

Minnesota State Senate

PRESS RELEASE

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Bill to prevent the pet store sale of dogs and cats from puppy and kitten mills to be introduced in Minnesota Legislature

ST. PAUL, MN – Minnesota Senator Karla Bigham and Representative Carlie Kotyza-Witthuhn are introducing bipartisan legislation this session to prevent the pet store sale of dogs and cats from puppy and kitten mills. Minnesota could be the next state to adopt this humane policy that prohibits the pet store sale of dogs and cats while allowing stores to host adoption events with animal shelters and rescues.

“As someone with rescue dogs, I understand personally the importance of pet adoption,” said Senator Bigham. “Our bill promotes pet adoption and will not impact responsible breeders. Unfortunately, most dogs and cats sold through pet stores come from puppy and kitten mills – commercial breeding operations that prioritize profit over animal welfare- but there is growing public sentiment in Minnesota against this outdated business model.”

“This bill will move the pet market toward more humane sources like shelters, rescues and responsible breeders and address known problems by stopping the sale of puppy mill puppies in stores,” said Representative Kotyza-Witthuhn. “I am the proud owner of a rescue labradoodle and the community I represent, Eden Prairie, has passed this legislation at the local level. They know, like I do, that most pet stores in Minnesota thrive without selling dogs and cats. They profit from selling products and services and many also host adoption events with local shelters and rescues to give back to their communities.”

“As a pet store owner, I have seen my business flourish after switching to a humane model,” said Angel Duratti of Angel’s Pet World, Hudson, WI. “I no longer sell dogs and cats; instead I showcase rescued animals for adoption at my store. The community has rallied behind me in support.”

“Pet stores that host adoption events save lives and bring homeless pets to a retail setting where consumers might not otherwise be exposed to them,” said bill coauthor Senator Karin Housley. “This humane business model is the future and is right for Minnesota.”

Additional information about humane pet store legislation:

It is documented that puppy mills (inhumane commercial breeding facilities that disregard the well-being of dogs for profit) supply Minnesota pet stores with puppies. A humane pet store bill reduces the demand for puppy mill puppies.

The bill will protect consumers. Consumers often spend thousands of dollars caring for sick pet store puppies who were born in puppy mills, in some cases only to suffer the heartbreak of their new pet dying. Many pet store puppies also have behavioral issues and struggle to transition from life in a cage to life in a family.

This legislation only impacts puppies, kittens, dogs and cats. No other types of animals are included. There are no impacts on agriculture.

This bill promotes pet adoption and does not impact responsible breeders. Pet stores that host adoption events save lives and bring homeless pets to a retail setting where consumers might not otherwise be exposed to them. For those who wish to buy a puppy, consumers will still be able to seek out a responsible breeder whom they can meet in person. Responsible breeders never sell to pet stores because they only sell directly to the public, so they wouldn't be negatively impacted by this bill.

This legislation also addresses a public health risk. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warns consumers about the risks of pet store puppies. In 2017-18, over one hundred Americans were sickened with an antibiotic-resistant strain of *Campylobacter* causing dozens to be hospitalized. In its final report of the outbreak, the CDC stated that 95% of pet store puppies received antibiotics at, or before arriving at, a pet store. This indicates overuse of these drugs and that pet stores know their puppies are likely to be sick.

The bill is business friendly. The vast majority of pet stores in Minnesota are already in compliance with this legislation because they already do not sell puppies or kittens. There are fewer than ten pet stores in Minnesota that sell dogs and cats, yet more than 130 do not sell dogs or cats.

This legislation will close a gap in current law. Minnesota does not inspect the source of all pet store puppies nor conditions within pet stores. Federal regulation of commercial breeders is minimal and enforcement is lacking. As one example, under federal law commercial breeders can legally confine dogs to cages only 6 inches larger than themselves for their entire lives.

Three states (MD, CA, ME) and over 340 local jurisdictions across the United States- including Roseville, Eden Prairie, and St. Paul, MN- have passed similar humane pet store laws.

About Senator Karla Bigham

Karla Bigham is a state senator who represents Cottage Grove, Hastings, South St. Paul, St. Paul Park, Newport, Afton and neighboring townships. She is a member of the following committees: Environment and Natural Resources Finance; Veterans and Military Affairs Finance and Policy; and Human Services Reform Finance and Policy.

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