

LATE TESTIMONY

Testimony of Heidi A. Cregor, President of the Kerry Blue Terrier Club of Hawaii, in opposition to S.B.2494 and S.B. 2492.

I and my organization, The Kerry Blue Terrier Club of Hawaii, oppose cruelty to animals in all forms, including "puppy mills", the very name of which conjures up images of large numbers of dogs, kept in confined, squalid conditions, whose only purpose in life is the production of puppies for profit. These mills are antithetical to everything I and my fellow "dog fanciers" stand for. I abhor these mills and support their being put out of business, yet, I believe that this proposed bill "paints with too broad a brush" and will have the unintended consequence of damaging those of us who truly promote the best interests of our dogs and our breeds.

The stated purpose of the bills is to regulate large scale, profit driven canine breeding operations. We do not fit under either category, yet we would be directly impacted by these bills. It is well known that the very best puppies for pets, for show, for obedience and other dog related events and competitions come from the small "mom and pop" breeders. We are the people who breed for the sheer love of dogs and attempt to improve our breeds, by gradually breeding better, stronger, healthier animals, free of genetic diseases, defects and temperament shortcomings. As hobby breeders we do it for the love of dogs and profit is not our motive. Most of us don't even break even on a litter of puppies, and we do not sell through pet stores. We get our reward when one of our puppies (usually no longer owned by us) goes on to win a Best in Show, or High in Obedience trial, or field trial champion or, simply earns us the congratulations of our peers. If you buy a puppy from one of us hobby breeders, you can be sure that the puppy has had hours of individual attention lavished upon him. We stand behind our puppies and most provide some type of guarantee to the buyer. If the puppy is not show quality, or more accurately, not of a quality to genetically promote the breed, we have the option under the rules of the American Kennel Club, to sell the puppy with a limited (cannot be bred) registration.

Most of us are very small scale, often going years between litters and only breeding when the time is right in all respects. I myself have had very few litters, yet I am considered a breeder by my peers. Even for small scale hobby breeders like me, the provisions of this bill can be too restrictive and oppressive. Having ten intact dogs may sound like a lot until one remembers that to be eligible to enter a dog show, the dogs must be intact. It should be no surprise that we don't discard our older dogs as they retire from the show ring. Many of us have several well-loved retired dogs enjoying the back yard. So, a litter of puppies can really run the numbers up, especially in some breeds that have large litters. Yes, most pet dogs are gone by four months of age, but a good responsible breeder will often keep better show prospect puppies much longer to see how they develop before selling them. And, yes, these puppies continue to receive the same time and attention lavished upon them until they move on out. The bottom line is that the time limits set forth in this draft bill can squeeze out the most responsible breeders.

I am not too sure whether or not unannounced, warrantless inspections are still a part of the current draft of the bills, but you must recognize that among people in my category, our "kennels" are our homes. An inspection, or search, or our kennels would likely intrude into our very bedrooms, a situation that I do not believe any lawmaker would sanction.

I heartily applaud your attempts to abolish puppy mills but do request your finding a way to exempt those of us who occasionally breed, not for profit, but for the love of the dogs and the improvement of our chosen breeds. We are the ones who are actually improving conditions for the dogs themselves and should not be trapped in a numbers game.