

Dog Owners of the Granite State
Protecting the interests of New Hampshire pet owners since 1991
Elin Phinizy, President
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March 8, 2017

RE: Opposition to the changes to RSA 437, Section 11 and 12, contained in HB 2

Madam Chair and Members of the House Finance Division I Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Dog Owners of the Granite State (DOGS), an American Kennel Club affiliated organization founded in 1991. DOGS represents the interests of not only purebred dogs, but all pet owners in New Hampshire. In addition to my involvement with Dog Owners of the Granite State, I was appointed by Gov. Benson to the Governor's Commission on the Humane Treatment of Animals and served on that commission until 2008.

DOGS opposes the changes being made to RSA 437 – *Transfer of Animals and Birds* in HB 2, Section 11 and 12 (pages 5 – 10).

Pet ownership in New Hampshire makes a valuable contribution to the New Hampshire economy. N.H. has an estimated 150,00 dogs¹. Dog owners spend approximately over \$246 million a year for food, vet bills, grooming, etc.² While there is no way to estimate the number of cats in New Hampshire, nationwide ownership of cats is even higher than ownership of dogs. Assuming NH ownership of dogs and cats are equal, cat owners would spend an additional \$168.75 million for a combined total contribution of \$415 million that can be attributed by NH pet owners to the state's economy. These figures do not include additional economic benefit from income generated as a result of tourism from sled dog races, agility trials, training classes, hunting, field trials, and dog and cats shows, as well as other "pet" and companion animal activities.

Pet owners rightly expect that, when they purchase a pet from a state licensed entity, be it a commercial kennel, a pet store, or an animal shelter or animal rescue, that the facility has met health and safety standards set by the state of New Hampshire. Yet HB 2, Section 11 and 12 (pages 5 – 10), removes the state from the duty to enforce their own licensing standards by removing the requirement for an inspection prior to a license being issued.

New Hampshire has the dubious distinction of being the location of the largest human mass exposure to rabies ever in the United States. In 1994, a rabid kitten sold in a pet store in Concord, NH resulted in

¹ Estimate based on the amount of money in the Pet Overpopulation Fund which is funded by a \$2 surcharge on dog licenses.

² http://www.americanpetproducts.org/press_industrytrends.asp The American Pet Products Association says that the average dog owner spends \$1641 a year on food, vet bills, grooming, etc. per dog while cat owners spend while cat owners spend \$1,125 per cat. Nationwide, the Pet Industry generates over \$60 billion dollars annually (a growth of over \$15 billion from 2009).

approximately 665 adults and children having to receive post exposure rabies inoculations because of exposure to rabies. The cost of this episode is estimated to have been \$1.1 million.³

While DOGS appreciates the strain on the Department of Agriculture's resources, caused by these inspections, the current inspection routine was originally proposed by the department in order to combat substandard pet stores and breeders – in short to protect the state's citizens. However, current statute, RSA 437:8 *Inspections*, allows the department to appoint someone outside the department to perform the inspection. Taking advantage of this ability would free up the department's resources and preserve consumer protections afforded by currently required annual inspections.

In our modern world, when most pets come from so-called 'rescues', annual inspections both act as a deterrent and to protect New Hampshire from being inundated with fly-by-night operators. As you read this letter, the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture has shut down "Greyhound Friends" due to continuously failed inspections. Without NH requiring similar annual inspections, particularly of a new entity, this rescue could easily set up shop in our state.

Although there are many other changes to RSA 437 in the proposed language, including the very poorly written section on health certificates (page 8, line 1 to page 9, line 6), the most egregious, damaging change is the addition of feline leukemia virus (page 9, line 2) to the exemptions for sick animals which may be transferred with a waiver. The initial waiver was added in 2012 and was to include only non-contagious diseases so as to not infect the general pet population. According to Cornell Veterinary College, feline leukemia is contagious between cats; it is the most common cause of cancer in cats; and the median survival time for cats after FeLV is diagnosed is 2.5 years.⁴

The members of Dog Owners of the Granite State ask that you eliminate HB 2, Sections 11 and 12 (pages 5 – 10) in its entirety. Thank you for your attention to this matter and kind consideration. If you have any questions, I can be reached either by phone, 603.835.2852 or by email at black.north@gmail.com. I remain

Sincerely,

Elin C.M. Phinizy
President, Dog Owners of the Granite State

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00038110.htm>

⁴ http://www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/Health_Information/brochure_felv.cfm