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April 12, 2023

Oregon State Legislature
Senate Committee on Judiciary
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 2915A (Retail Pet Sales Prohibition) – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

The Animal Legal Defense Fund – the nation’s preeminent legal advocacy organization for animals – and our members in Oregon, support HB 2915A, prohibiting the sale of dogs and cats in new retail pet stores. Unsuspecting consumers are routinely duped by pet stores' claims that their animals come from "family" breeders. In reality, virtually all animals sold at pet stores are sourced from mills – large-scale commercial breeding facilities that prioritize profits over the welfare of animals. To protect consumers from misleading information and dogs and cats from unnecessary cruelty, we strongly urge the passage of this bill.

Puppy mills raise dogs in crowded, unsanitary conditions. Puppies and dogs used for breeding often lack adequate food, clean water, or veterinary care. Mother dogs forced to give birth to multiple litters year after year are ultimately abandoned or killed when they are no longer able to produce puppies. Due to a lack of proper socialization and separation from their mothers at too young an age, puppies bred in mills are more likely to experience behavioral and psychological problems throughout their lives.

Under HB 2915A, consumers will still be able to purchase purebred animals from breeders. The bill only impacts the sale of dogs and cats at new pet stores. Pet stores do not typically purchase animals from small-scale breeders; instead, these animals often come from out of state mills that frequently have long histories of Animal Welfare Act (AWA) violations. Due to inadequate enforcement at the federal level, even the most egregious offenders are rarely shut down. HB 2915A would cut off this sales pipeline for some of the worst commercial breeding facilities in the country.

In addition to protecting animals, the bill provides critical protections for Oregon consumers. As a result of mills' breeding practices and the animals' poor living conditions, it is common for animals to suffer from serious genetic conditions and deadly diseases. Many families are devastated to discover that the puppy they recently purchased is seriously ill, sometimes within hours of bringing an animal home. The Animal Legal Defense Fund regularly receives requests for legal assistance from people who have unknowingly purchased sick animals and are now saddled with thousands of dollars in veterinary bills. HB 2915A safeguards future consumers from experiencing similar heartbreak.

All our clients are innocent

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Pet stores are also known for predatory lending practices, misleading customers into seeking “low” or “no” interest financing for their puppies, only to saddle them with interest rates up to 198%. In Oregon, there are at least two stores known to push financing through a known predatory lender called “Easy Pay”.

Oregon is currently the only West Coast market open to puppy mills seeking to sell their animals in pet stores, as California has banned all pet stores from selling dogs and cats, and Washington, similar to the provisions of this bill, has banned all *new* pet stores from selling dogs and cats. New York, Illinois, Maryland, and Maine have also passed similar laws. It is imperative that we do not let prospective companies take advantage of Oregon and its consumers.

To protect both animals and Oregon residents, the Animal Legal Defense Fund endorses HB 2915A and encourages the committee to support this bill as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Hauge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter "J" being particularly large and stylized.

Jennifer Hauge
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