



Please oppose HB 1424

February 13, 2023

Dear Members of the Washington House Consumer Protection and Business Committee:

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. Dozens of Washington kennel clubs and other animal-related organizations are part of NAIA

We are writing to express our opposition to HB 1424 and to ask that you not support it. Washington dealt with closely related bills during several recent legislative sessions. In the end, the act of taking away someone's livelihood – and the livelihood of their employees – was not acceptable to many committee members so an outright pet store ban did not pass. Sadly, after being battered year after year with new legislation to ban pet stores, a compromise was struck to use grandfathering as a mechanism to phase out pet stores.

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/bills/summary?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. They'll be back next year if they are not successful with HB 1424 this year.

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 it turns out that only 24% of the jurisdictions that enacted some sort of pet store restriction had a pet store in the first place! From a marketing standpoint, this approach worked wonders. It enabled the campaigners to sell their bills using a bandwagon sort of argument, "See how many other jurisdictions support our campaign" claim of support

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 has had an enormous impact on humane societies.

- 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, as well as retaining their much less stringently regulated operations.
- 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, Washington rescues and humane societies import thousands of dogs each year, an enormously higher number of pets than are imported and sold by Washington pet stores.
- Anti-pet store activists often argue that the demand gap that currently exists can be filled by hobby or casual breeders. This is not true unless hobby or casual breeders greatly increase the number of puppies they breed each year, basically becoming commercial breeders themselves. No, what is far more likely is that rescues and humane societies will fill the gap with imported dogs.
- Dogs imported by Washington shelters and rescues for adoption to Washington 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>
- Passing HB 1424 would create a retail monopoly for the nonprofit sector and put hardworking, taxpaying Washingtonians out of business.
- HB 1424 would mandate that Washington pet stores swap their US-born and highly regulated source of pets for a supply of pets whose source is largely unregulated and often unknown.
- Phasing out Washington’s pet stores, would decrease the type and quality of dogs available to Washington consumers, replacing ones that the public wants with dogs that are typically older, and of limited and less desirable types.
- Phasing out Washington pet stores would replace a source of dogs that comes 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 bad actor. 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 because some aren't living up to current law. In the United States, we are taught to judge individuals and groups by their conduct, not by their category. This bill seeks to do the opposite, to ban an entire category of businesses because some in this category have not lived up to their responsibilities. Our group urges you to instead hold lawbreakers accountable and pass reasonable laws that encourage genuine improvements in animal care and wellbeing.

Please vote no on HB 1424. It's wrong for Washington.



Patti Strand, President NAIA