

December 16, 2008

Senator Gary Cates, chairman
Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

In re: opposition to HB 446

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

My testimony today focuses narrowly on a statement apparently made by the bill sponsor to the *Columbus Dispatch* on Wednesday, December 10.

The article stated: "The kennel license, as it stands, is the biggest enabler for puppy mills," Webster said, noting that breeders can pay one license fee for five random dog tags, and only \$1 each for additional tags. "That allows people to essentially do it on the cheap."



This statement ignores the fact that the term 'puppy mill' lacks legal or common definition and has become a universal slur spread by those who believe that people should adopt from shelters rather than buy from breeders. Using the slogan "Until there are none, adopt one," these people and organizations vilify breeders for selling puppies while dogs die in shelters. To achieve their goal, they brand any kennel with more than some nebulous number of dogs as a 'puppy mill' regardless of the conditions of their dogs or facilities or the number of litters they produce.

Law-abiding breeders who maintain good kennel conditions and abide by current licensing law will suffer most from the exorbitant fee increase included in HB 446. The worst kennels – the true 'puppy mills' with squalid conditions and little or no veterinary care – tend to exist under the radar. They are the least likely to be licensed and will not be affected by the law unless they get caught.

Non-dog owners and pet owners with a dog or two or three that they dote over may not understand that breeders and fanciers can keep many dogs in good or excellent conditions. For example, a dog fancier who breeds an occasional litter may have many dogs in various stages of life from growing puppy to retired champion to old-timer. Those who raise dogs for hunting, sledding, and other activities also tend to have more than a few dogs. To saddle them with an increase in license fees in the name of knocking out undefined 'puppy mills' is unscrupulous and irrational.

The quality of care should determine whether a kennel is a 'puppy mill,' not the number of dogs housed or the purpose for which they are bred. Unless this inflated increase is removed from the bill, OVDO again asks you to vote 'no' on HB 446 and encourages lawmakers in the next legislative session to include breeders in any redrafting of animal control measures.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I will be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

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