

January 21, 2021
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SB103
NO MORE PUPPY and KITTEN MILLS ACT of 2021

FAVORABLE

Honorable Finance Committee Members,

My name is Mindi Callison and I am the Founder and Executive Director of Bailing Out Benji. I am speaking in favor of SB103 today. Our nonprofit exists to research and investigate the commercial breeding industry of companion animals and trace them as they move across the country from these facilities to pet stores and online customers. To give you an idea of the scope of our work, to date we have connected over 350 pet stores in 32 states to the thousands facilities they buy from. All of our research can be independently verified by the Department of Agriculture.

I want to speak about the dog brokering world and the lack of transparency that exists. Our research has recently connected one Maryland store to a two-time Horrible Hundred puppy mill broker in Ohio. This facility also operates as a sham rescue and nonprofit in order to sell the same commercially bred puppies as 'rescues'- in a clear act of consumer fraud. This puppy-laundering scheme is a nationwide effort started by dog brokers in order to skirt local and state laws. Both California and Iowa have cracked down on these sham businesses, but it is happening here in Maryland as well. Due to our research, we uncovered that the owners of 'Maryland Puppies Online' located in Bel Air operate 'Little Puppies Online' out of Mount Vernon, Ohio and 'Dogs to the Rescue' also out of Ohio. Due to their ongoing Federal violations, this facility has been named one of the worst puppy mills in the country twice but that doesn't stop them from operating brokering websites in at least five different states.

From the business side, stores and brokering websites such as PuppySpot.com use online ordering systems, much like Amazon or Walmart, to add puppies and kittens to their cart and have them shipped to their business or customers for resale. These transactions are all done online with little-to-no verification that the breeding facilities are humane and without violations. Through every step of the puppy ordering, buying and re-selling business there is a concerning lack of transparency. The consumers buying these puppies have no way of knowing for sure where they were born.

Because of this, we strongly believe that SB103 would close the loophole in the previous law and would add much needed consumer protection in the state of Maryland.

Thank you so much for your time and for your attention.

Warmest Regards,

Mindi Callison

Sources:

Iowa Department of Agriculture Dismantles Sham Nonprofit Operated by USDA Dog Broker:

<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/local/columnists/courtney-crowder/2020/03/30/iowa-dog-adoption-puppy-mill-national-puppy-laundering-ring-dismantled/5079937002/>

California Passes Stronger State Law to Stop Sham Rescues:

<https://timesofsandiego.com/politics/2020/09/20/governor-signs-todd-glorias-bill-ending-puppy-mill-sales-in-california/>

Ohio Dog Broker Starts Sham Rescue (video)

<https://www.nbc4i.com/news/local-news/local-dog-broker-cited-in-horrible-hundred-report-starts-rescue-causes-controversy/>

PuppySpot Reviews from the Better Business Bureau:

<https://www.bbb.org/us/fl/hollywood/profile/pet-services/puppyspot-group-llc-0633-22003405/complaints>