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P.O. Box 452
Camp Hill, PA 17001-0452
March 7, 2007

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

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
COMMISSION

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Dear Ms Bender,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Obedience Training Class of Harrisburg. We are a not-for-profit club that trains people to train their dogs. We do not take dogs to train ourselves, but rather help families create good canine citizens that are a welcome part of their families, neighborhoods, and communities. All of our members are volunteers, and any money we receive goes into paying our rent and other expenses. Our instructors give of their time and talent in order to save dogs from being surrendered to shelters for behavior issues. Given our experience in training a huge variety of dogs, including most breeds and all shapes & sizes of mixed breeds, we are calling for you to withdraw the recently proposed kennel regulations due to their "one size fits all" approach to raising dogs.

One example of this is the requirement to walk each dog 20 minutes per day. If you walk a Border Collie or similar mixed breed for only 20 minutes per day, then you will have a destructive dog. On the other hand, if you walk a Pug for 20 minutes when the temperatures exceed 95° with high humidity, then you might have a dead dog. Age also has a lot to do with how much a dog should be walked. Health concerns should also be taken into account, but there appears to be no language addressing it.

Another concern for us is the proper environment in which a puppy should grow. The regulations say the dogs cannot run on grass or weeds, but usually our backyards have these things. Obviously, we believe dogs raised by hobby breeders at their homes and exercised in their backyards are better off than dogs raised in a sterile kennel and exercised on concrete.


The regulations also say that dogs of different sexes may not run together. Obviously, if either or both dogs are spayed/neutered, this is an absolutely pointless requirement. Even if both dogs are intact, most people involved in dog sports have enough knowledge to separate them at the appropriate times so no unintended breedings occur. Unsupervised matings among domesticated dogs can be very dangerous to the health of both animals, and no one in dog sports would knowingly take such a risk.

Yet another point disagreement we have is in the sections that prohibit dogs of different sizes from running together. When we compete in obedience, agility, field testing, or any of the other myriad of dog sports, we build a bond with the dog. We are a team. We get to know that animal better than some know their human relatives. We know which dogs we can trust together, which need supervision when together, and which can never be allowed together. We do not need the government dictating to us which dogs we may allow to run together in the same yard.

Most importantly, while many of our members do not breed dogs, we do obtain our dogs from reputable breeders. We put long hours, many miles, and hundreds of dollars into finding the right dog to compete with us in our endeavors. The animals we select will be our teammates and family members. We want to continue to have a choice of where and from whom we obtain our next dog. We firmly believe that if these regulations are enacted, many talented, committed hobby breeders will be driven out of the sport. This cannot be allowed to come to pass.

The Obedience Training Class of Harrisburg has been a member of the PA Federation of Dog Clubs for about ten years. They are our voice in Harrisburg and they have earned the respect of many Legislators and state officials. The process by which these regulations came to be gives us grave concern as we know the PA Federation of Dog Clubs was left out of the process; therefore, we were left out of the process. Some comments by the Governor and his Administration regarding the last legally constituted Dog Law Advisory Board were insulting at best, and frankly we believe an apology is owed to us, the PA Federation of Dog Clubs and all its member organizations that have worked so hard over the years to improve the conditions for dogs and to protect the rights of their owners.

Sincerely yours,


Bonnie E. Hackman
Corresponding Secretary