



AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB®

October 13, 2020

**RE: American Kennel Club Supports Consumer Protection, Further Discussion of PA Animal Welfare Issues**

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

The American Kennel Club (AKC) writes today on behalf of our Pennsylvania dog clubs and thousands of constituent dog owners in the Commonwealth to respectfully provide feedback and insight on animal welfare issues in Pennsylvania, in anticipation of your hearing on October 20. We share your concerns and interest in the health and welfare of animals and welcome the opportunity to work with you to develop effective solutions that protect animals in the Commonwealth.

By way of introduction, the AKC is the world's largest purebred dog registry. We are a club of more than 5,000 local and breed dog clubs around the country, including 246 clubs in Pennsylvania. Our affiliated clubs maintain America's largest purebred rescue network, and for over 135 years AKC has been proud to be the only non-profit purebred registry devoted to the health and well-being and of all dogs. We advocate for responsible dog ownership and support strong enforcement of federal, state, and local laws that protects the health and welfare of all dogs and the rights of responsible dog owners. When people register their dogs with the American Kennel Club, their registration fee funds and supports a broad range of programs and initiatives that improve the lives of dogs, including:

- AKC's kennel inspection program – We inspect breeding kennels across Pennsylvania every year to ensure the safety and welfare of dogs.
- AKC Canine Health Foundation – AKC CHF is the world's largest funder of peer-review scientific canine health research. AKC CHF has funded more than \$50 million for canine health research projects and education that benefit all dogs and their owners. AKC CHF has donated approximately \$1 million to Pennsylvania universities and researchers in 2020 to fund a variety of canine health research and studies.
- AKC Humane Fund – Among other charitable activities, this fund provides grants to assist local rescues and domestic violence shelters to allow victims to have a safe haven with their pet.
- AKC Reunite – This charitable affiliate offers around-the-clock recovery services and has reunited over 500,000 dogs with their families. Together with local clubs, AKC Reunite donates emergency disaster relief trailers/ temporary pet shelters, worth millions of dollars, to communities around the country to help local emergency management prepare for and provide relief for people and their pets during natural disasters. Four trailers have already been placed in Pennsylvania, and two – for Philadelphia and Pike Counties – are in process.

The AKC is committed to the health and welfare of all dogs in Pennsylvania. As such, we wish to offer the following comments and feedback on current legislation and general animal welfare policy issues in the Commonwealth:

**Comments on Senate Bill 44 – Pet Retail Sourcing Ban:**

***Our commitment to the well-being of all dogs is the reason we oppose Senate Bill 44.***

As introduced, this bill will limit consumers' freedom of choice; limit the ability of families to select pets based on the breed, health and temperament traits they seek; and it will take away existing consumer protections offered by pet stores. When people cannot obtain a pet that is the right fit for their lifestyle, that pet is more likely to end up in a shelter. ***In addition, we urge you to consider that while this bill is being touted as a way to put an end to***

*“puppy mills”, fewer than 4 percent of pets purchased in the U.S. come from pet shops. SB 44 will not effectively address the issue of substandard breeders or irresponsible pet sellers – regardless of type. Also, it may further exacerbate animal welfare issues by limiting individuals’ ability to choose an appropriate pet for their lifestyle from a reputable, regulated source.*

#### **SB 302- Pet Consumer Protection – A better solution**

One of the best ways we can keep dogs out of shelters is by educating prospective dog owners and enabling them to obtain a pet that is the right fit for their lifestyle. Great pets come from a variety of sources, including breeders, responsible rescues, and regulated pet shops and shelters. But in every case, freedom of choice to select the right pet is the crucial first step to success. **Instead of limiting consumer choice and consumer protections, the American Kennel Club recommends expanding the state’s consumer protection laws. In particular, we ask you to support the passage of SB 302—a comprehensive consumer protection law for all sources of pets sold in the Commonwealth.**

The most effective way to shut down irresponsible breeders, rescues or pet sellers is to stop them from making money from the sale or transfer of unhealthy pets. Senate Bill 302 holds all pet sellers accountable for the pets they sell and mandates reimbursement for the purchase/ fees or veterinary care for an unhealthy pet in cases where illnesses at the time of transfer were not disclosed to the new owner.

#### **AKC Supports Concept of SB 1267 – Task Force to Conduct Comprehensive Study of PA Animal Welfare**

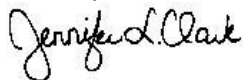
In principle, the AKC supports the concept of Senate Bill 1267, which develops a task force to conduct a comprehensive study of animal welfare laws and issues in Pennsylvania. Before arbitrarily introducing more legislation, it is essential that the Commonwealth bring stakeholders, experts, and enforcement officers together to examine what is working, what may need to be changed, and how to ensure the most effective laws to truly protect animals in Pennsylvania. This includes a discussion on appropriate and proper funding for enforcement of current animal laws.

We respectfully ask that when developing this task force, it be truly comprehensive and include commercial breeders, hobby breeders and exhibitors, sportsmen, veterinarians, breed rescues, and all who are impacted or could be impacted by Pennsylvania dog laws. In addition, we ask that this task force include representatives of the American Kennel Club and the Pennsylvania Federation of Dog Clubs to provide our vast expertise and experience both in Pennsylvania and throughout the United States.

The AKC and the Pennsylvania Federation of Dog Clubs would welcome the opportunity to work with you and local communities to address concerns with current laws and develop effective, comprehensive solutions that benefit dogs and dog owners in the Commonwealth. Please do not hesitate to contact us directly at 919-816-3720 or [doglaw@akc.org](mailto:doglaw@akc.org) if we may be of assistance in any way.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Clark  
Director, Legislative Outreach