

March 15, 2022

Proponent of Senate Bill 551

Dear Senator Kerschen and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kelly Bogner. I am a public servant and currently serve on the Kansas Pet Animal Advisory Board (KPAAB) as the public member representative. Public service and animal welfare are both strong passions of mine. I urge you to support Senate Bill 551, which reorganizes the Animal Facilities Inspection (AFI) program into a separate Division within the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA).

I have become familiar with animal welfare issues in my volunteer work and efforts to pass an ordinance to promote the adoption of rescue animals in Sandy Springs, GA. There are many good people and organizations that care about the pet animals they work with, but there are also people and organizations that have little concern for the welfare of the pet animals in their care.

People increasingly view their pets as members of the family. Over 50% of Americans have a pet in their home according to several surveys. Millennials are the group with the largest pet ownership rate, and 33% say the desire to have a better space or yard for a dog influenced their decision to purchase their first home, ahead of marriage or a baby.

The pet industry in Kansas and across the country is growing and changing. The American Pet Products Association has seen a growth in the industry from \$17 billion in 1994 to \$70 billion in 2017. This past year, there were numerous stories of an increase in pet ownership due to COVID and more people able to work from home.

Kansas has the opportunity to become a leader in the pet animal industry as it already is in the food animal industry. For Kansas to do so, it must enforce the Kansas Pet Animal Act (KPAA). However, the AFI program, responsible for enforcing the KPAA, has struggled since it was moved to the KDA in 2011 under the Division of Animal Health. A 2018 Legislative Post Audit (LPA) report shows AFI has frequently failed to enforce the law and has allowed pet animals to suffer needlessly. After joining the KDA in 2011, AFI's equipment was sold, preventing AFI from carrying out its statutory obligations to seize animals. AFI needs resources, management, and staffing with the expertise to focus on pet animals and enforce the law, including seizing animals when their health, safety, and welfare are compromised.

Please authorize a separate AFI division within the KDA to prioritize pet animals.

Thank you,

Kelly L. Bogner
Topeka, KS