

March 22, 2023

Rep. Rahjes and Members of the Committee:

My name is Midge Grinstead. I'm the state director of the Humane Society of the United States, the past director of the Lawrence Humane Society, and a former shelter representative on the Governor's Pet Animal Advisory Board. I am writing today in support of HB 2437.

Over the past 32 years, there have been minimal changes to the Kansas Pet Animal Act, while pet animal welfare standards have changed in the Animal Welfare Act, American Veterinary Medical Association Standards, and Shelter Veterinary Standards. The new "adequate watering" definition in this bill follows the recommendations of all three of the groups listed above.

Over the past 30 years, the culture around pet animals has changed. Kansans are acquiring pet animals in record numbers and they treat their pets as members of the family. The increase in pet ownership has required shelters and rescues to expand their services from taking in strays and running lost and found services. Now shelters assist communities with pet overpopulation and the high cost of pet ownership. Many shelters provide low-cost spay and neuter clinics, food banks, microchipping, and pet care and safety classes. These programs help pet owners keep their pets in their homes, rather than surrendering them to overcrowded shelters.

Shelters and rescues have also been called upon to help with state-ordered seizures, providing staff, equipment, transportation, medical care, housing, and food. Shelters have been asked to bear this burden without knowing the costs and duration of an animal's stay. For these reasons, the legislature needs to pass HB 2437, which provides shelters with a direct right of recovery from the owner.

Without the right of recovery, many shelters cannot take on the financial and staffing burden. Therefore, the cost of housing and caring for these animals will fall to the state.

HB 2437 also closes a loophole for out-of-state distributors that sell in-state, requiring them to be licensed and would ensure disease traceability. Additionally, this bill would require that all licensees follow our state Pet Animal Act requirements whether selling in-state or out-of-state.

Overall, HB 2437 will help the AFI program be more efficient and effective and elevate Kansas pet animals and the businesses and organizations surrounding them.

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