



AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB

Thursday, February 4, 2016

The Honorable Raymond J. Lesniak
Chair, New Jersey Senate Economic Growth Committee
985 Stuyvesant Avenue
Union, New Jersey 07083

RE: AKC Opposes SB 63 – Repeal of Pet Purchase Protection Act, Limiting Pet Choice

Chairman Lesniak and Members of the Senate Economic Growth Committee:

The American Kennel Club (AKC) writes on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of responsible dog owners in New Jersey to express opposition to SB 63, which is scheduled to be considered by your committee on Monday, February 8. **We respectfully request SB 63 be held in committee to allow time for additional input to be offered by all stakeholders for committee consideration.**

As you may know, the American Kennel Club was established in 1884, and promotes the study, breeding, exhibiting, and advancement of purebred dogs. As the world's largest not-for-profit dog registry, the AKC advocates for the purebred dog as a family companion, advances canine health and well-being, protects the rights of all dog owners, and promotes the ideas of responsible dog ownership.

The American Kennel Club believes that if enacted as currently written, SB 63 will upend New Jersey's current animal laws in favor of radical, untested policies that will ultimately harm consumers. Banning the sale of pets from known, regulated and inspected sources, and allowing pet shops to only sell pets from unknown, unregulated and uninspected sources, does the exact opposite of its purported intent. Instead, SB 63 will remove available protection for new pet owners and dramatically increase the risks to the public health of New Jersey and surrounding states.

The AKC supports reasonable laws and regulations intended to protect the pet-buying public in obtaining a sound dog of the breed represented, such as New Jersey's Pet Purchase Protection Act. Extensive provisions of the Act were updated in 2015. These recent updates are only beginning to impact pet store operations and therefore further protect New Jersey's consumers under the Act. SB 63's proposed repeal of the Pet Purchase Protection Act, however, would not only eliminate available consumer protections for new pet owners, but it would also effectively negate the time and thoughtful consideration recently spent by the Legislature in passing and enacting operational changes of regulated entities.

By requiring only in-person pet transactions of breeders and other sellers, SB 63 creates an unfair burden on hobby breeders who may depend on the ability to place dogs selectively in known situations without physically meeting with the purchaser in their home or kennel at the specific time of sale. Many hobbyists are comfortable purchasing an animal sight unseen based on years of studying bloodlines and pedigrees, the existence of previous relationships or purchases from the same breeder, or personal knowledge of a breeder's facilities and operating procedures. These scenarios are particularly common for breeders and fanciers of rare breeds. Likewise, it is also not reasonable for hobby breeders—including those who may own several "breeding females" but who breed very rarely or breed rare breeds—to expect that purchasers will be willing to travel long distances to purchase a particular puppy in person as would be required under SB 63's interstate commerce restrictions. **Paradoxically, while punishing small responsible hobby breeders, consumers, and licensed and regulated pet shops in New Jersey communities, SB 63 does nothing to prohibit the sale of puppies and kittens from the back of trucks in parking lots and highway rest stops. Such transactions do little to**

indicate the care offered to, and conditions experienced by, an animal that face-to-face transaction requirements purportedly would demonstrate.

Furthermore, SB 63 will dramatically reduce the ability of New Jersey residents to purchase a pet with the predictable type, mandated care, and substantiated health backgrounds that purebred pets provide. Under the provisions of SB 63, pet stores will be allowed to sell only those dogs and cats sourced from shelters, rescues, and other similar organizations. Unfortunately, many communities lack sufficient local breeders to meet the demand for the specific pets desired by local residents. If SB 63 is enacted, New Jersey families seeking a puppy that is a specific breed from a professional breeder subject to USDA or state animal welfare standards, or one that has traditionally been covered by New Jersey's consumer protection laws, will likely have little other alternative than to obtain a pet of unknown background, health history or status. **When consumers cannot acquire a pet that is an appropriate fit for their lifestyle, that animal is more likely to cycle in and out of the shelter system.** A better solution is to ensure that consumers are educated, understand the demands of responsible ownership, have access to a variety of pets so that they can make an educated selection for life-long success, and can avail themselves of consumer protections should they need to.

Finally, SB 63's attempt at assailing the reputations of and the valuable work done by all types of dog breeders with out-of-date USDA information, questionable statistics, and broadly-discredited conjecture, as evidenced by over two pages of "findings" included in the bill, will likely serve as the unsubstantiated justification for additional radical legislation that will earn New Jersey the title of most unfriendly state to dog owners. **The AKC believes New Jersey can do better than using biased, discredited and purposely misleading anti-breeder language in state statute—and strongly urges its removal.**

The American Kennel Club appreciates the Senate Economic Growth Committee's consideration of these concerns and those of other expert stakeholders who have not been included in discussions regarding New Jersey's best reasonable means for protecting its consumers and pets. **Again, we urge you to hold SB 63 in committee until all stakeholders have had a chance to comment for committee consideration.**

The AKC, the New Jersey Federation of Dog Clubs, and local AKC dog clubs welcome the opportunity to work with you to further the responsible breeding and ownership dogs. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 919-816-3720 if you have any questions or if we may be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Sheila Goffe
Director, AKC Government Relations

CC: State Senator Steve Sweeney, New Jersey Senate President
Allison Accettola and Laurine Purola, Committee Aides
Jeffrey Ball, President, New Jersey Federation of Dog Clubs
Barbara Reichman, New Jersey Director, National Animal Interest Alliance

PMG