

March 12, 2022

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the committee

Oppose: SB551

Please let me first introduce myself as the appointed member of the Kansas Pet Animal Advisory Board representing pet stores across the state. I have consulted on the board since its inception in 1989 and was elected as the chair in 2021.

The Animal Facility Inspection program (AFI) has had a record of being under-funded and we are very appreciative of the budget enhancement we anticipate receiving this year. This necessary program has historically struggled financially to meet the needs of animals across Kansas. Now, with proper funding, this program can meet the needs of unforeseen events and still carry out its duties as stated in the Kansas Pet Animal Act.

The Kansas Pet Animal Advisory Board is statutorily delegated to advise the Animal Health Commissioner on the implementation of the Kansas Pet Animal Act. Senate Bill 551 was introduced without any consultation of the Kansas Pet Animal Advisory Board. As the chair of the KPAAB, I am puzzled and concerned as to why we were not included in crafting this legislation that changes the structure of the successful AFI program.

The Kansas Pet Animal Advisory Board passed a resolution last week stating that the Animal Facility Inspection program remains within the Division of Animal Health in the Kansas Department of Agriculture. SB 551 seeks to remove the AFI program from under the umbrella of the Division of Animal Health in the Kansas Department of Agriculture. If that happens, there will no longer be direct oversight by the Animal Health Commissioner, who is a licensed veterinarian. The new director position recently created by Governor Kelly does not require a veterinarian license and neither do the inspectors. I do not see how removing direct veterinarian oversight from the AFI program improves its functioning nor benefits the animals it oversees.

My recommendation is to follow the wishes of the Kansas Pet Animal Advisory Board and keep the AFI program under the Division of Animal Health in the Kansas Department of Agriculture, so that veterinary oversight of the program is maintained for optimal functioning. To remove it would diminish its integrity and could do great harm to the AFI program, as well as the animals it protects.

Respectfully

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