



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

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February 27, 2020

Finance Committee
Maryland Senate
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for SB 625 - Business Regulation – Retail Pet Stores – Internet Sales of Domestic Animals
(No More Puppy– and Kitten–Mills Act of 2020)

Dear Chairman Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Committee,

The Humane Society of the United States, representing our members and supporters in Maryland, supports SB 625, legislation aimed at expanding on the current prohibition to sell dogs and cats in retail pet stores to include internet transactions.

We all know the internet can be a great place to buy anything from books to DVDs and rare gifts, but it's not where you should go to buy a new pet.

Tens of thousands of dogs are shipped into the U.S. from puppy mills in foreign countries, purchased by people over internet sites. Many people who have purchased puppies and kittens online find that their new pets are sick and often die from their health problems. Some never even knew they were dealing with someone outside of the U.S. or that their puppy was born overseas before being sold to a U.S. broker.

In the real world of online pet sales, families often lose significant money when the pet they ordered falls ill soon after arrival, but the real victims are the breeding animals stuck in factory-style operations, churning out puppies to be sold off for a quick profit. The Humane Society of the United States' Animal Rescue Team has assisted local law enforcement in the removal of thousands of dogs from deplorable conditions in puppy mills, many of which were selling over the internet to hide the conditions in which the animals were living. In a 2008 case in West Virginia, HSUS Emergency Services team assisted in removing more than 900 animals from overcrowded and substandard conditions at Whispering Oaks Kennel, an online puppy retailer. The Environmental Protection Agency had determined that wastes from the facility were polluting local waterways in addition.

In addition to disreputable dealers and puppy mills, internet scammers have crept into the realm of online pet sales, stealing money from unsuspecting people who think their new dog or cat is on the way to his or her new home, when in fact there was never really an animal at all. The only party harmed in these scams is the person who is out hundreds or thousands of dollars. According to the [Better Business Bureau Scam Tracker Risk Report](#), pets were the #1 subject of online purchase scams, making up more than one quarter of all "products" reported. Incredibly, experts believe at least 80% of sponsored advertisements about pets may be fake.

SB 625 is an important animal welfare and consumer protection bill, and for that reason I respectfully urge a favorable committee report.

Sincerely,

Emily Hovermale
Maryland and Delaware State Director