

April 17, 2020

Governor Ned Lamont
Office of the Governor
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Emailed to: Chief of Staff, Paul Mounds - Paul.Mounds@ct.gov

Cc: David Lehman, Commissioner, Department of Economic and Community Development - david.lehman@ct.gov
Bryan Hurlburt, Commissioner, Department of Agriculture - bryan.hurlburt@ct.gov
Renee Coleman, Commissioner, Department of Public Health - renee.coleman@ct.gov

Re: 1) Disallowing sale of puppies, kittens, and other animals in pet shops; 2) Encouraging food pantries to carry pet food

Dear Governor Lamont,

1. Please disallow the sale of puppies, kittens, and other animals in pet shops.

We, the undersigned, respectfully ask for modification (or clarification) of Executive Order 7H such that it would disallow the sale of puppies, kittens, and other animals by pet shops. It is the right thing to do for both public health and animal health.

Per Executive Order 7H, pet stores have been designated as an “essential” business and as such, have been allowed to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate the intent and understand that pet stores selling food and supplies should be able to continue to sell those products. However, importing and selling puppies, kittens, and other small animals at this time is clearly not a service required to maintain the health, welfare, and safety of the citizens of Connecticut.

Currently, up to eleven pet stores are importing new puppies for sale from out of state, which puts employees and customers at greater risk. Unlike the sale of items like pet food and supplies, the sale of animals requires (1) additional employees to be present in the store; (2) access to routine and emergency medical care by veterinary staff; (3) prolonged contact with customers; and (4) interstate transportation – all which risk transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

Further, with limited inspections at both the state and federal level due to COVID-19, it will be difficult if not impossible to monitor the health of the imported animals and whether pet stores are otherwise adhering to related sanitary regulations (separate and apart from social distancing requirements). Notably, almost all pet store puppies originate at midwestern puppy mills (i.e., large scale breeding operations that prioritize profit over animal welfare) and were identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as the source of a December 2019 outbreak of multi-drug resistant *Campylobacter* that sickened a Connecticut resident.

The CDC remains concerned about risk of *Campylobacter* outbreaks in pet stores. In a recent letter to The Humane Society of the United States (see Fig. 1), the CDC stated: “recent investigations led by CDC and state health departments indicate that *Campylobacter* is still being transmitted to people through pet store puppies.” Further, “CDC is concerned that the risk to employees and customers exposed to puppies sold in pet stores is continuing.” Allowing sick pet store puppies who are sometimes contagious to humans to enter the supply chain during this pandemic is irresponsible and dangerous.

At this time, similar requests to stop the sale of pets in pet shops are being made by our neighbors in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

2. Please issue a statement encouraging food pantries to carry pet food.

In light of the extreme and likely prolonged economic hardship being experienced by many people, we ask that you encourage all food banks and food pantries to carry and distribute pet food. Currently, many food pantries offer pet food but some do not. Some towns have food delivery services to the needy but leave pet food delivery to the town animal control. This is highly inefficient. Anecdotally, we have heard of caretakers rationing pet food and sharing already limited human food with pets. We understand that presently, there is sufficient availability of pet food, but making it easily available to pet caretakers is the challenge.

Animals play a significant role in people's sense of security and mental well-being. Certainly, we know that in both acute and chronic crises (e.g., natural disasters; domestic violence; homelessness), pet caretakers have consistently demonstrated a willingness to endure significant hardship rather than give up or separate from their pets. For many seniors, a pet is their lifeline to companionship during this time of extreme isolation. Helping people get their pets fed is a significant way to help reduce the anxiety created by the pandemic. Ensuring that pet food is accessible will also help some families keep their pets, and will reduce surrenders to animal shelters and abandonments, both factors that would burden animal control services, private shelters, and rescues. A strong statement of encouragement from your Office would go a long way to ensuring that food for people's pets will be readily available.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,



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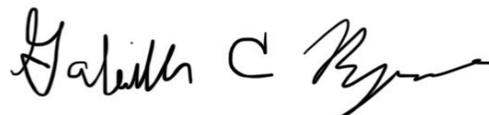


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Gabrielle C. Reynolds
Bailing Out Benji
Connecticut Team Leader

Figure 1: Letter from CDC to HSUS, dated April 14, 2020

