



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB®

January 26, 2021

Re: The American Kennel Club Supports Senate Bill 210 - Liability Protection

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The American Kennel Club (AKC) provides this written testimony on behalf of our 77 local constituent dog clubs in Maryland and the Responsible Dog Owners of Maryland (RDO-MD) to express our support and appreciation to Senator Chris West for sponsoring this bill which should protect our local Maryland dog clubs from liability when safely hosting events in the state.

The American Kennel Club (AKC) was established in 1884 to promote the study, breeding, exhibiting, and advancement of purebred dogs. Today, the AKC, along with our Maryland dog clubs, are dedicated to promoting responsible dog ownership and breeding throughout the state, including hosting dog events such as breed conformation shows, field trials, obedience trials, and performance events that focus on a dog's ability to perform jobs for which its breed was originally developed.

AKC licensed and sanctioned 549 events in the state of Maryland, in which more than 65,100 dogs participated. Surveys demonstrate that exhibitors at AKC conformation dog shows spend an average of \$685 per show weekend. This means spending by AKC dog show exhibitors for a show weekend could inject more than \$1.7 million into the local economy. And because AKC dog shows are an educational and family-friendly event, large spectator gates can generate additional revenues for cities and towns statewide.

Obviously COVID-19 impacted the ability to host events throughout much of 2020 and many clubs are uncertain as to when they may restart hosting event. During this time, in an effort to ensure the safety of exhibitors and animals, the AKC has provided our clubs with extensive guidelines to be used in conjunction with CDC and state COVID-19 guidelines to follow when hosting events and shows.

While one can infer that Senate Bill 210 would extend liability protection to include premises owned or managed by a person, and activities managed, organized, or sponsored by a person, it is not clearly mentioned in the bill. Therefore, we support this bill but would like to request that an amendment be added to make it clear that the liability protection includes premises owned or managed by a person, and activities managed, organized, or sponsored by a person when holding events in the state if someone chooses to not comply with reasonable guidelines established to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

We encourage a favorable report on this bill as it would be a great benefit to local dog clubs and the numerous events they host, which in turn have a significant positive impact on Maryland communities.

Thank you for reviewing and considering my testimony.

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