



To: Rep. Tom Barrett, Chair, House Agriculture Committee & Members of the House Agriculture Committee

From: Ann M. Griffin, Esq., Director of Advocacy

Re: HB 5916 and HB 5917

Date: May 15, 2018

---

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) is the largest and oldest animal welfare organization in the state with more than 200,000 constituents and supporters state wide. MHS works to improve and save lives through compassionate care, community engagement, and advocacy for animals. MHS is a private, nonprofit organization and is not affiliated with any national humane organizations nor any local or regional humane societies or SPCAs.

We are submitting this memo to express MHS' concerns regarding HB 5916 and HB 5917. Because of the short amount of time between the introduction of these bills and when they were heard in Committee, we were unable to provide testimony. Therefore, we would like to officially record our opposition to HB 5916 and HB 5917.

As you know, these bills would remove authority from local units of government to regulate pet stores particularly as to the source of puppies sold through those retailers and would impose state-wide rules that would apply to all pet shops regarding the sale of puppies acquired from commercial breeding operations.

We understand that HB 5916 has caused some confusion, because it appears to add more stringent standards that would apply to pet stores sourcing puppies from wholesalers. However, those standards rely in large part on the USDA licensure and regulation process. While it would be nice to be able to place trust in the USDA regulation process, unfortunately, that process is not as thorough, consistent, or stringent as it needs to be to protect animals in breeding facilities. The Office of Inspector General and Congress have both called on the USDA to do a better job enforcing the Animal Welfare Act and related regulations to protect dogs and puppies in commercial breeding operations.

In the absence of effective federal oversight, we believe that it is best for local units of government to regulate pet shops and close the door on the sale of puppies from wholesalers should they choose to do so. However, as you know, if HB 5917 passes, local units of government would not be able to impose such regulations, and any regulations already passed would be revoked.

MHS is strongly opposed to puppy mills and the sale of puppies from such operations for a variety of reasons:

- Dogs used for breeding in puppy mills are forced to live in unsanitary, cramped enclosures; are deprived of exercise; and are not given veterinary care and fresh food and water.

- Breeding dogs are bred as often as possible for as long as possible, and when they are no longer useful, they are discarded.
- Puppy mill puppies are not properly socialized with humans or exposed to a typical home environment, making their transition to a new family much more difficult.
- Puppy mill puppies often suffer from various illnesses, parasites, and behavioral and genetic problems, and they are sold to unsuspecting members of the public.

We believe that individual cities and counties should have the ability to respond to local citizens' concerns and decide whether they will allow pet retailers in their jurisdictions to source puppies from puppy mill operations. Cities that have already enacted such ordinances have done so for the sake of the animals and also their residents, as these puppies often come with very serious issues that require their new families to spend thousands of dollars for veterinary care and/or behavioral rehabilitation and to face the ultimate heartbreak when their efforts are unsuccessful.

**We respectfully request that you refuse to send HB 5916 and HB 5917 to the House floor.**

Thank you for your time and consideration of our position on this issue.