



Please oppose VT H 567

January 30th, 2024

Dear Members of the Vermont House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry:

I am writing on behalf of the National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA), a diverse, national animal welfare organization founded in Portland, OR in 1991. NAIA was created to provide evidence-based solutions to complex and controversial issues regarding animals. Our group promotes animal wellbeing, preserving the human-animal bond and the basic civil rights of people who live and work with animals. Our members are pet owners, hobby breeders, rescuers and animal professionals, scientists and veterinarians. Dozens of New England kennel clubs and other animal-related organizations are part of NAIA.

We are writing to express our strong opposition to H 567 in its current form and to ask you to carefully consider the following background facts before voting on it.

In order to understand the current marketplace battle and the unintended consequences of shutting down one of the public's remaining sources of pets, it's important to understand that the problem of dog overpopulation has largely been solved in New England and **there are no longer enough locally bred dogs to meet demand**. This shortage has had an enormous impact on humane societies.

- As a result, shelters and rescues have created **“humane relocation” programs, which import thousands of dogs into their nonprofit organizations** each year to sustain their operations and increase their adoptions. In many cases these shelters and rescues have become de facto pet stores while retaining their former image as charities that care for local pets, as well as retaining their much less stringently regulated operations.
- According to the CDC and USDA, over one million dogs were imported from foreign countries in 2019. Many are imported by private shelters and rescues. Please click on the following study: https://www.naiaonline.org/uploads/WhitePapers/CDC_FedRegJan2019Citation.pdf
- The importation of dogs into the United States to fill the demand of consumers for purebred dogs is a known issue that has even impacted Vermont directly - [Make Sure Adopted Pets are Healthy, rabid puppy imported into VT](#)

- These dogs can arrive with a whole host of diseases that can infect our healthy dog populations and even carry zoonotic diseases transmissible to humans. Take neighboring New Hampshire, for example - [Leptospirosis in Puppies from Puerto Rico](#)
- Anti-pet store activists often argue that the demand gap that currently exists can be filled by hobby or casual breeders. This is not true unless hobby or casual breeders greatly increase the number of puppies they breed each year, basically becoming commercial breeders themselves. No, what is far more likely is that rescues and humane societies will fill the gap with imported dogs.
- Sadly, a fair number of shelter dogs have behavior problems, and some come from no-kill shelters where saving the life of a dog is more important than protecting a child from a dog with a known history of aggression. [Mother of vicious dog victim in Arlington still seeking action, Town ordered animal to be euthanized in August](#)

We are in favor of preventing bad actors from establishing themselves in Vermont by supporting laws and regulations that provide meaningful oversight to all marketplace actors, retail and nonprofit. This ensures that the health and welfare of pets is a top priority and has the added benefit of protecting consumers. Ultimately, whether or not a dog is purchased from a retail establishment or a nonprofit organization, that pet's health and welfare are what matters.

Contact me if I can offer any additional information.

Sincerely,



Patti Strand, President NAIA