

IN SUPPORT OF MINNESOTA HUMANE PET STORE BILL — SF 1317

March 8, 2023

TO: Minnesota Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee

FROM: Angel Duratti, pet store owner

RE: SF1317 / HF1276 Letter of Support

Dear Chair Klein, Vice Chair Seeberger, Lead Dahms, and members of the committee:

My name is Angel Duratti. I own Angel's Pet World in Wisconsin. For years, I had purchased puppies from commercial breeders and sold these puppies to consumers. Many of these breeders were located and operating in Minnesota.

I no longer sell puppies or kittens from my store and, instead, in 2010, switched to a humane pet store model.

I respectfully ask you to support the humane pet store model SF 1317.

The switch to a humane pet store model was about doing the right thing. Many of the puppies we purchased were from Menning Enterprises. This breeder/broker, located in southern Minnesota, is still operating. They are one of the largest breeding facilities in Minnesota and are licensed by both the federal and state governments. At one time this breeder had over 900 dogs and puppies in their kennels; their total "inventory" varies year to year.

After years of receiving sickly dogs from Menning Enterprises, we, as a pet store, could no longer afford to keep spending money on the veterinary care needed to treat the puppies and no longer wanted to support this breeder and his practices.

Numerous health problems

Many of the puppies we bought from this breeder had health problems, such as kennel cough, giardia, coccidian, roundworms, pneumonia, skin issues, ear issues, patellas, parvo and more. The last litter (10 puppies) I bought from him each had brucellosis, which is a dangerous disease. We knew that he bred some of the puppies in his own kennels and also purchased puppies from other nearby breeding kennels and then sold (brokered) them to us.

Every time we received a delivery of puppies we immediately took them to our veterinarian to be examined.

Because there were so many health concerns, we also decided to wait ten days before selling any puppies — just in case one of the puppies showed signs of an illness. But even that didn't work. I never knew when I'd get a call from a customer saying "my puppy is sick." I would reimburse consumers for their veterinary bills, which was expensive. We didn't need to do that legally, but I wanted to. I didn't want to deceive my customers.

We could return sick puppies to the breeder, but I never did. I didn't want the animal killed. When I would notify the breeder about a health problem, he might discount the price or sometimes just tell my veterinarian to euthanize the animals — which I wouldn't allow.

So I decided we would no longer buy from breeders — and instead go humane, which meant working with rescue groups and holding adoption days at my stores.

The switch to a humane model has been highly successful

Some people ask me how that decision impacted my sales. Puppy sales alone made up about 22% of our sales. But the veterinarian expenses exceeded that amount. Plus, once we joined up with Coco's Heart Dog Rescue and people started hearing that we went humane, we got huge support. Within 2 years, our customer base grew about 70%. People who really care about animals and oppose puppy mills started buying their pet supplies from us. Even my employees were so happy we made the switch.

Going humane has been wonderful and has changed everything. The reward is so much greater. I fully support the humane pet store model and hope you will support the humane pet store bill for Minnesota.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. If you have any questions for me, I may be contacted at the email and phone number below.

Sincerely,

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