

Below was my prepared testimony I was unable to give this afternoon in support of HB 4838.

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Good afternoon.

Chair Liberati, Vice Chairs Pohutsky and Posthumus, and members of the House Government Operations Committee, I would like to thank you for allowing me the time to testify in support of House Bill 4838.

My name is Dennis Hennen, and I've served as a member of City Council for the City of Berkeley for the last 6 years.

Today I'm NOT speaking on behalf of the City of Berkeley but from my own experiences on this issue.

In early 2023, a new pet store opened within our city which sells purebred puppies. Initially, I had no concerns. However, my constituents quickly educated me on how these operations typically work - sourcing animals from overcrowded and inhumane puppy mills.

The owner assured us his animals and their parents were treated humanely at all stages of their lives. But Council wanted to verify that. After months of careful deliberation, we passed an ordinance requiring documentation that could help show how the animals were treated.

Unfortunately, once the ordinance went into effect, the records showed hints that all was not as we were lead to believe. But despite suspicious activity and the best of intentions, the city has found it nearly impossible to take meaningful action.

First, we're resource-constrained, just like every other city. We simply don't have the workforce to give this issue the attention it deserves.

But more importantly, when there is inhumane treatment, it largely happens outside of our city limits where we are powerless to act.

That is why it's absolutely essential that action be taken at the state level. It's a state-wide problem, and local units can't solve it alone.

As things stand now, our city is forced to be part of this pipeline of potential animal abuse, contrary to our own values.

I don't seek to close down any businesses. We're surrounded by successful pet stores that are already in compliance with the proposed bill. And I'm not against purebred animals. I own two purebred Siamese cats myself.

What I'm asking for, and my constituents and your constituents, are asking for, is help from the state to put an end to the inhumane treatment of these innocent animals. I urge you to support HB 4838, and I'm happy to answer any questions.