

March 23, 2020

TO: HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTER COMMITTEE

FROM: JUST PUPPIES, INC, MITCHELL THOMSON & JEANEA THOMSON (OWNER)

RE: SB 103 (SENATOR KRAMER)

**POSITION: OPPOSITION**

Just Puppies owns and operates two retail dog stores in Maryland – Towson and Rockville. We are adamantly opposed to SB 103. **SB 103 is elitist legislation that harms middle to lower income Maryland residents that do not have the time and/or financial resources to find a breeder of their choosing and travel to the location of that breeder.** Further, SB 103 encourages Maryland residents to purchase from an unregulated breeder regardless of breeding conditions just because they are located in the state of Maryland. Ironically, SB 103 will actually produce more unhealthy dogs in Maryland and lead to widespread underground fraud. During this pandemic, we have made so many families without the ability to travel delighted to raise a healthy puppy they could source from a local pet store.

**10 Reasons for Choosing a Pet Store Puppy**

**1. Pet stores provide healthy puppies.**

The preeminent study by Cornell University of Veterinary Medicine on the health of puppies from various sources demonstrates, on average, **pet store puppies are as healthy as, or healthier than, those from any other source.** The proponent's rhetoric about selling "puppy mill" dogs is fact-less. Since 2012, there have been less than 10 complaints to the Consumer Protection Division involving puppies that may be considered unhealthy.

**2. Pet stores and their sources for puppies are regulated at the state and federal level.**

**Pet stores and breeders are the most regulated sources of pets.** Pet stores and their puppy suppliers must comply with federal, state or local laws including care standards, veterinary treatment, socialization and exercise requirements, among other things. Shelters, rescues, private breeders and internet sellers have no regulation or oversight at all.

**3. Pet stores provide consumer protection and satisfaction.** Pet stores are an accountable, traceable source for pets. An overwhelming majority of pet stores provide warranties on the dogs they sell, often backed up by specific legal requirements. These laws frequently don't apply to other sources of animals, **so pet store customers enjoy greater protection.**

**4. Pet stores help owners find the best breed for their lifestyle.**

Pet store visits ensure compatibility. Pet store customers have the convenience of easily visiting the store as many times as necessary to physically interact with their prospective pet, and ensure compatibility and a responsible choice. Most puppy shoppers do not know the best questions to ask to find the right dog demeanor for their family. **Puppy stores are experts in placing the right dog in the right home.**

5. **Pet stores provide vet certificates and limited health guarantees.** Maryland pet stores provide a vet certificate no later than 30 days old upon purchase of a puppy. They also provide limited health guarantees. Marylanders do not get these protections when purchasing from a private breeder.
6. **Pet stores are not the source of unwanted pets in shelters.**  
The National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy report found that **96 percent of relinquished pets came from somewhere other than a pet store**, and 70 percent of the time the reasons owners relinquish a dog or cat to a shelter could have been prevented with consumer education. Most pets in shelters were acquired for less than \$300, most free.
7. **Pet stores add to the local economy.**  
**Reputable pet stores are established businesses in the community.** These legitimate businesses bring steady tax revenue and build the local economy with owners purchasing: supplies, veterinary services, grooming day care, etc.
8. **Pet store bans can will create underground markets. Preventing responsible pet stores from selling pets opens the door to an underground, unregulated market.**  
Craigslist is filled with ads from people selling puppies with no required standard of care. Many people send deposits only to realize the puppy never shows up.
9. **Pet store bans do not address animal welfare issues.**  
Those who truly care about the welfare of animals work to raise standards of care and eliminate pet providers who don't maintain acceptable standards. **Blanket pet sale bans is an easy political target for activists and do not advance the standards of care for pets.**
10. **Pet stores rely on customer satisfaction.** Customer satisfaction is paramount in any successful business. Pet stores facilitate the pet ownership experience, relying on repeat customer business and customer satisfaction. **Providing healthy, well socialized pets is not only the right thing to do, it is a good business decision.**

We ask the House Economic Matter Committee to please protect the interests of Maryland pet stores and provide essential consumer protection regulations for healthy dogs rather than a complete ban on this business in Maryland. **Just Puppies asks the committee to give SB 103 an unfavorable vote**