



AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB<sup>SM</sup>

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April 26, 2024

The Honorable Emilie Kornheiser, Chair  
House Committee on Ways and Means  
115 State Street, Room 45  
Montpelier, Vermont 05609-0101

**RE: AKC Opposes S. 301 Amendment, Sale of Dogs, Cats, and Wolf-Hybrids by Pet Shops**

Dear Chair Kornheiser, Vice-Chair Canfield, and Members of the Committee:

Founded in 1884, the American Kennel Club (AKC) is a not-for-profit animal welfare organization that is recognized as a trusted expert in canine health, breeding, and training. We advocate for the purebred dog as a family companion and promote the ideals of responsible dog ownership. We represent over 5,000 dog clubs nationally, including nine in Vermont, which represent thousands of constituent dog owners. In 2022, [AKC licensed and sanctioned 68 events](#) in Vermont where more than 6,000 dogs participated. Surveys estimate that exhibitors spend \$982 per show weekend, many of whom travel into Vermont to participate.

***For multiple reasons, AKC strongly opposes any measure that restricts choice by compelling people and/or retailers to obtain pets solely from shelter or rescue distributors.***

Vermont already allows its Department of Agriculture licensed and regulated pet shops to partner with animal shelters to promote animals available for re-homing. Some do offer their retail space in this way. However, the April 25 amendment to S. 301 regarding the sale of dogs and cats would force pet shops into this restricted business model if they transfer any dogs or cats. The one exception is for a single Vermont licensed shop, as long as it does not transfer shop ownership or transfer more dogs and cats than in the prior year.

- I. **Puppy Demand Outpaces Supply**: In the United States, the number of puppies produced by responsible breeders does not satisfy the public's demand for those puppies. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) [Pet Ownership and Demographic Sourcebook](#) reported on page 21 that less than 25% surveyed in 2022 got a new dog from a breeder. AKC hobby breeders licensed in Vermont as "pet dealers" report their wait lists for families looking for a purebred puppy are typically two to three years.
- II. **Licensed Pet Shops Provide a Valued Alternative**: Many pet purchasers who wish to purchase a dog with predictable traits, substantiated health backgrounds, and consumer protections are unwilling to wait once they have decided they are ready for a new pet.

- III. Data Shows Consumers Go Online: If consumers are unwilling to wait for a puppy from a breeder and cannot obtain the pet they want from licensed and inspected pet shops that are required to give pet purchase protections, they are at significant risk of online scams. Since 2017, the Better Business Bureau (BBB) has been [studying the fraud](#) perpetrated on an unsuspecting pet-buying public, and has warned consumers to exercise caution when purchasing pets without seeing them in person. According to the BBB, pet scams accounted for an estimated 25% of all online scams in 2021.
- IV. A Shelter or Rescue Pet is Not the Right Fit for Everyone: Many shelters and rescues have great dogs in need of a home, but they do not provide pets of the same characteristics that suppliers of purpose-bred dogs do. In addition, shelter and rescue animals can present behavioral challenges or costly medical issues that might not be a good option for every family that wants a pet.
- V. Banning a Regulated Source of Pets is Premature: Currently, Vermont has no registration or licensure requirement to oversee animal import organizations and certify the health of animals being brought into the state.

People deserve the freedom to decide for themselves whether to acquire a pet from a regulated source, like pet shops, which are subject to healthy sourcing requirements, care and conditions standards, and provide consumer protections; or not.

Respectfully, AKC requests that the committee reject the April 25 amendment to S. 301 for these above reasons. 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,



Government Relations Regional Manager, New England

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