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To Chairman Dill, Chairman O'Neil and Members of the Committee on Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry:

As a representative of the Maine Veterinary Medical Association, I am testifying in support of LD 561, A Resolve To Improve Standards for Animal Rescue Entities.

In recent years the number of animal rescue entities has proliferated. The interstate transport of puppies and dogs for adoption is not federally regulated.

The American Veterinary Medical Association says the following about the industry:

"The best programs screen puppies and dogs at their origin for infectious diseases and aggressive behavior. Vaccinations, treatment and prevention for parasitic infestations, and medical treatment for other infectious conditions are provided before dogs and puppies are allowed to travel. Good programs do not transport dogs that pose a risk of carrying infectious diseases to the destination facility, those that pose a public health risk because of aggression or zoonotic disease, or those whose welfare will likely suffer during the process (e.g., those that are heavily pregnant, injured, or arthritic, or that have especially nervous dispositions). Well-run programs will also reclaim animals for re-homing if the original placement did not succeed, and will work with adopters if infectious diseases or behavioral problems become apparent soon after relocation. Originating shelters can benefit from an increase in their live release rate, reducing the number of dogs that have to be euthanized locally due to overpopulation. This can also free up resources (financial and staff time) to facilitate improved care for the dogs left behind in the shelter, and allow more spay and neuter outreach to the community to assist in addressing the community's overpopulation of dogs."¹

In addition to the above, staff-to-animal ratios and other operational regulations ensure the safety and welfare of the animals under the care of these entities.

We believe that Maine's Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) is particularly well suited to advise the Department on the creation of regulations and standards for animal rescue entities. This group has unfortunately been unable to meet since 2019 and is still awaiting confirmation of several members. We believe that the group should be reinstated as soon as possible to assist in creating these standards.

Sincerely,

Janelle D. Tirrell, DVM
MVMA Legislative Committee Chair

Katherine Soverel
MVMA Executive Director

¹ "Animal Rescue—Transporting Fido Across State Lines," American Veterinary Medical Association. Available at <https://www.avma.org/resources/animal-health-welfare/animal-rescue-transporting-fido-across-state-lines>.