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KENNEL CLUBSM

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March 9, 2021

The Honorable James Dill, Senate Chair
The Honorable Margaret O'Neil, House Chair
Joint Committee on Agriculture Conservation and Forestry
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

RE: American Kennel Club Recommends Amendment to LD 561, Improve Standards for Animal Rescue Entities

Dear Chairs Dill and O'Neil, and Members of the Committee:

The American Kennel Club (AKC) is a 135-year-old not-for-profit animal welfare organization recognized and trusted as the expert in canine health, breeding, training, and responsible dog ownership. We represent over 5,100 dog clubs nationally, including 31 clubs in Maine. We have raised over \$59 million for canine health research projects since 1995; donated millions to help local emergency management prepare for disasters and provide relief for people and their pets; and continue to offer lost dog recovery services that has reunited over 500,000 dogs with their families. Moreover, we inspect thousands of kennels every year to ensure the safety and welfare of AKC-registered dogs. AKC shares concerns regarding population issues that result in homeless dogs. In fact, breed rescue is a strong and longstanding part of the hobby breeder tradition and AKC has one of the largest rescue networks in the country.¹

LD 561 would require the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to adopt rules that set standards for animal rescue entities, including but not limited to rescue dog operations, that specify staff-to-animal ratios and that govern animals that are returned multiple times and resold or placed in multiple homes. The sponsor of LD 561 has indicated that the proposal is in response to a complaint from a rescue operation with over 50 dogs and the inability to provide adequate care and where a vicious dog was sold and returned three or four times. *AKC supports the intent of the bill and is submitting a suggestion for the committee's consideration.*

All organizations importing animals into Maine for resale or adoption must be a licensed pet shop or shelter and must hold a valid import permit with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (Department). The Department lists importers with a valid permit on its website.² Quarantine (holding) periods, the administration of core vaccinations, and certain testing must be completed before animals can be released for sale or adoption. Under the Department's enforcement of state animal cruelty laws, regulations require anyone owning or responsible for confining or impounding any animal to provide them with adequate shelter, sustenance, medical care, space, and humane conditions. Violations of these standards should be reported to the Department for appropriate action.

Animal Hoarding Disorder is a Complex Issue.

The Department has shared that it frequently encounters the hazardous accumulation of animals to a point where the owner or responsible person fails, or is unable, to provide care consistent with the Department's standards resulting in harm or danger to the health and wellbeing of the animals. Animal hoarding disorder is a relatively new mental health diagnosis officially recognized in the American Psychiatric

Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5).³ Individuals with animal hoarding disorder can be classified into three subtypes; the mission driven rescuer, the overwhelmed caregiver, and the exploiter. Shockingly, animal hoarding disorder causes more animal suffering than all acts of intentional cruelty combined.⁴ Data show that without treating the unique psychological symptoms of the condition, 100% of animal hoarders will repeat their behavior.⁵

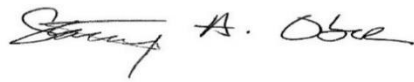
Three states now issue "Hoarding Disorder Awareness Week" proclamations to increase public awareness regarding this illness. They include Massachusetts, Washington, and Minnesota.⁶ If Maine were to adopt a similar proclamation, it might help communities recognize other areas in the state with the same challenges, acknowledge past attempts which have been unsuccessful, and explore with the Department what might work better.

Ensuring Public Health and Safety Must be a Priority.

Americans love their pets and the demand for dogs is high. Some dogs transported by rescue entities for re-homing may have unknown health and behavior histories. However, re-homing a dog with a vicious or dangerous history without sharing that knowledge is unacceptable. In response to this issue, the state of California enacted a new law in 2019, which requires animal shelters or rescue groups to provide information on the circumstances of each bite resulting in a skin break. The person buying or adopting the dog needs to sign a paper acknowledging they know about the history. If the shelter or group in question fails to give a history that they know about, then they can be fined up to \$500.⁷

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. If I can be of assistance to the committee, kindly contact me. I can be reached at (919) 816-3348 or Stacey.Ober@akc.org.

Sincerely,



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AKC Government Relations

CC: Liam Hughes, Director of Animal Welfare, Maine Department of Agriculture Conservation & Forestry
Nancy Daniels, President, Maine Federation of Dog Clubs

¹ "Facts and Stats," American Kennel Club National Breed Club Breed Rescues, accessed May 8, 2020 at <https://www.akc.org/press-center/articles-resources/facts-and-stats/akc-national-breed-club-rescue/>

² "Shelter/Rescue Import Permits," Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, accessed March 5, 2021 at https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ahw/animal_welfare/documents/Shelterrescueimportpermits.pdf

³ Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, American Psychiatric Association (2013).

⁴ Lee, C., "Never Enough: Animal Hoarding Law," *University of Baltimore Law Review*, 47 U. Balt. L. Rev. 23 (2017).

⁵ See Gee, C., "Never Enough: Animal Hoarding Law", *University of Baltimore Law Review*, 47 U. Balt. L. Rev. 23 (2017).

⁶ Girodat, J., "Legislative Proclamation for Hoarding Disorder Awareness Week Signed for 2020," North Shore Elder Services, March 11, 2020, accessed March 8, 2021 at <https://www.esmv.org/legislative-proclamation-for-hoarding-disorder-awareness-week-signed-for-2020/>.

⁷ Simon, E., "Animal Shelters Must Now Report Dog Bite History Under New California Law," *California Globe*, October 4, 2019, accessed March 8, 2021 at <https://californiaglobe.com/section-2/animal-shelters-must-now-report-dog-bite-history-under-new-california-law/>.