



February 13, 2024

Vermont State House  
House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs  
115 State Street Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

**RE: Vermont H. 626 – An act relating to animal welfare**

Dear Members of the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs:

The Vermont Feed Dealers and Manufacturers Association (VFDMA) has several concerns with H. 626 and welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the bill.

Established in 1946 the VFDMA has a 78-year history of providing leadership to Vermont's agriculture industry. In addition to legislative activities, our focus is the welfare of the dairy, poultry and other livestock industries of Vermont and the mutual benefit of professionals and consumers in these industries through the cooperation of feed, seed and fertilizer dealers and manufacturers, with each other and with educational and service agencies. We offer insight to legislative committees and state agencies when they seek our input on regulatory and budgetary matters which directly impact our members.

The VFDMA appreciates the purpose of H. 626 which is to create a Division of Animal Welfare within the Department of Public Safety with authority and funds to develop a far-reaching program to enforce the state animal welfare laws through communication, education, and enforcement. We are, however, concerned with the proposed means to fund the new position within Vermont state government. The VFDMA has a decades long history of supporting appropriate registration and tonnage fees collected from commercial and custom animal feeds and used by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture for the appropriate regulation of animal food. Collecting fees from businesses to support a social mission of H 626 for animal welfare and for the purpose of protecting the health and safety of Vermonters, while commendable, is an inappropriate use of the proposed fees to be levied on businesses. If the citizens of Vermont feel animal welfare is a priority the new Division of Animal Welfare should be funded through appropriations made by the General Assembly not by a tax on businesses whose purpose is to provide wholesome and safe nutrition to animals of all kinds.

In several ways, the function of the proposed new division is duplicative of the Vermont Livestock Care Standards Advisory Council authorized by the legislature in 2009, comprised of 14 members and chaired by the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture. The LCSAC is tasked with advising the Secretary of Agriculture and the legislative committees on agriculture on issues relating to livestock well-being in the state of Vermont. The Council is also authorized to engage in educational and outreach initiatives meant to improve the welfare of Vermont's livestock animals. If the State of Vermont feels the need to expand the scope of its engagement with issues of animal welfare these changes could be addressed through modification of the existing council rather than creating a duplicative effort financed by a tax which is unduly imposed on animal feed manufacturers.

**The VFDMA opposes the proposed tax of \$10 per product on commercial feed, which would raise the cost of registering animal feed and pet food from the current \$105 per product to \$115 per product.**

Sincerely,

Shannon Kayhart,  
President, Vermont Feed Dealers and Manufacturers Association