



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB®

May 21, 2024

RE: HB 4838 – Oppose Ban on Retail Sale of Purpose-bred Pets

Dear Representative Liberati and Members of the House Government Operations Committee:

The American Kennel Club (AKC) writes today on behalf of our 161 Michigan dog clubs and thousands of constituent dog owners in the state to respectfully urge you to not advance HB 4838.

Banning the regulated retail sale of purpose-bred pets at pet stores in Michigan will not address so-called “puppy-mill” or negligence issues. However, it will harm thousands of future dog owners and undermine responsible pet choice, the first step in responsible dog ownership.

The AKC shares the sponsors’ concerns about the well-being of all pets. The AKC is the world’s largest purebred dog registry, our affiliated clubs operate America’s largest purebred rescue network, and for nearly 140 years we have been proud to be the only non-profit purebred registry devoted to the health and well-being and of all dogs. We advocate for responsible dog ownership and support strong enforcement of the state’s current laws and the federal Animal Welfare Act. ***Our commitment to the well-being of all dogs and our extensive experience with both rescue and purpose-bred dogs is why we are compelled to weigh in on this issue.***

By seeking to create an institutional bias for pets offered by unregulated and random sources over professionally-raised, regulated sources, it not only removes the most regulated and vetted source of pets from the market; **it exacerbates the problem by failing to protect consumers and increasing demand for pets that are not subject to, and do not benefit from animal welfare regulations or health tests associated with existing consumer protection laws.**

We urge you to consider the following:

- This ban does little to get at any actual issues of cruelty or negligence. It limits access to a choice of pets for those who want a pet with specific characteristics and health warranties, and do not have access to a specialized local breeder or the resources to travel out of state to obtain a pet that is a good fit for their lifestyle.

It removes the choice to obtain a puppy from a regulated, licensed pet store that provides consumer protections, and health history of the pet. Instead, it will push future pet owners to the internet where sick puppies and scams are common.

- In 2019, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that approximately one million dogs are imported into the United States on an annual basis. The vast majority of these dogs come with little valid health information, receive little regulatory or welfare oversight, and are likely destined for the large unregulated U.S. retail rescue market. In this environment, protecting regulated retailers helps assure some protections for Michigan pet buyers. Retail outlets, unlike the internet, will also provide the opportunity for purchasers to meet the pet before purchasing it.
- AKC believes a better approach for animal welfare is to help keep pets out of shelters in the first place. One of the best ways to do this is by educating prospective dog owners and enabling them to obtain a pet

that is the right fit for their lifestyle. Great pets come from a variety of sources, including breeders, responsible rescues, and regulated pet shops and shelters. But in every case, freedom of choice to select the right pet is the crucial first step to success. This is why **instead of limiting consumer choice and consumer protections, the American Kennel Club recommends implementing the statewide consumer protection laws for pet purchasers.**

- Finally, we are very concerned that this bill could have a significant impact on legitimate breed rescue efforts. AKC's commitment to the health and wellbeing of dogs is why every national breed club affiliated with the AKC, as well as many local clubs, have long been involved with breed rescue. Responsible and reputable breeders ensure the puppies they raise are placed in loving, safe homes. In addition, many breed enthusiasts, including breeders, also provide significant resources to breed rescue activities including time, expertise, and housing. Years of experience with their chosen breeds place breeders in a unique and important position to ensure that dogs in need of rescue get the breed-appropriate care and home the dog needs and deserves.

The AKC would welcome the opportunity to work with you, the sponsors, and local communities to address your concerns without closing businesses, shortchanging Michigan pet owners or undermining responsible breeders. Please do not hesitate to contact us at (919) 816-3720 or doglaw@akc.org if we can provide further information.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Clark
Director, Legislative Outreach