

A Joint Letter In Support of Senate Bill 551

AN ACT concerning the department of agriculture; relating to animal health; establishing the pet animal facilities inspection division to be administered by a director under the supervision of the secretary; amending K.S.A. 47-1701, 47-1702, 47-1703, 47-1704, 47-1706, 47-1706a, 47-1707, 47-1708, 47-1709, 47-1710, 47-1711, 47-1712, 47-1715, 47-1718, 47-1719, 47-1720, 47-1721, 47-1723, 47-1725, 47-1726, 47-1727, 47-1731, 47-1732, 47-1733, 47-1734, 47-1735 and 47-1736 and repealing the existing sections.

March 14, 2022

Senator Kerschen and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding Senate Bill 551.

I am Crystal Swann Blackdeer. I serve as the Executive Director of Leavenworth County Humane Society in Lansing, KS. We serve the cities of Basehor, Bonner Springs, Lansing, Linwood and Tonganoxie KS, as well as the unincorporated areas of Leavenworth County under contract.

I also serve as the Governor's Appointee to the Pet Animal Advisory Board, representing licensed animal shelters in Kansas. Because there is no provision in the Pet Animal Act for a board representative for Rescues, I also am responsible for representing those licensees.

Shelters and Rescues are the largest group of licensees under the Pet Animal Act (296 licensees as of 3-9-22). We have one voice on the Advisory Board, while there are 3 representatives for breeders and 1 for pet animal distributors (277 licensees as of 3-9-22). Clearly, the Board does not equitably represent the Kansas Pet Animal industry.

As you are aware, a resolution adopted on March 9, 2022 by those appointees present at the PAAB meeting is submitted as testimony. While I respect and understand the vote of the members present (2 were absent), the greatest objection expressed in our discussion of what was then an un-numbered bill (now SB 551) was due to the reluctance of some appointees to open the Pet Animal Act to revision for any reason, not a vote to keep the Program in the Division of Animal Health.

Shelters and Rescues serve our communities by caring for lost and homeless pets. Many shelters offer affordable vaccinations and other veterinary care, pet food pantries, access to spay and neuter services, and help with behavior and training issues, all in an effort to keep pets with their families, and to provide healthy, behaviorally sound pets to those who choose to adopt.

Shelters and rescues also aid in disaster relief and recovery, emergency services for lost animals in urgent need of care, and ongoing care for pet animals seized by law enforcement subsequent to cruelty/neglect investigations. We do this work not for financial gain, but because we are committed to serving our communities, protecting the health and welfare of pet animals who are a part of the fabric of those communities.

The undersigned shelters and rescues support Senate Bill 551, establishing the Pet Animal Facilities Inspection Division in the Department of Agriculture.

Under the Division of Animal Health, the inspection program has been under-resourced, under-manned and chronically unable to fulfill its mission. This endangers the integrity of the pet animal industry in Kansas.

A robust and empowered Pet Animal Facilities Inspection Division will provide for trained inspectors sufficient to inspect, advise and train all licensees on a schedule that makes sense, a qualified cruelty/neglect investigator, legal counsel, and a Director, plus resources to provide care for animals seized when circumstances require. Pet animal health will be improved and suffering will dramatically decrease.

Pet animals share our homes. A majority of people who keep pet animals view them as family members. Separating the oversight of licensees who breed, board, train, and shelter pet animals from those who produce livestock means that both segments of agriculture in Kansas get the unique and focused attention they deserve.

We applaud the initiative by Secretary Beam to establish the Pet Animal Facilities Inspection Division and to ensure the health, welfare and soundness of pet animals bred and kept in licensed facilities, and purchased or adopted from Kansas.

Thank you for your time.

Crystal Swann Blackdeer, Shelter Representative to the Pet Animal Advisory Board

Allen County Animal Rescue Foundation, LaHarpe & Allen County
AWOL, Independence & Montgomery County
Beauties and Beasts, Wichita & Sedgwick County
Brown County Humane Society
Buck Fund, Emporia
Bunny TNT, Wichita
Camp Merry Sunshine, Moline
Caring Hands Humane Society, Newton & Harvey County
CCARE, Clay Center & Clay County
Chanute Animal Control
Chasing Tails Rescue, Great Bend
City of Arma
City of Bonner Springs
City of Cimarron
City of Hutchinson
City of Jamestown

City of Leoti
City of Longton
City of Manhattan
City of McPherson
City of Wellsville
City of Yates Center
City of Weir
Companion Animal Protection Society
Corgi Connection of KS
Cowley County Humane Society, Winfield
Emporia Animal Shelter
Finney County Humane Society
For the Love of Every Animal (FLEA), Derby
Ford County Humane Society, Dodge City
Forever Home Rescue, Americus
Forever ShihTzu & Dog Rescue, Chanute
Fort Scott Animal Shelter, Fort Scott
Friends of Animals in KS, Topeka
Friends of the Emporia Animal Shelter, Emporia & Lyon County
Golden Belt Humane Society
Great Plains SPCA, Merriam & Johnson County
Have A Heart TNR, Clifton
Humane Society of Greater KC, Kansas City KS
Humane Society of the Flint Hills, Emporia & Lyon County
Humane Society of the High Plains
Hutchinson Animal Shelter, Hutchinson & Reno County
Kansas Animal Control Association
Kingman County Humane Society
KS Forever Shih Tzu & Miniature Schnauzer Rescue, Chanute
Leavenworth County Humane Society, Inc.
McPherson Animal Shelter
McPherson Humane Society
Melissa's Menagerie, Shawnee
Pawnee County Humane Society, Larned & Pawnee County
Petsmart, Jessica Taroli
PetWorld, Lawrence
Pittsburg Animal Shelter
Proud Animal Lovers (PALS), Parsons
Regina's Rescues, Parker KS
Reitz Animal Shelter, Manhattan & Reilly County
Riley County Humane Society

Save Rescue Love, Inc., Minneapolis
Saving Death Row Dogs, Tecumseh
Second Chance Animal Rescue Society, Auburn
Sedgwick County Animal Control
Southeast Kansas Humane Society
Wellington Humane Society
Western Plains Animal Rescue
Western Plains Animal Rescue, Hays & Ellis County
Wichita Animal Action League
Wichita Pug Rescue