



**PET INDUSTRY JOINT
ADVISORY COUNCIL**
1615 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: 202-452-1525

TESTIMONY OF THE PET INDUSTRY JOINT ADVISORY COUNCIL BEFORE THE FRANKLIN,
TENNESSEE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN REGARDING A PROPOSED ORDINANCE
RELATING TO THE SALE OF DOGS AND CATS

December 7, 2018

The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) appreciates the opportunity to offer the Franklin Board of Mayor and Aldermen our views regarding the proposed ordinance amending Title 10 of the City of Franklin Municipal Code to restrict the retail sale of dogs and cats at pet stores.

As the country's largest pet trade association, representing the interests of all segments of the pet industry throughout the United States, PIJAC counts among its members national associations, organizations, corporations and individuals involved in the commercial pet trade. More specifically, PIJAC represents the interests of pet stores, distributors, pet supply manufacturers, breeders, retailers and pet owners throughout the state of Tennessee and across the United States.

The ordinance perpetuates the unsubstantiated assertion that pet store animals generally come from substandard breeding facilities, a commonly used smoke screen that obscures the fact that the overwhelming majority of pet owners who choose to purchase from pet stores bring home a happy, healthy pet and remain highly satisfied with their pet store experience.

The reality is that almost all pet stores source their puppies from either USDA licensed breeders who are regularly inspected and found to comply with appropriate care standards or small-scale hobby breeders who are not eligible to be licensed by the USDA, a standard that we strongly support mandating through legislation. In contrast, many of the dogs and cats from other sources, including rogue Internet operators, private sales, shelters and rescues, did not come from licensed breeders.

In considering a citywide retail pet sale ban, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen risks enacting a law that will not only fail to stop the bad actors who operate substandard breeding operations but will actually exacerbate the very problem a retail sales prohibition seeks to address. Banning the sale of dogs and cats by pet stores that are subject to strict regulation and sourcing transparency will eliminate the only licensed and regulated source for animals, forcing pet owners to look to unregulated sources.

This ban would not protect consumers, as customers already enjoy far more protection in the law for the animals they get from pet stores than from any other source. They would merely be deprived of looking to a pet store as one of several alternatives for acquiring a pet, and in the process lose statutory protections that they currently enjoy. It does not protect the animals themselves. Pet store puppies are as healthy as any others and typically receive more frequent veterinary care than puppies from other sources. Additionally, consumers who buy their animals from pet stores enjoy extra protections in the event the animal purchased is sick or diseased.

As discussed in a Fox News opinion piece written by Sheila Goffe of the American Kennel Club, "It's hard to know if a rescue dog was legitimately in need of re-homing, bred for the retail rescue market or a random-

source foreign animal imported en masse. And without records on origin and health, chances increase it could have serious temperament issues and be carrying serious diseases¹.” In passing a pet sale ban in Franklin, the city risks reducing consumer protections and limiting the availability of information that responsible pet owners need to choose the right pet.

A retail pet sales ban serves to target responsible pet stores, while exempting others who need not even comply with the standards under which pet stores already operate. Animals delivered to pet stores in Tennessee already highly regulated:

- In the state of their birth
- In the state of their distributor
- By the federal government
- And animal cruelty is a criminal offense everywhere

Further, some make the claim that prohibiting the sale of commercially bred dogs and cats in pet stores will lead to more adoptions of shelter animals. No independently developed data supports this claim. PIJAC knows that animal control facilities and non-profits are often excellent sources for pets for some prospective pet owners, though not for everyone. Many shelter animals are relinquished because of socialization or health issues. Adoption may not be an appropriate option for families looking for a certain breed of animal for health considerations. There are varied reasons why families choose the animals they do. They should have a choice and not be denied the pet that best fits their family’s requirements.

Hyperbole and emotionalism are poor substitutes for rational evaluation of objective information in establishing public policy. PIJAC recognizes that a few substandard facilities supplying pet stores do exist, as do substandard breeders providing dogs directly to the public and, in fact, substandard shelters exist as well. And, PIJAC’s efforts to ensure humane standards of care are met in all of these facilities will continue. However, singling out pet stores for specious generalizations based on anecdotal evidence will **NOT** eliminate the existence of substandard conditions. While this may be a “feel good” approach it only diverts attention away from efforts to really accomplish effective solutions and we urge the Board of Mayor and Aldermen not to move forward with any proposed ordinance that targets pet stores in this way.

PIJAC is highly sympathetic to the concerns motivating this proposed ordinance, but an outright ban on retail pet sales is unjustified, harmful to the future of the local economy and ultimately will fail to better protect pets. We respectfully urge the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to reject the ban and not impose excessive restrictions on all pet owners by shuttering legitimate local businesses that are committed to the health, safety and well-being of the animals they provide to Franklin families.

If the purpose of this proposal is to encourage tighter restrictions on the sources of animals coming into Franklin and Tennessee as a whole, PIJAC would welcome the opportunity to work with the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and other elected officials to raise the bar to ensure proper animal sourcing that protects dogs and cats. For instance, common sense solutions would require:

- Animals come from only USDA licensees
- Breeders sourcing animals in any current or future Franklin pet stores shall not have an entry on their last USDA inspection report that directly impacts animal health -these inspection reports could travel with the animal and be made available to the customer

¹ Goffe, Sheila. “The US Has Become a Dumping Ground for Foreign 'Puppy Mill' and 'Rescue' Dogs. Here's What Needs to Change.” Fox News, FOX News Network, 30 June 2018, www.foxnews.com/opinion/2018/06/30/us-has-become-dumping-ground-for-foreign-puppy-mill-and-rescue-dogs-here-s-what-needs-to-change.html.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with the City of Franklin to arrive at a meaningful solution to the public policy concerns related to the care of animals. By working together, we can make sure that Franklin's citizens continue to have access to healthy animals to love as pets now and in the future.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

Savonne Caughey
Director of Government Affairs
Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC)