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Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement
ATTN: Ms Mary Bender
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
Harrisburg PA 17110-9408

Dear Ms Bender:

You have probably already received a letter written by me as the president of the Chambersburg Area Kennel Club. This letter is under my other hat as a private citizen interested in dog (and other animals) welfare.

When my wife and I moved to Pennsylvania in 1981, I had just retired from the US Army. I had two pre-teens still living at home, and we felt it would be good for the children to have a dog. At that time, we had no experience with how dogs are housed and bred, and we had no idea of Pennsylvania's reputation as a haven for puppy mills. The 6-week-old pure-bred puppy we bought from a farm breeder turned out to be a disaster. The puppy, raised in a barn on chicken wire, was hyperactive and untrainable. After months of trying to get her trained, we finally enlisted the help of a knowledgeable breeder who concluded that we had done all we could. He recommended getting her to a home in the country where she would be able to have freedom to run. We did so.

Some time later, we went to the local shelter and got a mixed-breed female who was 6 years old at the time. She had been abused, and it took us two years to get her to the point where she finally adjusted to the concept that we would not harm her. She lived for 7 more years and, though she always suffered anxiety as the result of her earlier mistreatment, turned out to be a good house pet.

As the result of those experiences we have gone to great lengths in educating ourselves on how to determine that we are getting a healthy animal as a pet. As with any living creature, there can be no absolute guarantees, but with proper education on the part of the buyer and with proper legislation, regulation, enforcement and teamwork, it is possible to assure that almost all puppies/dogs are healthy at the time of purchase.

The point of this introductory history is that legislation without enforcement is not worth the paper it is printed on. The current dog laws have not been enforced, or at best, have not been *uniformly* enforced. Otherwise, the farm breeder where we bought our first puppy would have either been cleaned up or put out of business before we ever came along. To my knowledge, he is still breeding dogs, and though I have not been to his farm since we bought the dog 25 years ago, I would be willing to wager that the conditions there are still unacceptable.

Although it would not make as large a political "statement" as passing a new law would, it would be better for the legitimate breeders, sellers and buyers of dogs to put the money into enforcement of the existing legislation. As always, appointing a blue-ribbon panel to study a problem and create solutions seldom produces good results. In this case, since some of the panel members have an agenda that appears to be the elimination of dog ownership—or at least the transfer of dog ownership to the State, with the current owners as caretakers—it is highly unlikely that the resulting legislation as proposed will improve the situation for dogs in general or for breeders who are legitimate under the existing legislation. Indeed, the proposed legislation has

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the potential for making the Commonwealth little different from the corporations that capture farmers under contract to raise chickens and pigs.

We (my wife and I) propose the following:

- Strip all the proposed changes out of the legislation and start over.
- Appoint a standing board that includes the following membership: a representative from the PA Department of Agriculture (chair); a representative, from each, the American Kennel Club and the United Kennel Club; a representative from the Pennsylvania Federation of Dog Clubs; a member to represent all shelters in the state; a representative for commercial breeders; a representative from the U of Pennsylvania veterinary school. Include in its charter a requirement that the board members solicit input from their respective constituencies.
- Change the existing law that allows a puppy to be sold at 7 weeks old to 10 weeks old. Research at U of Pennsylvania and Cornell has concluded that puppies who are removed from the litter before 10 weeks suffer socialization problems—they do not know they are dogs. This has the added benefit that the seller must add another inoculation to the schedule before the puppy leaves the nest.
- Create a differentiation between commercial breeding operations and hobby breeders. For example, to qualify as a hobby breeder, a breeder may be limited to no more than three AKC- or UKC-recognized breeds, must show dogs in sanctioned events such as conformation, obedience, rally, or agility; must be an *active* member of a national breed-specific club and a local all-breed kennel club; can breed no more than 5 litters per year, irrespective of the size of the litter; can only sell dogs off their own site rather than through a broker, pet store or other agent; must maintain records according to their parent club's requirements (AKC or UKC); (NOTE: As you are probably aware, there are a number of "alphabet" organizations (AKA, ACA, etc) that exist solely to give the appearance of a legitimate registry of dogs.); cannot breed mixed breeds to include "designer dogs" such as puggles, cockerpoos, etc (NOTE: These designer dogs, not being recognized as specific breeds by the national registries, are bred purely for profit. It would defy ethical standards to include them as hobby breeders).
- Require that any time a puppy/dog is sold, along with the current legal requirements for shots, medical health certificate, etc, that the seller have it microchipped and that the number be recorded with the appropriate registry.

As I noted above, although I am the president of the Chambersburg Area Kennel Club, I am writing as a private citizen. The CAKC is a representative cross section of people interested in dogs and their welfare. The membership ranges from people who love dogs but do not have a pet, people with a single pet, people who show but do not breed and people who both breed and show in various sanctioned events. The consensus is that the proposed legislation, if vigorously enforced, endangers all pet ownership. The ad in the Patriot News last week states very succinctly the downside of the proposed legislation. If passed, the only breeders of dogs left in Pennsylvania will be the corporate breeders who have pockets deep enough to handle the extravagant expenses engendered by the law. The hobby breeders will disappear. If that is not your intent, a few years from now it will be too late to say, "I told you so". However, it is certainly the intent of PETA and like organizations who, under the guise of claiming to support animal rights, would like to end all pet ownership.

It is our hope that the persons who review the proposed legislation will assess the potential impacts hidden in the strict enforcement of the proposal.


Francis J Calverase

Judith A Calverase
