

House Committee Agriculture and Natural Resources
Testimony in support of HB 2437

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

Chair Rahjes and members of the House Agriculture Committee:

My name is Ellen Querner. I have been in Animal Welfare for over 50 years. I was one of the many people who helped pass the original Pet Animal Act. I was appointed to serve on the states original Advisory Board representing Animal Shelters, as I was then, the President of the Board of Directors of the Kansas Humane Society.

While I was with the Kansas Humane Society, I was in charge of their animal cruelty and neglect investigations. At that time there were no State Regulations for Commercial Kennels. While with the Kansas Humane Society I investigated many kennels, then known as "Puppy Mills" I had to charge one kennel in Sedgwick County with cruelty and neglect, get a search warrant to confiscate all the dogs (approx 50) housed in deplorable conditions. It was at great cost to the Kansas Humane Society to do so. At that time, due to complaints and conditions in these kennels, I and others across the state realized that the USDA license and inspections were far from adequate in their regulations and enforcement. It was obvious that the State of Kansas needed to step in and start licensing and inspecting Commercial Kennels. Thus the Kansas Pet Animal Act, then called the Animal Facilities Inspection Program came about.

Getting the original Pet Animal Act passed was a long and hard fought battle as we were up against an industry that did not want to be regulated. Every year the industry fights to weaken the regulations to where it now stands with many of the minimal USDA regulations that were and still are not adequate.

I was on line and listened to the past two Pet Animal Act Advisory Board meetings. At the meeting held last Monday they voted 4 to 3 to oppose HB 2437. At no time did they actually go through the bill and talk about the changes. One member said she contacted people within the industry and all were adamantly against all of the changes. Others indicated they did not have time to review the changes and react to them. They have had this information for at least two months. I was unable to speak and it was difficult for me to listen to the inadequate way they approached their decision to oppose HB 2437.

We need to, again, be a state that shines above others in how we stand up to insure that Commercial Kennels are held to a high standard. Those in the industry should be applauding and approving the upgrade in the regulations. Instead they are again fighting to keep the minimum standards and enforcement that proves that they are indeed "Puppy Mills".

I have read the proposed changes and support all of them, line by line. They improve on the management and oversight. They close loopholes that have long needed to be closed. They set very reasonable standards for facility inspections, regulations and training. They reset the standards of how animal shelters are reimbursed when they step in to care for animals confiscated by the state. They make it easier to update licensees when needed, and they set steps to be done when a license has been pulled.

So, here I am again, faced with testifying not just for the companion animals that have to live their lives in commercial kennels, but also for the puppies that are produced in such conditions. Most of these puppies are sourced through pet shops throughout the United States and sold to the unsuspecting public. Many puppies purchased from commercial kennels have health and behavioral issues.

Pass HB 2437, and keep the State of Kansas a leader in how we license and care about this industry.

Respectfully,

Ellen Querner, President
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