

**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:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony. I am Ashley Beason, representing the Kansas Pet Protection Coalition and our coalition partners listed at the end of my testimony. These include animal shelters and rescues, animal control departments, and commercial pet entities working to advance the health and wellness of pet animals in Kansas.

Kansas consistently ranks as a top puppy mill state, diminishing our state's reputation as a leader in pet animal health. Advancing this bill is necessary to credibly position Kansas as a leader in pet animal health.

In 2018, the Legislative Post Audit revealed a variety of deficiencies in the Animal Facilities Inspection program, and this bill responds to that audit. Today, the Animal Facilities Inspection program has asked for your support as they address many of those deficiencies in the updated statute and work to improve their program. We hope you will stand behind that request.

Kansas Pet Protection Coalition strongly supports HB 2437. If you have read it, you understand the changes are common sense updates to an act that has not been materially updated in decades. For that reason, I would like to dispel some misinformation we believe you will hear from HB 2437 opponents.

Some of the opposition to this bill will come from specific members of the Kansas Pet Animal Advisory Board, especially the breeders. Notably, the shelter, veterinarian, and public representative members support the bill. To understand why these dynamics, it is important to look at the gross imbalance in board representation and how that imbalance has driven inertia. We have been following this Board for more than a decade and for all of those years, it has been constituted largely of seats designated for breeders, even though the largest number of licensees in Kansas are animal shelters and rescues. Breeders have four seats, and animal shelters have one. It is not a representative Board of licensees in this state, and the breeders on this Board benefit from lower animal care standards and a historical lack of enforcement. They have consistently argued against improvements to the Kansas Pet Animal Act.

We were there in December when the Pet Animal Advisory Board met, and members had opportunities to contribute to the provisions of this bill. We were there when they pushed back against the AFI director's recommendation that pet animals in licensed facilities be fed twice a day, even though doing so is recommended by the American Veterinary Medical Association. We were there when they offered no substantive feedback on the bill at three subsequent meetings but declared they did not want the Act opened. Please consider their conflict of interest as they work against reasonable, common-sense updates to the Kansas Pet Animal Act.

We anticipate this same group, joined by others motivated by self-interest, will complain about the no-contact fee adopted by the legislature more than five years ago to solve a significant problem related to licensees being unavailable for inspection. The legislature crafted a solution that has been enormously successful, reducing no contacts by more than 50% and saving the state close to \$50,000 annually in staff and travel costs. Blanket criticism of a demonstrably successful solution speaks volumes regarding their motivations.

If animal shelters operating largely on the donations of their communities and volunteer hours can meet these standards and support them, surely for-profit breeders can do the same. Unlike shelters, breeders can pass any increased costs on to the consumer, who today willingly shell out thousands of dollars for a purebred or designer puppy.

We ask you to consider why certain groups may oppose a common sense bill designed to correct deficiencies in a program whose purpose is to protect the health and safety of pet animals. Consider why large-scale breeders would oppose enhancements to the Kansas Pet Animal Act and enforcement standards that protect dogs and cats. Is it because they are not already properly caring for the pet animals they breed? Is it because they do not want to be held to reasonable standards? Do they have something to hide?

We support HB 2437 and the reasonable updates it makes to the Kansas Pet Animal Act. We ask you to do the same.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ashley Beason  
Lobbyist

Prairie Paws Animal Shelter – Ottawa  
Pawnee County Humane Society – Larned  
Kansas Animal Control Association  
Humane Society of the United States  
Double 25 Animal Sanctuary – Derby  
Shanti Mikolajczyk  
Southeast Kansas Humane Society – Pittsburg  
Northeast Kansas Animal Welfare Foundation – Topeka  
Wichita Animal Action League  
Animal Control – Bonner Springs Police Department  
Fort Scott Paws and Claws  
Spay Neuter Kansas – Wichita  
Brown County Humane Society – Hiawatha  
Pals Animal Rescue, Inc. – Wichita  
Great Plains SPCA – Merriam  
Dr. Kathy Engler  
Animals With Our Love (AWOL) – Independence  
Leavenworth County Humane Society – Lansing  
Humane Society of Greater Kansas City  
Atchison Humane Society  
Crystal Swann-Blackdeer  
Nika Orebaugh – Sedgwick County  
Chandler Jacobson – Galena  
Allen County Animal Rescue Facility (ACARF) – La Harpe  
Wellington Humane Society