

Why you should oppose the “Petland bill”: An open letter the Ohio House of Representatives

Dear Representatives:

This November you will vote on a bill (SB331/HB573) that was hastily pushed through the Senate without giving it the time needed for proper vetting. During the last week of session in May, hundreds of phone calls and letters from constituents who opposed the bill were ignored and the measure passed the Senate within a couple of weeks. We urge you to listen to the thousands of Ohioans who oppose this harmful legislation, and to vote no on this bill. Here’s why:

If this bill passes, it will make it easier for puppy mills to sell dogs in Ohio. In puppy mills, breeding dogs spend their entire lives in small, wire cages and are denied basic veterinary care, exercise and socialization. Puppy mills depend on pet stores to sell their puppies because pet stores allow the cruelty to remain hidden. This bill secures the puppy mill – pet store supply chain.

If this bill passes, it will waste tax dollars on a weak and unenforceable law that would merely maintain the status quo for the problematic pet store industry. The bill allots \$800,000 per year to the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture to attempt to regulate pet stores. Yet, even if adhered to perfectly, the provisions would fail to protect animals or consumers. Compared to other state pet store laws, Ohio’s would be the weakest. Also, the enforcement mechanisms in the bill make it all but impossible to hold any pet store accountable for violating the provisions.

If this bill passes, it will support the primary backer of this bill, Petland, a corporation routinely accused of treating customers poorly and selling dogs raised in puppy mills. Petland relies on a socially unacceptable and outdated business model that relies on selling puppies from puppy mills, consumer deception, and predatory lending schemes. When heartbroken consumers seek reimbursement from Petland for their sick or dead puppy, the company is known to silence them with gag orders before any reimbursement is given. A long list of litigation, reports, and news coverage—all easily accessible online—show the truth about Petland.

If this bill passes, it will strip citizens of their right to address local issues with local elected officials. Local ordinances protect animals by cutting off the puppy mill-pet store supply chain and protect local consumers from being duped into supporting this cruel industry and ending up with sick and behaviorally challenged pets. This bill would void two such ordinances in Toledo and Grove City and prohibit any Ohio municipality from passing one in the future and prevent future ones removing their right to determine what is best for their communities. The national momentum toward local regulation of the puppy mill industry is clear. In 195 localities across the US and Canada city and county officials have responded to concerned citizens by passing ordinances prohibiting the sale of puppy mill dogs in pet stores.

If this bill passes, it will undermine years of progress against puppy mills in Ohio and contradict the values of the overwhelming majority who want animals to be treated humanely. In 2012, the General Assembly passed a popular puppy mill bill to regulate this problematic industry in Ohio. Earlier this year, the Ohio Senate swiftly passed this “Petland bill” to protect the sales outlets of this inhumane and controversial industry and undermine enforcement of the current law. The Ohio House should not follow suit.

Vote no on the dangerous “Petland bill.” It’s the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

ACT Ohio, All Dogs Come From Heaven, Allen County Humane Society, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Animal Ministry, Airedale Terrier Rescue and Adoption, Best Friends Animal Society, Cleveland Animal Rights Exchange, First UU Church of Columbus, Fayette Humane Society, the Humane Society of the United States, I Have a Dream Rescue Organization, Jefferson County Humane Society, Licking County Humane Society, Medina County Humane Society, Ohio SPCA, Ohio Together Cat Initiative, Peace for Paws, Rascal Animal Hospital, Rascal Charities, Inc, Rascal Unit, Ltd, Rascal Charities, Inc., RESCUEDohio, Scottie Rescue, Star-Mar Rescue, Starting Over Airedale Rescue, Toledo Humane Society, Westerman Family Foundation and Wood County Humane Society