

Testimony on SB 414

Senate Agriculture Committee

February 22, 2012

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Courtney Thomas, CEO of Heartland SPCA, an animal welfare organization located in Merriam, KS. Heartland SPCA's Mission is *to save, protect and improve the lives of animals, while strengthening the relationship between pets and their human companions*. I am a Certified Animal Welfare Administrator (CAWA), one of only 79 CAWA's in the country, and have more than 20 years of professional and volunteer experience in the animal welfare field. As currently written, I oppose SB 414.

I am here today to oppose and influence consideration to amend SB 414 to require annual inspections of all licensees under the Kansas Pet Animal Act (KPAA) and to retain K.S.A. 47-1712 (c).

At present, the proposed bill does make two improvements to the KPAA; (1) it deletes an exemption for greyhounds so that all dogs will be covered by the KPAA and (2) it imposes the requirement for adequate veterinary medical care on all USDA licensed animal breeders and distributors that operate in Kansas.

However, the proposed bill strikes K.S.A. 47-1712 (c) and fails to make other critical changes necessary to protect animals. We all have an obligation to protect the health and well-being of all the pets in our state. Eliminating the requirement that pets entering or leaving the state of Kansas must be free from visible signs or symptoms of communicable diseases puts all animals at risk. As a shelter, this significantly and negatively impacts our organization as it passes off the responsibility of health and the expense to treat pre-existing, contagious health issues to our non-profit agency. Ensuring pets are healthy prior to transport into or out of our state is the responsible and ethical action that should be taken. Every year we accept dozens, sometimes hundreds of animals from state-level initiatives where animals are being removed from sub-standard conditions. Our organization suffers the burden to invest the resources necessary to prepare that animal for a new home – or a worse outcome being the investment in euthanasia for an animal who has suffered for too long.

As the goal exists to be the animal health capital of the world, we should all be aiming to build a standard of care for animals in our state that others will aspire to model. Not taking a step in a backwards direction, as would be the result in striking K.S.A. 47-1712 (c).

In the last few years Kansas has seen an increase in sub-standard facilities and an increased number of hoarders. The proactive solution to these challenges is mandating a state policy of annual facility inspection for rescues, shelters, fosters, and breeders. It is the humane, responsible, ethical thing to do.

To that end, I am asking you to amend Senate Bill 414 to require annual inspections of all licensees under the KPAA and retain K.S.A. 47-1712 (c). With your support, all animals will be provided the humane living conditions they need and deserve.