

To: The Honorable Rachel Talbot Ross, Senate Chair, The Honorable Bill Pluecker, House Chair,
and Committee Members, Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and
Forestry

From: Kathy Hoppe, Portage Lake, Maine

Date: May 5, 2025

**RE: Oppose LD 1771, An Act to Strengthen Oversight of Kennels by Changing the Licensing
Authority from Municipalities to the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and
Forestry**

At quick glance LD 1771 may appear to be a simple administrative move of kennel licensing
from municipalities to the state but that is incorrect. LD 1771 does so much more.

1. It changes the legal status of the home to a state licensed facility. Currently
homeowners with 5 or more dogs or hobby breeders with 5 females capable of breeding
can obtain a municipal kennel license. The assumption is that this is in a home
environment, the dogs are in the home or yard. While a State license is for a facility not
a home. An animal facility is a commercial venture and generally not compatible with a
residential neighborhood and will result in zoning conflicts.
2. LD 1771 applies onerous and inappropriate burdens on pet owners and hobby breeders
by treating them as a commercial enterprise. . Pet owners with 5 or more dogs or hobby
breeders will be required to keep records, meet temperature controls, structural
requirements, ventilation, light ect. Lets be clear, these are your neighbors living in
homes not commercial boarding kennels or pet shops. They are your neighbor who
rescued 5 dogs, the golden retriever hobby breeder next door, the family who has a few
sled dogs so the kids can compete in skjoring or 30 miles sled dog races, or a coworker
who likes to hunt hares with his beagles. These are not commercial enterprises in
facilities.
3. LD 1771 significantly increases dog licensing costs. The current municipal kennel license
fee (\$42) covers the kennel license and 10 tags. In LD 1771 the State Kennel License fee
(\$50) covers only the State Kennel License, no tags. The state licensed kennel owner will
need to purchase, at an additional charge, a license for each dog. This results in an
increase between **186-305%**, depending on how many neutered or intact dogs (currently
\$7 for neutered and \$12 for intact).

Is there overwhelming evidence of a problem that justifies such a drastic change and increased burden on pet owners and hobby breeders?

No. Reviewing [Animal Welfare's 2023](#) Annual Report, the most recent report available, the Animal Welfare Program (AWP) reports only a 'handful' of complaints. It is interesting in a report full of numbers, AWP was unable to provide an exact number. In looking for a definition of 'handful' it can be anything as low as 3 to as many as 7. Did these 'handful' of complaints involve animal welfare issues? Did they need to seize dogs? **NO** they were *"noise nuisance due to barking, dogs being housed outside and tethered to dog houses or other structures, and sometimes allegations that these are, in fact, breeding facilities that fail to obtain a state breeding facility by instead maintaining a municipal kennel license."* None of these are terribly serious justifying the huge change in kennel licensing. And what is with '*allegations*'? Recognizing people make allegations or complaints to regulatory agencies all the time doesn't mean they are true. Yet what is more disturbing is that a professional state agency has chosen to echo '*allegations*' in a report. Reports should state the facts. If there was an unlicensed kennel then state so in the report, don't repeat allegations.

In the event these allegations are true, is there a process to address Animal Control Officers failure to enforcing the regulations?

Yes. There is a grievance procedure for citizens to use when they believe their ACO is not performing their job [3950-A Official Refusal or Neglect of Duty by a Municipal Officer Complaint Form](#). The 2023 report indicates AWP received 7 such complaints only one related to a municipal kennel but the report fails to indicate if a real problem was found and if it was resolved. At most there may have been ONE ACO who failed to perform their job when dealing with a municipal kennel. Regardless of their findings, what is important is that the AWP has a method to address ACO problems that is less disruptive and onerous to the pet owner or hobby breeder than requiring a State Kennel License.

Due to the significant burden that will be placed on pet owners and hobby breeders, the changing status of residential to commercial facility with the zoning conflict implications, and the lack of supporting evidence to justify the burden, I ask that the Committee vote ought not to pass and kill this bill.