



TO: Special Committee on Agriculture
FROM: Kate Meghji, Executive Director
DATE: January 26, 2017
RE: Support for HB2097: Updating the Kansas Pet Animal Act (KPAA)

Chair Hoffman and Members of the Committee:

I am the executive director of the Lawrence Humane Society, President of the Pet Animal Coalition of Kansas, a member of the Society of Animal Welfare Administrators, and I have been involved with animal sheltering and welfare for more than 10 years.

Animal shelters and rescues in Kansas, like the Lawrence Humane Society, accept and care for the State's 100,000+ unwanted, abused, overbred, surplus and abandoned cats and dogs every year. As non-profit or municipal organizations, we are not funded or reimbursed by the State or any national animal organizations and we support the State's economy by paying hundreds of thousands of sales tax dollars and more than \$30 million invested annually in our local communities. Licensed shelters, rescues and group home fosters represent the largest number of animal facility licensees in the State.

HB2097 has the support of the Department of Agriculture, the Pet Animal Coalition of Kansas, and numerous other pet animal organizations and facilities in the State, and represents the time and commitment of animal shelters, rescues, veterinarians and breeders working together to propose changes to the Kansas Pet Animal Act (KPAA) that we all agree are in the best interests of our various businesses and organizations, and the animals who are in our care. Kansas is behind a vast majority of states in animal welfare legislation, and the adoption of changes in HB2097 is a much-needed step in the process of getting Kansas in line with currently accepted best practices in animal care in the country.

I respectfully ask you to move HB2097 forward to the full house. The following are crucial pieces of the proposed changes to the KPAA:

1. Rescue Networks: Rescue networks are a growing need in our State, and also oversee a great number of the 1695 licensed foster homes in Kansas. Providing a separate license and representative on the Kansas Pet Animal Advisory Board would differentiate this group from municipal and nonprofit animal shelters, which are very different in terms of facility and operations, and both require representation. Currently, there are four (4) members of the KPAAB that represent the various types of breeding facilities (315 total) and one (1) representative for all municipal and nonprofit shelters, as well as rescue groups (323 total)
2. Facility Inspections: Utilizing the State's trained inspectors to ensure that all animal facilities are following the KPAA is the best way to ensure and improve the health and welfare of animals in Kansas. However, there is no way to ensure that facilities comply with required animal housing standards without regular inspection. Changing the language from "may inspect" to "shall inspect" will go a long way towards ensuring adequate accommodations for the animals in these facilities. To minimize the financial impact and time required by the

State to perform these inspections, I support the proposed inspection frequency schedule to be adopted by rules and regulations to allow facilities with no violations to have a longer inspection cycle and be inspected on a complaint basis, and those with more violations will receive the attention they require to ensure compliance with the laws.

3. Adoption Events: Licensed animal shelters and rescue networks often need to be innovative when marketing homeless animals for adoption. Barriers to adoption, such as location, limit the audience of potential adopters to those who specifically come to an animal shelter to adopt. Under the current law, an adoption must take place at the licensed facility, which adds a level of complication to offsite adoption events, and limits the number of potential adopters by requiring the both the adopter and shelter staff to relocate from the adoption event to the animal shelter to sign the adoption contract. Inconveniencing the well-intentioned members of the public who wish to adopt a homeless animal by requiring a second trip to another location makes pet adoption less appealing, and limits shelters' and rescue networks' ability to impact and educate larger pieces of our communities. Offsite adoption events are typically one-day events that do not require special animal housing, and are a widely accepted practice across the country.

While I completely support HB2097 and think that it will provide crucial updates to the KPAA, I also request that you consider the amendments being submitted to address the following:

- Licensed facilities should not receive advance warning of an inspection, unless they have been violation free for at least 3 years.
- Licensed facilities that fail 3 inspections in 24 months should have their license revoked.
- Substandard licensees should be held financially accountable for re-inspections, no contacts, inspection refusals, and failing inspections.
- The annual fee for licensing foster homes, utilized by most shelters and rescues, should not triple in one year. Shelters already pay the highest annual licensing fee and increasing foster licenses 300% will place a burden on nonprofit and municipal organizations and their volunteers.

I want to thank each of you for your service and dedication to Kansas, and your consideration of HB2097 as a means to allow our state to join the majority of United States which have responsible and enforceable pet animal care acts. The proposed changes to the KPAA are the result of hard work and compromise, and reflect the expertise of the Kansas Department of Agriculture, and has the support of many animal organizations and businesses in the State.

I am happy to answer any questions or provide any additional information that you may require.

Thank you,



Kate Meghji

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