

March 19, 2021

HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE

SB103

NO MORE PUPPY and KITTEN MILLS ACT of 2021

FAVORABLE

KEY POINTS:

**MARYLAND PET STORES ARE NOT IN COMPLIANCE WITH ORIGINAL ACT OF 2018*

**PET STORES SUED THE STATE OF MARYLAND IN FEDERAL COURT AND LOST*

**PET STORES ARE SELLING PUPPIES "BY APPOINTMENT" TO CIRCUMVENT LAW*

**LOOPHOLES NEED TO BE CLOSED TO ENFORCE ORIGINAL ACT PASSED IN 2018*

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Sara Yassin, the Maryland Team Leader of Bailing Out Benji, a national non-profit focusing on puppy mill education. I am in support of SB103 because our Maryland pet stores are not in compliance with the pet store bill that was passed and signed in 2018. They continuously sell puppies to the public on an appointment basis deliberately dismissing our law which bans pet store puppy purchases.

Our law went into effect on January 1, 2020. This legislature graciously gave the pet stores over a year and a half to comply with the new law. In August 2019, the pet stores filed a lawsuit against the State of Maryland declaring the law violated the commerce clause. Last February I witnessed two days of a fair hearing in The United States District Court. Judge Hollander delivered a 79 -page

ruling citing that "Protecting consumers, reducing financial support for mill breeders, and encouraging pet adoption are indisputably legitimate state interests." The pet stores lost their suit against Maryland yet they continued to sell puppies to the public in defiance of our law.

I, along with other animal advocates, exposed their deception with an investigation which was aired on Fox5DC TV this past August which can be found here: <https://www.fox5dc.com/news/maryland-pet-shops-still-selling-puppies-despite-new-ban>. The investigated reporter even witnessed the delivery van delivering puppies in the back alley behind one store. The City of Rockville voided Just Puppies' license in September yet they still continued selling puppies.

We passed this law to stop the influx of puppy mill puppies coming into our state. Our state does not want to support inhumane treatment of companion animals. I might also add that during this pandemic we certainly do not want people coming into our state from less regulated Midwest states to deliver puppies. Puppies are not essential items.

While the Attorney General has ruled that the "open to the public" language is not permission to sell by appointment, to ensure enforcement of this law I urge the Committee to close this loophole so that the pet stores will comply with the law we historically passed and signed making Maryland the second state to ban puppy mill puppy purchases.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sara Yassin