



DATE: Tuesday, February 9, 2021

TIME: Rise of the House

PLACE: Room 35 - State House

House Committee on Judiciary,

We submit the following comments on H5040, creating an animal abuse registry, in conjunction with PetSmart. We support the intent of H5040 and the provisions establishing an animal abuse registry and prohibiting animal abusers from owning animals. Our only opposition is on the point-of-sale verification.

COVID has taught us a lot of lessons, one of which is that asking our retail employees to enforce the law can have dire ramifications. According to a 2020 SEIU survey, 44% of employees were assaulted due to the face mask mandates. Sadly, retail employees in Colorado, Michigan, and Pennsylvania have died trying to enforce mask mandates, and employees in other states have been shot at and attacked with knives. These are often younger individuals working part-time while attending school. They are not trained to deal with confrontations of this nature, nor should they be expected to.

The point-of-sale verification included in H5040 would require pet store to check if customers are listed as animal abusers before selling an animal. Store, shelter, and rescue employees would be responsible for turning away individuals on the registry, putting the personal safety of these employees or volunteers at risk, especially since those on the registry will have already been found guilty of a violent crime.

We have a few suggestions to help the legislature meet the goals of H5040. The enforcement of animal abuser registries should be left to law enforcement professionals who are trained to successfully handle conflicts and situations that could turn violent. We would recommend keeping retail out of this process and ensuring it remains with law enforcement. We believe the legislature can still meet the goals of H5040 simply with the creation of the registry and prohibition on animal abusers obtaining animals. H5040 will create a significant burden on pet stores for a few rare situations when an animal abuser tries to obtain an animal, knowing they would be committing another crime.

If the legislature is adamant about including pet stores, we would recommend allowing them to notify law enforcement after the sale/adoption of an animal to a person on the registry. Law enforcement can then follow up with the individual, avoiding a conflict at the pet store and the endangering of employees.

Lastly, we recommend limiting the definition and requirements to the sale/adoption of dogs and cats only. The current language would include the sale of "any living mammal (except a human being), bird, reptile, amphibian, or fish." This would mean checking a registry any time someone buys feeder fish, as an example. We feel this is overly burdensome considering animal abuse is not often directed at such animals. Most of states considering animal abuse registries are limiting it to dogs and cats.

We sincerely support the intent of H5040 and are remorseful to have to submit comments in opposition. But we strongly recommend that the language be amended to help protect retail, rescue, and shelter employees. Thank you for your time and please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Respectfully,

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