



AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB<sup>SM</sup>

**Stacey Ober, J.D.**  
Government Relations  
Regional Manager  
New England

February 15, 2024

The Honorable Michael McCarthy, Chair  
House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs  
115 State Street, Room 10  
Montpelier, Vermont 05609-0101

**RE: American Kennel Club Supports H.626, Animal Welfare Protections**

Dear Chair McCarthy and Members of the House Committee:

The American Kennel Club (AKC) writes on behalf of the many responsible dog owners in Vermont in support of H.626, which addresses the issue of animal welfare and prevention of diseases. Founded in 1884, the AKC is a recognized and trusted expert in health, breeding, training, and responsible dog ownership. We represent over 5,000 dog clubs nationally, including 10 clubs in Vermont. As the world's largest purebred dog registry, we are dedicated to ensuring the health of all dogs and to preserving each unique breed.

AKC and its affiliates are committed to ensuring that all dogs are kept in safe, humane environments, and together we offer many programs regarding humane care and treatment of dogs. We have raised over \$63 million for canine health research projects since 1995; donated millions to help local emergency management prepare for and provide disaster relief for people and their pets; and offer lost dog recovery services that have reunited over 500,000 dogs with their families. Moreover, we inspect thousands of kennels every year to ensure the safety and welfare of AKC-registered dogs.

Among its many provisions, H.626 establishes a plan for the unification and improvement of state administrative functions relating to domestic animal welfare protections. It would:

1. Establish a Division of Animal Welfare at the Department of Public Safety to develop, implement, and administer a centralized program for investigating and enforcing animal welfare requirements in the State,
2. Amend or establish standards for the operation of animal shelters and animal rescue organizations, and
3. Detail requirements for the importation or transportation of animals into the State.

Despite the rising U.S. demand for pets, estimated at over 8 million dogs per year, state and local laws that discourage domestic dog breeding enacted over the last generation have resulted in enormous growth in U.S. canine imports. [According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#), over one million dogs were imported into the U.S. in 2019. Many of these dogs are inadequately vaccinated or have invalid health certificates. Because many dogs are imported via the retail rescue industry or internet sales, they do not receive the same level of oversight as dogs bred in the U.S.,

creating the conditions for a public health crisis. In fact in July of 2021, the [CDC issued a temporary suspension](#) on importing dogs classified as high risk of rabies from more than 100 countries.

AKC has been concerned for many years about the devastating but preventable threat from diseases and parasites from inadequately vaccinated or health-checked animal imports. Establishing a Director to implement the provisions in H.626 will serve to ensure Vermont's health and safety is protected from zoonotic disease transfer.

Therefore, we respectfully request your support of H.626. If I can be of further assistance, kindly contact me. I can be reached at (919) 816-3348 or [Stacey.Ober@akc.org](mailto:Stacey.Ober@akc.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stacey A. Ober". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the first name.

Government Relations Regional Manager, New England

Cc: Mary McFaun, President, Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs