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Testimony – written proponent SB 551  
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Senator Kerschen and Members of the Committee:

My name is Midge Grinstead, I am the Kansas State Director for the Humane Society of the United States. I've been in that role for eleven years. I am also the former director of the Lawrence Humane Society, spending almost 15 years there. Over that time, I have worked with shelters and rescues on a daily basis.

In communicating with shelters and rescues across our state, they agree that creating a stand-alone division within the KDA, focused solely on pet animals and enforcing the KPAA, is necessary to effectively manage the program and to elevate the work of all licensees under the pet animal act. It will offer a better opportunity for resources and support for shelters and rescues and allow them to focus on the challenges of helping their communities.

Over the past few years, the culture surrounding pet animals has changed. Kansans are acquiring more pets and therefore creating more challenges for the shelter and rescue community. Shelters and rescues care for lost & homeless pets, educate their communities, provide services for underserved people, offer spay/neuter services to help curb the overpopulation of pet animals and help with animal behavior issues, in an effort to keep pets in their homes. Additionally, shelters and rescues offer emergency services during disasters, and care for animals seized by law enforcement for cruelty or neglect reasons.

When enforcement is lacking, and there are no consequences for the bad licensees, then there is no reason to abide by the law. Essentially, that is what we are seeing in Kansas across the state. Additionally, there is no one to stop the bad actors operating without a license because AFI no longer has an investigator position to find them.

Pet animals are important to Kansans. They are part of our families. It is important that they are well cared for including housing, socialization, and veterinary care. Separating the AFI program from the Dept of Agriculture and into a new division, will elevate pet animals and achieve a good balance of care for the health and safety of those animals. Please support SB 551.

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