

**Subject:** Opposition to House Bill 1551

Dear Members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

I am writing to express my concern regarding House Bill 1551. While the bill is intended to reduce shelter intake and improve outcomes, it imposes extensive fees and reporting requirements on small, responsible breeders without evidence that they contribute to shelter populations.

**Key Points:**

1. **Excessive Costs:** The bill mandates \$150 annual registration fees and \$50 per puppy birth certificate. These fees could accumulate quickly and threaten the sustainability of small, responsible preservation breeding operations. These breeders are often preserving rare or endangered breeds, helping to protect breeds that might otherwise disappear. Many hobby breeders have only one litter every several years, yet this bill would penalize them the same as high-volume operations.
2. **Privacy and Safety Concerns:** The publicly accessible registry would expose personal addresses and operational details. Breeders have historically been targeted, and in some tragic cases, killed. Making this information public could put breeders and their families in danger. Protecting their privacy is essential for their safety.
3. **Redundant Microchip Requirement and Lifetime Responsibility:** Many responsible breeders already microchip, track, and take full responsibility for every puppy they breed. When a dog ends up in a shelter, breeders are contacted through the microchip and can reclaim their dog. In some cases, however, rescues have refused to return dogs to their breeders, sometimes placing them into unregulated or underground placements. HB 1551's microchip and recordkeeping requirements are therefore duplicative and do not address the reality of responsible breeders' accountability.
4. **Lack of Evidence Showing Responsible Breeders Are a Problem:** There is no factual documentation linking small, responsible breeders to increased shelter intake. Commercial breeding is already regulated, and responsible hobby breeders consistently comply with these standards while taking additional steps to ensure the welfare of every dog they breed.
5. **Shelter Population Drivers:** Maryland shelters show that the majority of dogs in the system are pit bulls or pit bull mixes. These breeds face housing restrictions, insurance limitations, and adoption challenges that contribute to overcrowding. In addition, Maryland rescues are bringing dogs into the state from out-of-state rescues to meet adoption demand. If shelters are already full, this practice raises important questions about its impact on shelter capacity. Small, responsible breeders of preservation or hobby breeds are not contributing to this issue. Examining breed-specific factors, out-of-state intakes, and other drivers of shelter populations would provide a stronger foundation for legislation.
6. **Unintended Consequences:** By imposing additional burdens, HB 1551 risks hobby and preservation breeder programs due to unnecessary expenses, taking resources away from the dogs under their care. This would reduce the availability of healthy, well-bred dogs for the public and could push more dogs into unregulated or backyard breeding operations ultimately increasing the very risks the bill is intended to prevent.

House Bill 1551 creates costly, redundant, and invasive requirements for small, responsible breeders who are already acting responsibly and protecting the welfare of every dog they breed. I respectfully urge the Committee to hold this bill and first examine the real factors affecting shelter populations before imposing additional burdens.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
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