

I am the Chairman of the Board of the American Kennel Club. The AKC is the largest and only significant not-for-profit dog registry and sanctioning body for competitive dog events in the US. We register nearly 1 million purebred dogs and over 400,000 litters of purebred puppies every year. Almost 17,000 competitive dog events are held nationally each year under AKC rules, attracting more than 2.5 million entries.

I cite these statistics to emphasize the importance of the sport of purebred dogs. Selling puppies is a business for some, but for many Americans who breed and raise purebred dogs, it is a hobby, a family sport, and a labor of love. The AKC was founded in this spirit 121 years ago, and this passion is still alive today.

The AKC, however, also provides registration services to all dog breeders, large or small, who meet our standards, including mandatory inspections of high volume breeders, dog identification and recordkeeping, care and condition standards for dogs and kennels, and DNA testing to check parentage of litters. This year we are on target to conduct approximately 5000 kennel inspections.

The AKC encourages puppy buyers to buy from responsible resources. We believe the vast majority of high volume breeders, as well as smaller breeding establishments, do a conscientious job of breeding and raising quality puppies, and care passionately about their animals.

However, we also know from our first hand experience in the field, that in spite of our efforts, and the efforts of the USDA, there are still significant problems that need to be addressed for the sake of both the dogs and the pet buying public.

Some of these are deficiencies in the Animal Welfare Act. Some result from changes in the marketplace and marketing techniques for dogs that have occurred in the 30 years since the Act was extended to dog dealers. That is why we are pleased that you have focused your attention, and the attention of Congress, on the need to strengthen the Act. We are pleased to be working with you in that effort.

As you know, we did not support your previous legislation intended to address the problems of so-called puppy mills, because we felt that federal regulation of practices for breeding and socialization of puppies was the wrong approach. However, PAWS takes a different approach. It gives the USDA access to source records of persons who acquire dogs for resale, provides a realistic limitation on license suspensions for violators, and gives the USDA effective authority to close down egregious violators. These are essential tools for the USDA to effectively enforce the Act. We do not expect the USDA to have to use these tools often. But the fact that the USDA has these tools, will create an incentive for persons to obtain licenses and quickly

correct violations.

We also know from the AKC's own experience that the time has come to bring under regulation high volume breeders and brokers who sell at retail or who import puppies in volume for resale. However, it is also essential that we maintain the sport and hobby of purebred dog breeding and exhibiting as it is today, an activity regulated by our own rigorous compliance requirements. PAWS should focus the federal government's regulatory resources on realistic targets and goals. We appreciate the dealer provisions of PAWS, as you have clarified them. We especially appreciate the addition of the provision that will exempt retailers based on kennel inspection standards of not-for-profit organizations certified by the Secretary of Agriculture. This will focus enforcement on the high volume retail breeders and importers whom it is appropriate to regulate without imposing federal regulation on hobby and show breeders.

Mr. Chairman, we thank you for your hard work and leadership on this important issue. We thank you for your flexibility and openness to new approaches. We look forward to continuing to work with you to develop and secure passage of legislation that will be good for our beloved dogs.