best-in-class source of pets that are inspected regularly, provide veterinary exams, and keep detailed records of the condition and care of their animals:

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) established and enforces humane care standards under the federal government's Animal Welfare Act that regulate the transportation, purchase, sale, housing, care, handling and treatment of animals for use as pets.
- Breeders with five or more breeding females that are not USDA-licensed are prohibited from selling to pet stores.
- USDA-licensed breeders are routinely inspected to ensure they are complying with humane standards for veterinary care, shelter, food, and clean water.
- Pet stores are also regulated by state laws regarding animal care and warranties and are required to keep records related to the health, veterinary care and source of the animals they sell.

Beyond the legal requirements, our members feel a responsibility to the animals themselves. They work with families to find the ideal pets for their individual situations because that is the single best way to ensure successful lifelong pet relationships, and keep pets from being surrendered to shelters and rescues. Pet stores also have a significant incentive to adhere to the highest standards of care and sourcing because they depend on their reputation, and positive word of mouth to stay in business.

Pet stores are a valuable and transparent option for prospective pet owners. They provide the peace-of-mind and the opportunity for families to personally interact with and choose a pet that will be the best fit for their circumstances that was raised under federal and state care standards, has a detailed medical history, and in many cases, is protected by a consumer warranty¹.

The best option for pet ownership for some families are the pure- or purpose-bred puppies offered by pet stores. They may need a specific breed due to health considerations – 30 percent of Americans suffer from pet allergies². Or, with young children, they may not be able to take on the behavior risks of bringing a dog with an unknown history into their home – 47 percent of rehomed dogs are relinquished because of pet problems, including aggressive behaviors³. If a future pet owner needs or wants a specific breed due to such common circumstances, their options will be severely limited without pet stores

¹ American Veterinary Medical Association. <https://www.avma.org/advocacy/state-local-issues/pet-purchase-protection-laws>

² Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. <https://www.aafa.org/pet-dog-cat-allergies/>

³ ASPCA, National Rehoming Survey (2015). <https://www.aspc.org/animal-homelessness/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistic>

A ban will boost the black market for pets. Bad breeders who don't adhere to care standards can sell puppies with diseases or genetic defects, and families are left with huge veterinary bills and without the legal recourse of a warranty, such as those offered by many pet stores and required in many states. In California, for example, veterinarians saw an increase in consumers purchasing sick dogs from unregulated sources shortly after the state implemented a ban on the sale of dogs, cats and rabbits at pet stores in 2019⁴.

Without pet stores to personally interact with and select their new pet, families may turn to online sources, where they could fall victim to the “puppy scams” that have surged in recent years—tricked into sending unrecoverable money for a nonexistent dog. While there are reputable and responsible online sellers, the Better Business Bureau has stated that fake online puppy sellers and puppy scams have dramatically increased by 39 percent since 2017⁵, and up to 80 percent of sponsored online ads for puppies may be fake⁶. Victims of these puppy scams often have no legal recourse because they purchased from a source without regulatory oversight and without a purchase warranty to protect them.

We respectfully urge Oregon to reject HB 2915. This legislation would not impact bad actors, but it will punish law-abiding pet stores, often small, local businesses that depend on establishing life-long relationships with pet owners to sustain their businesses because they can't compete with the volume pricing that online or big-box retailers are able to offer. These local businesses are committed to the health, safety, and wellbeing of the animals they provide to Beaver State families, but a pet sale ban will force them to close their doors permanently.

The way to put bad breeders out of business is to evaluate, improve, and increase enforcement of federal and state animal care laws, including setting and enforcing strong and uniform standards of care and applying them to pet sources including stores, licensed breeders, shelters and rescues.

⁴ ABC 10 San Diego <https://www.10news.com/news/team-10/puppy-dies-four-hours-after-sd-family-buys-it-vets-say-new-law-may-be-part-of-the-problem>

⁵ BBB Alert: Beware of Puppy Scams This Holiday Season – Findings by BBB Reveal a Surge in Complaints and Scam Reports. (n.d.). <https://www.bbb.org/article/scams/18964-scam-alert-beware-of-puppy-scams-this-holiday-season>

⁶ Puppy Scams: How to Protect Yourself from Fake Online Pet Sellers. (2017, November). <https://www.bbb.org/article/scams/14213-puppy-scams-how-to-protect-yourself-from-fake-online-pet-sellers#:~:text=Experts>



We appreciate your consideration and would welcome the opportunity to work with the House Business & Labor Committee to find ways to meaningfully address bad breeders. By working together, we can make sure that Oregon citizens continue to have access to healthy animals to love as pets now and in the future.

Sincerely,

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