

February 8, 2026

Representative Joseph J. Solomon, Jr., Chair
House Committee on Corporations
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.7334, An Act Relating to Animals and Animal Husbandry—
Psittacine Birds**

Dear Representative Solomon and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of H.7334, a bill that would drastically improve the lives of captive birds. Introduced by Representatives Cotter, Potter, Serpa, Fellela, Cruz, Casimiro, Kazarian, Alzate, Stewart, and Tanzi, H.7334 bans sales of breeder and broker-sourced psittacine birds (parrots and parakeets) at pet stores, outdoor markets and retail parking lots. This bill is essentially the avian counterpart to legislation targeting pet store sales of dogs sourced from puppy mills.

Stores like PetSmart, PetCo and a handful of private pet shops statewide source their birds from bird mills, most of which exhibit the same disregard for animal welfare that puppy mills do, as evidenced in a recent undercover investigation by World Animal Protection of four U.S. Department of Agriculture-licensed bird mills. See: <https://www.worldanimalprotection.us/research/bird-mill-investigation/> for more information.

Stores profiting from the sales of birds claim that keeping the birds in visible storefronts and markets ensures transparency in the welfare of the birds and the opportunity to educate consumers, but transparency is irrelevant when there are no codified standards of care that apply to birds in pet stores. Animal control officers and humane societies receive numerous complaints about dismal conditions in pet stores that they can do nothing about because there are no minimum standards under the law to enforce. Pet store licensing is an administrative process serving zoning and public health interests. It offers no assurance of humane animal care.

Many bird owners eagerly anthropomorphize in attesting to their birds' happiness, but fail to attribute the level of sentience that merits the investment of time and effort required to truly fulfill its species-specific needs and desires. They disregard what they can't see—an unbalanced level of emotional need and dependency. The Rhode Island Rules and Regulations Governing Animal Care Facilities (250-RICR-40-05-4) defines "enclosure" as "...the most proximal barrier to an animal that will have the intended purpose or effect of containment of that animal or that will effectively restrict the liberty of the animal." (<https://rules.sos.ri.gov/Regulations/part/250-40-05-4.>) The concept of liberty does not arise in many discussions of pet ownership, yet most pet birds spend their entire lives in cages.

The fact that a person can walk into most pet stores and walk out with a bird minutes later implies that purchasing a bird is a trivial decision, but by the time the average parrot is surrendered to a shelter, it has already passed through four or five homes. Birds require a level of companionship, enrichment, and commitment that most people are not able to provide. Impulse purchases lead to birds with stereotypic and self-destructive behaviors, aggression, and an unforeseen level of dietary and veterinary care. Everyone I have ever known to procure

a bird—whether cockatoo or parakeet—ultimately sought to re-home their bird with someone who could provide the life it deserved. Those lives cannot be provided by people. They can only be provided by other wild birds with the ability to fly and exercise their natural instincts. Fortunately, organizations like Rhode Island Foster Parrots and Rhode Island Parrot Rescue have stepped up to provide for hundreds of surrendered birds at any given time, but they are not able to staunch the flow created by the pet industry.

Few cities and towns have included birds in their efforts to ban pet store sales of animals, but Cambridge, Massachusetts passed a law similar to H.7334 in 2017. See: https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodemd=TIT6AN_CH6.20RESAANPESH. I am hoping that Rhode Island can build on this momentum to become the first state to grant birds the same consideration we grant dogs, cats, and increasingly rabbits and other animals trapped in the pet trade.

Sincerely,

Christa Albrecht-Vegas
Portsmouth, RI 02871