



Leavenworth County Humane Society, Inc.

100 W. Gilman Road, Lansing, KS 66043

www.LCHSInc.org

LvnCoHS@live.com

www.facebook.com/LvnCoHumane

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Testimony in Support of House Bill 2542

Submitted by Crystal Swann Blackdeer, Executive Director, Leavenworth County Humane Society, Inc., Lansing KS

Mr. Chair and distinguished Representatives:

I speak today in strong support of the much needed updates to the Kansas Pet Animal Act contained in House Bill 2542.

Since being appointed as the Shelter Representative to the Pet Animal Advisory Board (PAAB), I have endeavored to build bridges among different entities in the pet animal industry. We all have much in common, compassionate and humane care for the pets entrusted to us, and the goal of providing healthy, behaviorally sound pets to our consumers, whether they are buyers or adopters.

I was thrilled this summer when the Kansas Pet Professionals (a not-for-profit with fewer than 50 licensee members) asked to meet and consider changes that the Department of Agriculture and the Animal Facility Inspection Program want.

We met multiple times with many stakeholders sharing various concerns and desires for the updates. What I heard in those meetings indicated that we had consensus on much of what was being proposed. The AFIP staff worked many hours with the Department and with the Revisor's office to put what we worked on in writing.

The PAAB discussed the proposed bill on multiple occasions, and even held a special meeting on Friday, January 12 to discuss the bill as it would be submitted.

While I was only appointed to the PAAB in 2021, I've attended most of the quarterly meetings since 2010. At that time, I was running LCHS, Inc. as a licensed Rescue Network. I attended meetings largely because there was no Rescue Network representative on the Board. There still is no Rescue Network representative.

I have made it clear to my colleagues on the PAAB that one of my goals is to correct that oversight, and let Rescues provide their unique perspective. A rescue is not a shelter, and a shelter is not a rescue.

The PAAB is an ADVISORY Board. We do not decide or prescribe anything. We provide input to the Animal Facility Inspection Program and to the Department of Agriculture based on our experience in our roles. The only binding vote that we ever take is to approve our minutes and to set the date for our next meeting. We are 10 separate and distinct voices. No one on the PAAB should be silenced or discounted because of having a minority position. And no segment of the pet animal industry should be denied a voice. Every licensee should be represented.

Numbers of licenses by type as of January 29, 2004, are as follows:

Animal Shelter – 239 licensees – 1 seat	
Boarding and Training – 204 licensees – 1 seat	DVM – 1 seat
Retail Breeder – 120 licensees – 1 seat	Member of the public – 1 seat
Animal Breeder – 71 licensees – 1 seat	
Pet Shop – 66 licensees – 1 seat	
Hobby Breeder – 56 licensees – 1 seat (recently vacant)	
Rescue Network – 51 licensees – NO SEAT (annual fee \$125)	
Animal Distributor – 8 licensees – 1 seat	
Animal Research Facility – 6 licensees – 1 seat	

Even though I believe that the Rescue Seat is important, I believe House Bill 2542 overall is more important at this moment. It cleans up some language, corrects some errors, and helps provide AFIP the tools they need to perform their mission. Too many hours and agreements have gone into this bill to simply discard it. If the Rescue Seat doesn't happen this year, it will in the future. Simple fairness and common sense demand it.

Since the introduction of this Bill in January, I've become aware of some angst over the nomination and appointment process that assigns members to the Pet Animal Advisory Board. I believe we the PAAB can help the Department work within the appointments system to keep seats populated with appropriate qualified representatives. I personally would like to see appointments expire when they expire, not let anyone continue to serve in a seat ad infinitum without re-appointment. New ideas and voices are healthy for an advisory board. My term expires this year, and I've applied for reappointment already. The point is, dissatisfaction with the Department's management of their appointments is not a reason to torpedo HB 2542.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the Committee to advance and support the passage of House Bill 2542 this session. Thank you for your time.