

Testimony of: Linda Huebner

Submitted to: House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry

Regarding: Support for H.567

Date: April 16, 2024

Chair Durfee, Vice-Chair Surprenant, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry, thank you for considering my testimony in support of H.567, An act relating to the sale of dogs, cats, and wolf-hybrids by pet shops.

I live in Halifax, VT, where I work as a self-employed contractor who supports animal protection and environmental nonprofits. Among others, for the past 7 years, I've been working for the Companion Animal Protection Society (CAPS), which is the only national nonprofit dedicated exclusively to protecting companion animals from cruelty in pet shops and puppy/kitten mills. Since the mid-1980s, I have worked and volunteered with shelter/rescue animals in the northeast. Many shelter/rescue animals were previously purchased at pet shops and then surrendered because of physical or behavioral issues inherent in animals bred in mills.

H.567 would help to address the issue of inhumane commercial breeding facilities by prohibiting additional pet shops in Vermont from selling dogs, cats, and wolf-hybrids bred in mills. The more prohibitions on the sale of puppies in pet shops, the less demand for intense, industrial breeding facilities that supply poorly bred animals to pet shops.

To clarify, this legislation does not prohibit legitimate breeders from breeding animals for sale, nor does it ban the purchase of an animal who was purpose-bred by a legitimate breeder. These breeders sell direct to their customers and allow the customers to meet their animals before purchase; they would not sell their animals via a pet shop.

People do not intentionally support mills; they do so inadvertently because they do not understand that the 'puppy in the window' came from a mill and that the puppy's parents will live their entire lives (or at least their reproductively viable years) in intense confinement. In addition, people make impulse purchases of animals at pet shops without knowing enough about those animals to really make a lifetime commitment to them. Understandably, it's hard to resist when a pet shop employee encourages a person to hold an adorable puppy or kitten and then offers to help them work out a payment plan to take the animal home that day.

It's not just the animals suffering in mills and in transit from mills to pet shops around the country. People who buy these animals pay exorbitant prices for animals who may become very ill due to poor care and intense confinement, as well as poor breeding decisions re: congenital conditions. Consequently, people are victims of consumer fraud, but they're also

dealing with the emotional consequences when their beloved animals become ill and sometimes die prematurely.

Banning the retail sale of dogs, cats and wolf-hybrids in Vermont – and encouraging pet stores to host adoption events with shelters and rescues – will save and improve lives because people will have opportunities to meet and adopt these animals when they are available outside of shelters and rescue facilities.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. I hope that the committee will advance H.567 to help put an end to the cycle of suffering created by the inhumane pet shop and puppy/kitten mill industry. We can do better for Vermont's animals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Linda Huebner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Linda Huebner, Halifax, VT