

May 26, 2010

Senator Jim Hughes, chairman and committee members
Senate State and Local Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

Opposition to Sub-SB 95:

My name is Norma Bennett Woolf. I have previously testified against SB 95 on behalf of Ohio Valley Dog Owners Inc. I am also the American Kennel Club legislative liaison from the Clermont County Kennel Club and a CCKC board member, and I am here today with the following testimony from the CCKC board of directors.



**Clermont
County
Kennel
Club, Inc.**

CCKC is one of more than 100 AKC-affiliated clubs in Ohio. We host three annual weekend events that provide competition opportunities for owners of purebred dogs and support local businesses. These events have provided dollars to give pet oxygen masks to county fire departments, bulletproof dog vests to county police departments, support for canine health research, and most recently donate a scholarship to a veterinary technician student at the University of Cincinnati. Our members are active in canine-assisted therapy programs, responsible dog ownership education, purebred dog rescue, and pet dog training.

In addition to charitable contributions, community service, and dog shows, club members help preserve and protect more than 160 breeds of dogs, safeguarding their historic relationship with man and their place in modern society. Sub-SB 95 will hamper these activities if the bill is approved as written.

Kennel license

New language in Section 955.02 combined with the definition of a breeding dog as an intact dog in new section 956.01 requires the owner of an intact dog to buy a kennel license. Although most of our members keep intact dogs, many do not breed and will be harmed by this provision as follows:

Shows: Dog showing is a hobby indulged in by those who love their breeds. Only intact dogs can participate in conformation shows. However, most intact purebred dogs are never bred and many owners of show dogs never become breeders – we keep intact dogs so we can compete.

Health: Sterilization surgeries have health consequences. Removal of reproductive hormones affects growth, and recent evidence shows that spayed and neutered dogs have a higher incidence of some cancers and are subject to structural malformations that can lead to injuries. Sterilized female dogs have a higher incidence of urinary incontinence, and many altered dogs tend to become overweight and thereby susceptible to a number of other health problems.

Local zoning: Some local jurisdictions prohibit kennels in residential zones. Under current law, responsible breeders who produce an occasional litter in their homes are exempt from a kennel license per an attorney general's opinion. Under new language in Section 955.02, these breeders and other owners of intact dogs will be required to have a kennel license by the state but refused such a license by their local government. They will be left with few options: they can sell their homes and move or they can sterilize their dogs in spite of the health concerns or their pursuit of dog breeding and showing as a hobby.

Inspections: Most counties allow inspections of kennels. If an owner of an intact dog is required to buy a kennel license even though no breeding is planned, that owner's home will be subject to inspection by the dog warden.

Cost: A kennel license fee is generally five times the amount of the individual dog license fee we are now required to pay. Most intact dogs are never bred, making this increase an unfair burden on owners and exhibitors who own fewer than five intact dogs but do not breed.

Summary: Whether by accident or design, Sub-SB 95 is a bill that will drive responsible breeders out of a business or hobby with its onerous restrictions and standards. New section 955.02 will inevitably lead to a decline in the number of hobby breeders and dog show exhibitors in Ohio. This decline will affect the survival of rare breeds and will damage clubs like CCKC that host events, donate to rescue efforts and canine health research, support local businesses, promote responsible dog ownership, and serve as a resource for pet owners and local governments.

Rescue

CCKC members have no objection to holding rescue groups to realistic standards. However, Sub-SB 95 goes too far by subjecting rescuers to massive paperwork requirements, state approval of adoption fees, and registration of foster homes and by holding rescues to the heavy-handed standards listed in Section 956.08.

Most kennel club members who do rescue keep the dogs in their homes. The dogs that enter rescue are often in poor or marginal condition, a situation that could trigger a complaint and a home inspection under language in the bill. If the rescuer has more than three dogs in an enclosure, uses a crate that is “incompatible based on observation,” fails to provide coated wire on an exercise pen, etc., he will be in violation of the law even if the dogs are not adversely affected.

Rescues have a difficult time finding foster families to rehabilitate and evaluate dogs for new homes. Adding paperwork and state registration requirements will make it more difficult to enlist and keep foster homes.

Conclusion

CCKC urges the committee to revert to current language in Section 955.02 that describes a kennel as “a person, partnership, firm, company, or corporation professionally engaged in the business of breeding dogs hunting or for sale.” This language has served Ohio and Ohio breeders well for decades and is fair to hobby breeders and small commercial kennels.

We also urge you to reconsider the language affecting rescue organizations in Section 956.01 (B), 956.03 (D) & (E), 956.06, 956.10, 956.11. These volunteer organizations already face hurdles in finding foster homes, funding veterinary care, and locating new homes for hard-to-place dogs. They will suffer if required to file paperwork with the state, register foster homes that may only house a dog for a few days or weeks, or comply with dozens of regulations written for commercial kennels.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Sub-SB 95. I will be happy to answer any questions now or later.



Norma Bennett Woolf for the officers and board of the Clermont County Kennel Club
6142 N State Route 48, Lebanon, Ohio 45036
(513) 932-3176; cckcodbiz@canismajor.com