



AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB<sup>SM</sup>

June 21, 2010

**Re. Oppose Senate Bill 460**

Honorable Members of the North Carolina House Finance Committee:

The American Kennel Club (AKC) remains gravely concerned about Senate Bill 460 as currently written and we respectfully ask that your committee not allow this bill to advance.

As the world's largest and most respected not-for-profit dog registry, AKC represents 139 kennel clubs in North Carolina, comprised of thousands of your constituents and taxpayers. Over 250 North Carolinians also work in our Raleigh operations center, furthering our mission, which includes advancing canine health and well-being, educating the public about responsible dog ownership, and protecting the rights of all responsible dog owners. In 2009 alone, the AKC sanctioned and licensed approximately 450 dog events throughout the state, and purebred dog activities brought the state over \$5 million in revenue.

The AKC is extremely concerned about the problem of substandard puppy breeders and sellers that this bill purports to address. Every time a substandard kennel is found, it reflects badly on all breeders, including the vast majority of responsible breeders and owners who care for their dogs, volunteer as community educational resources through local kennel clubs and other groups, and who dedicate their lives to the well-being of their beloved breed.

We believe so strongly about the ensuring the well-being of dogs and puppies that we are the only purebred not-for profit registry in the country that runs its own inspections program. AKC spends over \$6 million a year to ensure that breeders who register with us are inspected.

When addressing issues of canine welfare, AKC brings 125 years of experience and expertise to the conversation. With our state federation, the North Carolina Federation of Dog Clubs, we have made a number of suggestions and issued a number of concerns regarding ways this bill could be improved. However, several major problems with this bill continue to make it unworkable for responsible breeders and owners:

- **Commercial breeder definition.** If the bill is designed to regulate commercial operations, it should define commercial breeders based on the number of dogs sold each year, rather than on what an individual owns. The current definition is unclear as to whether the threshold is based on a cumulative number of dogs owned over a lifetime, or the number on a property at one time. As currently written, there is no way to know who this bill affects.
- **Weakened ability to protect North Carolina dogs.** North Carolina already has effective laws criminalizing animal negligence and cruelty, including a new law passed last week (S 254) which imposes tough new felony penalties on cruelty. *The state's existing animal welfare statutes, if properly enforced, actually do a better job of protecting dogs than SB 460.*
- **Creation of a new, unfunded mandate for counties.** SB 460 makes county authorities responsible for conducting investigations and follow-up work pursuant to the state's motion. It does not, however, provide funding for this. In this difficult economic climate, it is unnecessary and unwise to create a costly new program and require North Carolina counties and their taxpayers to find the funding to properly implement it.
- **False and misleading legislative findings.** The bill's legislative findings are based on unsubstantiated claims and state that the bill does not interfere with a person's right to participate in hunting and working activities with their dog. *However, the bill only exempts those who board or train – not breed – dogs for these purposes.*

For these reasons, the AKC respectfully urges you to reject SB 460 and not allow it to advance in your committee. Once again, I would like to reiterate that we would welcome the opportunity to be considered a stakeholder in this matter and to work with you in the coming year to help develop a more comprehensive measure that would ensure the health and welfare of dogs sold in our state without punishing North Carolina's responsible dog breeders and taxpayers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheila H. Goffe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Sheila Goffe  
Director, Government Relations