



**PET INDUSTRY JOINT
ADVISORY COUNCIL**
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**TESTIMONY TO THE MARYLAND SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE IN OPPOSITION TO HB581 FROM THE
PET INDUSTRY JOINT ADVISORY COUNCIL (PIJAC)**

ON 5 FEBRUARY 2021

Position: Opposed

As an organization that routinely supports legislative efforts to advance the welfare of animals, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) appreciates the opportunity to share our views and expertise on House Bill 581 regarding the establishment of an animal abuse registry. PIJAC and our members across Maryland respectfully request that the House Economic Matters Committee decline to take action on the bill.

We in the responsible pet industry don't just care about animals, we care for them on a daily basis. For many years PIJAC has provided a highly respected animal care certification program intended to ensure that employees are well trained in the care of the animals they sell; a program that is widely utilized not only by persons in the commercial pet trade but also shelters and humane societies throughout the country and one that has even been adopted as a statutory standard in some states. PIJAC has worked closely with the USDA on effective implementation of the Animal Welfare Act for pets since its inception almost fifty years ago and has joined hands with state agencies to ensure adoption and enforcement of appropriate regulatory standards. Our association has long been recognized as the voice for a responsible and humane pet trade.

As the Covid-19 pandemic spread, Maryland recognized the need for access to food, services, and supplies for companion animals and rightly took action and declared businesses providing pet supplies as essential. These businesses have met a critical need during a time when companion animals have contributed more to the mental and physical wellbeing of their owners than ever before. The costs associated with House Bill 581 would devastate already struggling businesses and would and would result in highly predictable outcomes.

First, many of the costs associated with House Bill 581 would be passed on to consumers. This would mean that Marylanders who are already struggling would see the cost of pet ownership increase dramatically at a time when those companion animals are needed most and their personal finances are the most precarious.

Second, the disparity between small businesses and larger businesses will increase. Those businesses with larger, more flexible workforces will be better suited to adapt to limit the damage of these increased costs while smaller businesses with fewer employees will not.

Finally, businesses will fail. Maryland has already experienced a substantial number of business failures as a result of Covid-19. While most of the failures to this point have been businesses that were forced to close during the pandemic, the costs associated with HB581 will make it impossible for many essential Maryland businesses to continue operating.

Please do what is best for Maryland consumers, companion animal owners, and businesses by declining to take action on House Bill 581.

Thank you for your consideration,

Robert Likins
Vice President of Government Affairs
Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC)