



Please oppose HB 2915

February 9, 2023

Dear Representative Holvey
Chair, Oregon House Business and Labor
Sent via email: Rep.PaulHolvey@oregonlegislature.gov

Dear Chair Holvey:

I am writing on behalf of the National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA), a diverse, national animal welfare organization founded in Portland OR in 1991. NAIA was created to provide evidence-based solutions to complex and controversial issues regarding animals. Our group promotes animal wellbeing, preserving the human-animal bond and the basic civil rights of people who live and work with animals. Our members are pet owners, hobby breeders, rescuers and animal professionals, scientists and veterinarians. Responsible Dog Breeders Association of Oregon, a statewide network that includes 99 Oregon kennel clubs and numerous other animal-related organizations, is part of NAIA. Oregon kennel clubs, which are not-for-profit, volunteer organizations, bring 10's of millions of tourism dollars to Oregon each year.

We are writing to express our opposition to HB 2915 and to ask that you not support it.

Oregon dealt with a closely related bill in 2019 that if passed would have banned pet stores (<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2019R1/Measures/Overview/HB2804>). The legislature did not pass the bill because the claims in the bill were not proven to be true in Oregon. The arguments in favor of the ban were acquired from unrelated, out-of-state situations or from events that occurred years ago.

In the end, the act of taking someone's livelihood away without substantiated reasons was not acceptable to many committee members.

This year's bill may appear to be a more reasonable version of the 2019 bill because it offers to grandfather existing stores whereas the 2019 bill was defeated because its claims did not hold up. That being case, it makes no sense to grandfather them.

Importantly, Oregon HB 2915 is modeled after a Washington state bill that grandfathered existing pet stores during Washington's last legislative session (<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1424&Year=2021>). This year, many of the same individuals and groups that promoted the grandfather bill in Washington are back promoting a bill

that would effectively remove the grandfathering.

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1424&Year=2023&Initiative=False>

When bills aimed at outlawing pet stores first appeared about 10 years ago they were considered so revolutionary, few legislative bodies would touch them. To get around this problem the national animal rights groups behind them developed a tactical solution to make them more palatable. They pushed legislation in municipalities where there were no pet stores and therefore no stakeholders to argue against them. Ten years later only 24% of the jurisdictions that have enacted some sort of pet store restriction had a pet store in the first place. From a marketing standpoint, though, this approach worked. It enabled the campaigners to sell their bills using a bandwagon sort of argument, “See how many other jurisdictions support our campaign.”

In order to understand the current marketplace battle and the unintended consequences of shutting down one of the public’s remaining sources of pets, it’s important to understand that the century-long problem of dog overpopulation has been solved in the Pacific Northwest and **there are no longer enough locally bred dogs to meet demand**. This shortage impacts pet stores, humane societies and rescues as well as consumers.

- As a result, shelters and rescues have created **“humane relocation” programs, which import thousands of dogs into their nonprofit organizations** each year to sustain their operations and increase their adoptions. In many cases these shelters and rescues have become de facto pet stores while retaining their former image as charities that care for local pets.
- According to the CDC and USDA, over one million dogs were imported from foreign countries in 2019. Many are imported by private shelters and rescues. Please click on the following study: <https://www.naiaonline.org/uploads/WhitePapers/CDC-FedRegJan2019Citation.pdf>
- To meet demand, one Oregon humane society alone imported 3,841 dogs in 2019, the last year before COVID imposed limitations on importation. This is more dogs than all 6 of Oregon’s remaining pet stores combined sell in a year. Moreover, the demand gap that currently exists cannot possibly be filled by hobby or casual breeders.
- Dogs imported by Oregon shelters and rescues for adoption to Oregon consumers come from as far away China, So. Korea and Mexico, countries where the standards of veterinary medicine are often far below those of the US. The epidemic of canine flu that closed shelters here and across the country, was traced to rescue dogs imported from So. Korea. In other parts of the US, rescue dogs with lethal diseases like rabies have been imported. As a result, CDC has just extended its ban on dog imports from over 100 countries. <https://www.naiaonline.org/articles/article/cdc-extends-suspension-of-dog-imports-from-countries-with-high-rabies-prevalence#sthash.BB0lms0M.dpbs>
- Long-term, passing HB 2915 would create a retail monopoly for the nonprofit sector and put hardworking Oregonians out of business.
- Long-term, HB 2915 would mandate that Oregon pet stores swap their US-born and regulated source of pets for a supply of pets whose source is largely unregulated and often unknown.

- Phasing out Oregon's pet stores, would decrease the type and quality of dogs available to Oregon consumers, replacing ones that the public wants with dogs that are typically older, and of limited and less desirable types.
- Phasing out Oregon pet stores would replace a source of dogs that come with a warranty and a reasonable return policy, with ones that generally do not offer these advantages
- Sadly, a fair number of shelter dogs have behavior problems, and some come from no-kill shelters where saving the life of a dog is more important than protecting a child from a dog with a known history of aggression.
- Phasing out pet stores from selling pets of the type the public wants, would simply push the marketplace online and underground where the source of dogs cannot be regulated or taxed and where health warranties for puppies do not exist.

The pet industry includes many excellent rescues, shelters, pet stores and hobby breeders, but all of these groups have an occasional black sheep. In this case, the non-profit sector is taking aim at the businesses that they view as their marketplace rivals, focusing on every outcast that has ever been associated with the retail sector. This campaign blurs the issues and prevents decision-makers from seeing the bigger picture and unintended consequences of adopting the bias of the non-profit sector.

Please don't condemn whole categories of lawfully conducted businesses. Instead hold lawbreakers accountable and pass reasonable laws that encourage genuine improvements.

Please vote no on HB 2915. It's wrong for Oregon.



Patti Strand, President NAIA