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The Honorable Oscar Longoria
Members of the House Committee on Business & Industry
Texas House of Representatives
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chairman Longoria and Members of the Committee,

The City of Houston (Houston or City) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of HB 870, a bill to require retail pet stores in Texas to source the cats and dogs they sell from shelters or humane organizations, protecting both animals and consumers.

Houston is just one of several Texas cities that have enacted ordinances to protect both pet store animals and the consumers who purchase them. Other Texas cities that have adopted these regulations include: Bryan, College Station, Dallas, El Paso, Euless, Fort Worth, New Braunfels, Austin, Sherman, Bryan, Pasadena, Wylie, Corpus Christi, San Marcos, and The Colony.

Cities are adopting these regulations because state law does not protect Texans from the predatory and inhumane practices of retail pet stores. These practices include selling mill-bred puppies and kittens with undisclosed health deficiencies. These deficiencies often occur due to the crowded conditions in which puppy mills keep their animals, including stacked wire cages where the puppies are constantly exposed to urine and feces from the cages above and around them. Many of these animals do not receive proper veterinary care and die within weeks of being transported to a pet store

Although pet stores argue that the animals are sourced from responsible breeders that are “USDA approved” and the health of the animals is “guaranteed,” these assurances are mainly designed to protect the seller’s interests rather than the buyer. Guarantees written into purchase contracts tend to contain limitations of liability and exclusionary language that negates the enforceability of the warranties. It is also worth noting that the “USDA standards” touted by these stores are minimum standards under the Animal Welfare Act and should not be mistaken for minimum *standards of care* for these animals as defined by animal welfare organizations or veterinarians.

Additionally, these pet stores engage in predatory financing that often leads to financial hardships for borrowers due to frequently undisclosed and exorbitant interest rates and fees. In some cases, the full disclosure of the interest rates and fees are not revealed until after a loan application is made. In other cases, the pet is essentially “leased” to the buyer because the “loan” agreement specifies that the pet will not transfer to the purchaser until a certain number of payments are made. In those instances, failure to make timely payments could mean the pet is “repossessed,” like a car. Because of such business practices, many states are now enacting statutes to end predatory lending in the retail sale of puppies and kittens.

Finally, Houston, and all of Texas, is currently in a pet overpopulation crisis. Pet adoption and foster levels are down and have not rebounded to pre-pandemic levels. Yet pet stores continue to bring in unaltered pets from out of state each year. To put the issue into perspective, one pet store can contribute to the birth of 1,200 new puppies. Statewide legislation to ban the sale of mill animals is critical to begin to stem the tide of homeless animals in this state.

National, state, and local humane rescue organizations support this legislation. The many cities that have attempted local solutions support this legislation. The City of Houston appreciates your hard work in advancing the cause of homeless animals and we strongly support this legislation and ask for your help in moving it forward.

Respectfully submitted,



Tina Paez, Director
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