

Chairman Kerschen and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding House Bill 2477. My name is Susan Hakes Kaufmann, and I am here today as a strong proponent of HB 2477 as amended by the full House. I am a community animal advocate from Fairway, KS. I serve as a board member for an animal shelter that saves approximately 6,000 pets a year in Mission, Kansas. The majority of these 6,000 pets come from Kansas City, Kansas, and rural outstate areas in Kansas such as Chanute, Columbus and more. My husband and I also volunteer and serve as a foster home for this shelter. In addition, I lead a coalition of animal shelters and rescues, spay and neuter services, and concerned citizens who are working with the Unified Government of Wyandotte County to make KCK a better place for people and pets.

Last year, testimonies before this very Committee highlighted issues regarding several inefficiencies in the Animal Facility Inspection Program, including the amount of money expended for no-contact inspections, failed inspections, focused inspections, and re-inspections. Subsequent debate within the legislature overwhelmingly supported inspections and re-inspections without raising fees on shelters and rescues.

The Kansas Pet Animal Act was created to govern the health, safety, and welfare of Kansas companion animals. However currently this Act is not being enforced effectively, primarily due to the prior notification breeders receive of an upcoming inspection. Instead the state of Kansas should follow the same standard as our state hospitals, nursing care facilities, child care facilities, restaurants, and even liquor stores are required to follow – inspections without prior notification. In addition to my volunteer work, I am blessed to work for The University of Kansas Health System. We are never notified when we are being visited by state or joint commission inspectors, which ensures we constantly maintain a state of readiness in terms of compliance with standards that are vital to the health and safety of our patients, employees and the general public. It is common sense that any licensed facility charged with maintaining certain standards be subject to unannounced inspections.

Kansans value the integrity of the Kansas Pet Animal Act. Companion animals live in our homes and sleep in our beds: Their health and welfare affect all of us. Let's improve the integrity of the Animal Facility Inspection Program by conducting inspections without prior notification.

I ask the Committee to support HB 2477 as amended by the House.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have to the best of my abilities.