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February 5, 2007

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY  
REVIEW COMMISSION

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture  
Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement  
Attn: Ms Mary Bender  
2301 North Cameron St  
Harrisburg PA 17110-9408

Dear Ms. Bender:

Along with being our beloved pets and constant companions, dogs are a valued part of our society, or so they should be regarded as such. We employ service and/or assistance dogs for people who have physical limitations, such as blindness, paralysis, or hearing impairment; therapy dogs for shut-ins, the elderly, and those with mental health and/or emotional issues. We have search and rescue dogs, police dogs, cadaver dogs, drug & bomb sniffing dogs, military dogs and even dogs who can detect cancer and epilepsy.

It is with this in mind that I write to you. As a resident of Pennsylvania, I am outraged that "man's best friend" is treated with such disdain at the hands of unscrupulous backyard breeders. As you may already be aware, our state is known as the "Puppy Mill Capital" of the United States. These businesses are solely motivated by profit and have no regard for the health or welfare of the dogs they sell. I am a concerned citizen and I'd like to be a voice for those dogs who suffer tremendous cruelty in the name of greed.

I often see advertisements printed in my local *Penny Saver* that state, "**\$99.00 Puppies [list of more than twenty different breeds of dogs.] We accept all forms of payment!**" I happen to own a pure bred pug that I purchased from a reputable breeder, and he was far from being just \$99.00! Of course, he was only one of six pups in a single litter, and not, for lack of a better term, "mass produced" like these ads seem to suggest. I'm also pretty sure that I had to pay a little more for him because, unlike a puppy mill puppy, I had the opportunity to see his parents, had proof of all his shots, and observed that he wasn't housed in a cramped, filthy cage. I have seen the deplorable conditions of puppy mills, and know the quality of puppies sold there. They are genetically inferior due to over breeding and inbreeding, are usually in poor health and need extensive medical treatment, or inevitably must be euthanized. I don't know how these places stay in business!

Which brings me to my next point: dog breeding is a business, and one that is in desperate need of regulation! When these breeders label themselves as a "puppy farm," they are propagating a lie. The term is misleading because, as far as I know, breeding dogs for money has absolutely nothing to do with farming or agriculture. My parents can even attest to this fact, as they were both raised on farms and never had "dog breeding" as one of their responsibilities.

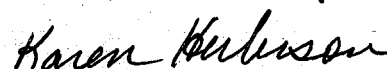
My heart breaks when I think of the dogs and puppies locked up outdoors in tiny, ramshackle cages during severe weather. Even as I write, the temperature outside has fallen below zero. I wonder how many dogs will freeze to death today? Or how many have died over the summer during the oppressive heat? Isn't this considered abuse? How does a "kennel" like this get a license?

These inhumane practices need to be halted immediately. Dogs should be provided with acceptable food, shelter, medical and exercise. They should be treated as living creatures – not commodities!

Although I would rather that "puppy mills" would be abolished altogether, I am very grateful to the Bureau of Dog Law for proposing new regulations for commercial dog kennels and I wholeheartedly support them! I strongly urge you to pass these new policies and put them into effect as soon as possible so that the living conditions and quality of life for these dogs is vastly improved, because they really deserve better.

Once again, I support and encourage the proposed kennel regulations! Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Herbison".

Karen Herbison

CC: Douglas G. Reichley, 134<sup>th</sup> Legislative District, PA House of Representatives