



Kansas Pet Professionals

*Dedicated to Ensuring the Health of KANSAS Pets
and the Humane Care of ALL Animals.*

March 17, 2022

Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

RE: Senate Bill 551 – Opposition

Chairman Kerschen and Committee:

My Name is Michelle Russell, I have been a Breeder for almost 20 years. I also serve as President of the Kansas Pet Professionals. Today I speak on Behalf of the Licensed Professional breeders of the state.

As a long time, licensee under the KDA's Animal Facilities Inspection (AFI) program, I have seen a number of changes to the Pet Animal Act. Some of these changes I have supported wholeheartedly and some I have seen as being necessary, but not entirely well-crafted. Several proposed changes over the years I have seen as unnecessary and counterproductive, but I was able to understand the reasoning behind them even though I disagreed. SB 551 fits into none of those categories.

In all the discussion about the Kansas Department of Agriculture proposing a reorganization bill creating AFI as a department separate from Animal Health, I have yet to hear the overall, compelling reason why this is necessary. Upending organizational structure within a program that has recently implemented procedural changes in response to 2017 audit and is in line to receive budget enhancements and staffing allocations to further implement suggested improvements seems ill-timed and unwise.

In the New Section 1 of Senate Bill 551, the commissioner of animal health is authorized to "promulgate rules," and "to utilize and direct" employees in the division of AFI under certain circumstances. The director of AFI is to "cooperate" with the commissioner in these situations and act "in consultation with" the commissioner in another segment of the director's duties.

Under current law, all of these things are done because the director of AFI reports to the Commissioner of Animal Health. Why replace a clear-cut chain of command with exceptions, cooperation, and consultation?

A new director implementing a program based on upgrades to funding and staffing of the AFI program would seem to be the proper direction to proceed – not turning everything inside out without a clearly-stated, compelling reason.

Please reject Senate Bill 551.

Thank you

Michelle Russell

