

# Environment Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** HB-6240

AN ACT CONCERNING THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF ANIMALS SOLD AT

**Title:** PET STORES.

**Vote Date:** 3/28/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/24/2025

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

### CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Jason Doucette, 13th Dist.  
Rep. Kerry S. Wood, 29th Dist.  
Rep. Amy Morrin Bello, 28th Dist.

Rep. Sarah Keitt, 134th Dist.  
Rep. Anne M. Hughes, 135th Dist.

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill aims to protect animals and pet owners in the state by increasing transparency with pet store owners and implementing stricter regulations for breeders and pet store sourcing. Currently, pet stores in Connecticut are prohibited from sourcing animals from a breeder/entity if such entity does not possess a current USDA license, and/or if they have committed a direct violation of USDA pet dealer regulations or three or more USDA indirect violations related to the health and welfare of animal within the prior two-year period. This bill would strengthen these regulations from two to seven years and would also prohibit any breeder with an indirect violation from selling to Connecticut pet stores.

### Substitute Language LCO 6920:

The substitute language removed the underlying bill's requirement that a pet shop only source dogs and cats from a licensed breeder with no more than one violation, either direct or indirect, of USDA pet dealer-related regulations in the last seven years. Instead, it retains the current one direct or three indirect violation maximum prohibition but extends the current look-back period from two to three years.

## RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

### Bryan Hurlburt, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Agriculture (CT DoAg):

DoAg appreciates the intent of this bill but has concerns regarding the language as drafted. Extending the violation period from two to seven years could create compliance challenges, given that the USDA APHIS regulations currently require facilities to retain records for a period of three years. DoAg recommends that their timeline should be aligned with the USDA APHIS deadline at a standard of three years. While DoAg would be able to report on the number of violations if the period were extended to seven years as proposed, additional resources that are not accounted for in the budget would be needed.

## NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

### The Animal Caucus, Connecticut General Assembly:

The Animal Caucus of the Connecticut General Assembly **supports** this bill, as strengthening regulations ensures that only responsible breeders supply Connecticut pet stores. This will then reduce the demand to purchase animals from unethical sources. Providing detailed breeder information to customers promotes accountability and consumer awareness.

### Kristen Roeckle:

While she is in strong opposition to the sale of live animals in pet stores, Kristen **supports** this bill, as she views it is a step toward banning the practice all together. The current system of pet stores allows the continued operation of the puppy mill to pet store pipeline. This bill offers oversight, but it is a bandaid, and more should be done in the future to continue to ban the sale of live animals in pet stores.

### The following individuals also submitted testimony supporting the bill:

Linda Dalessio, Nancy Decrisantis, Elizabeth Lagocki, Laura Lynch, Anne Mazzone, Jacqueline McGrath Curtis, Sheryl Pierson, Lorealea Rivera, Cindy Vaporis, Jamila Viandier, Anonymous, Anonymous.

## NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

### Alyssa Hurley, Vice President of Government Affairs, the Pet Advocacy Network:

The Pet Advocacy Network **opposes** this bill as an advocacy voice of the responsible pet care community. This bill is redundant, as Public Act 14-77 already ensures that only responsible breeders are supplying Connecticut pet stores. PA 14-77 prohibits pet stores in Connecticut from sourcing animals from any breeder or entity if they do not have a current USDA and state license and/or have committed a direct violation of USDA pet dealer regulators or three or more USDA indirect violations that are related to the health and welfare of an animal within the two-year period. It is important to distinguish between direct and indirect violations with this bill. Direct violations involve conditions that pose an immediate risk to animal health or safety, but indirect violations include clerical errors, recordkeeping mistakes, or minor facility maintenance issues that do not impact animal welfare. Indirect violations are very broad, and expanding the prohibition to encompass indirect violations and

extends the review period to seven years creates too broad of a regulation for pet store owners.

**Stacey Ober, Manager of Government Relations, Animal Kennel Club (AKC):**

The AKC, with 57 clubs across Connecticut, **opposes** this bill as written. Dogs deserve proper care, and they should not be kept in circumstances where proper care cannot be ensured. Indirect AWA violations reflect administrative or recordkeeping lapses, but not animal conditions. This bill proposes requirements that are impractical, and may be burdensome due to current federal agency staffing level uncertainty.

**Susan Linker, President, Connecticut Votes for Animals:**

**Opposes** this bill because dogs should not be sold in pet stores. Many pet stores have unethical breeding practices which leads to health, behavioral, and genetic health issues for dogs. Pet stores also encourage impulsive purchases by not educating customers before they buy. CT Votes for Animals encourages a shifted focus to promoting adoption from shelters and rescues. Additionally, there are many ethical considerations when it comes to pet stores, where living beings are being sold the same way that products are.

**Nicole Bruck, Founder and Director, Animals-R-Family:**

**Opposes** this bill, as pet stores source their animals from puppy mills, that are raised in an environment that is more likely to suffer from both physical and behavioral issues. Pet stores encourage impulsive purchases, which harms both the animal and the buyer, and the bill should be eliminating the sale of animals in pet stores.

**Tara Fleming, Owner, A to Z Pets LLC:**

As a Connecticut pet store owner since 2012, Ms. Fleming **opposes** this bill, as the bill, as written, would have severe unintended consequences that will affect animals and families. Breeders follow strict regulations, but indirect violations that are minor can affect operations. This bill could result in job losses and store closures, which affects not only the business, but also lowers the number of educational resources and supplies that families depend on.

**Edmond Foucault, Co-Owner, and Jerry Pleban, President, All Pets Club:**

**Opposes** this bill as pet store owners, as it would drastically impact his business and its customers. Indirect Violations do not harm an animal's health or well-being, but they can still hurt a pet store owner. The relationships that All Pets Club has with its current USDA puppy breeders would have to be severed under this bill, forcing the business to find new breeders that could potentially compromise its quality of care. The current law that was implemented by the recommendations of the Puppy Task Force in 2013 has been effective and should not change.

**Victoria Hamilton, Manager, Safari Stan's Pet Center:**

**Opposes** this bill as a pet store manager. This bill will penalize good breeders for minor and indirect violations if it extends the review period back seven years. This bill does not stop breeders from committing violations, and instead it makes it more difficult for pet stores to work with ethical breeders.

**Gary Nudelman, President, CT Breeder:**

As an experienced pet breeder and trainer with over 41 years in the pet industry, Gary Nudelman **opposes** this bill, as he believes it is in the best interest of the public that he retains the ability to select puppy sources given his experience. Additionally, indirect violations often stem from situations unrelated to animal welfare, and to exclude breeders with only indirect violations is detrimental to breeders, business, and prospective pet owners.

**Virginia Van Norden, Director, Forgotten Felines:**

**Opposes** this bill as a director of a no-kill cat shelter for twenty-five years. The state should ban pet stores altogether, and instead should encourage the use of animal shelters.

**Margaret Boisture:**

**Opposes** this bill. Indirect violations reflect administrative lapses, and not animal care conditions, leaving the seven-year period of review to be unreasonable or impractical.

**Griffin Colopy:**

**Opposes** this bill, as it does not do enough to protect pets. Transparency should be the bare minimum, and this bill should advocate for stronger protections that prioritize the well-being of animals over the financial interests of pet stores.

**Nan Zyla-Wisendale, Dr. P.H.:**

**Opposes** this bill as written. The ASPCA estimates that ninety-nine percent of the dogs sold in pet stores are products of profit-seeking puppy mills. Under the Animal Welfare Act, the USDA is required to monitor and enforce conditions in commercial dog breeding facilities, but enforcement of the law and actions taken against dealers rarely occurs. New York State recently passed a law to ban puppy mills, but the result has been an influx into Connecticut of dogs produced in puppy mills for sale in pet shops. Maryland, Maine, and other nearby states have enacted such laws, making Connecticut a regional outlier.

**The following individuals also submitted testimony in opposition to the bill:**

Cecily Baran, Darcie Cello, Sheryl Esposito, Brandie Fiore, Faith Fleming, Gerald Fleming, Jill Fleming, Beatriz Gallegos, Deborah Givano, David Gorman, Sai Prakash Govada, Nancylee Griffin, Bridget Guzzardi, Joanne Huber, Sue Kautz, Rachel King, Irene Klemonski, Joseph Kocet, Eileen Kopec, Judy Maassen, Valerie Maloney, Keeley Mangeno, Kate Marchwinski, Susan Marucci, Francis Mastri, Lisa Menko, Anupama Mohan, Cathy Popp, Kristen Rzasa, Tina Sarno, Asela Shabazz, G. Simmons, Nicole Smith, Suzanne Urban, Joel Valentine, Bonnie West, Anne Westbrook, Karen Williams, Michael Williston, Alison Zyla, Beatriz Gallegos, Anonymous, Anonymous, Anonymous.

**Reported by: Abigail Lockwood**

**Date: 04/07/2025**