

February 16, 2017

Dear Representatives,

I was born and raised in Abilene, Kansas, and from as early as I can remember, greyhounds were a part of my life. Greyhounds were originally bred to hunt and guard, not to race.

For the last three years, my job was working at a greyhound kennel in Abilene. From the time the greyhounds were puppies we let them run free in 1,600 foot pens. Watching the puppies chase each other was my favorite part of working at the kennel.

But as time went on, I saw that the mother greyhounds and their puppies were not viewed as the unique individuals that I saw them as. Greyhound breeding and training was a business. Every dog was viewed as a carbon copy of the same dog, each expected to behave the same way and perform to a specified standard. There was no room for error, illness or injury.

At twelve months old, they no longer ran free in the fenced area. They were relegated to a twenty by twenty foot room where they lived in small crates, one stacked on top of the other. After being in these crates for hours overnight, all they wanted to do is run and play. But for the 40 minutes the greyhounds are outside in the morning you have to keep the energy level and barking down because a fight could happen at any minute. Some of the wounds the dogs had weren't from racing, but from fighting. It is much easier to keep them separated in their crates.

When it was time to train, we took the dogs to a field, worked on lure training, ginny training to teach them to turn left, and eventually big track training to chase the lure. One day, a dog caught the mechanical lure. I watched the lure drag him several hundred feet until he flipped end over end and broke his front leg.

This was not unique. Half, if not more, of the greyhounds we worked with came back to us from the race track with broken bones. Foot fractures are the worst to heal; quarter bone fractures and thigh injuries were common with all the dogs. The bones in greyhound legs are thin and lightweight, not as dense as many breeds, and it makes them more susceptible to injury.

The puppies I watched run the fences together and chase rabbits in the field came back from the track too injured to ever run again. We used to say that "greyhound heaven" must be filled with couches for the greyhounds to finally rest their bodies.

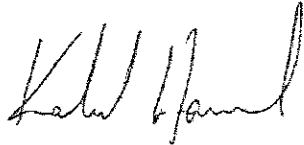
The common belief is that there are around 10-15 greyhound farms in Abilene, but the reality is there are about 50. One person alone owns 12 greyhound farms. Those kennels have cement floors caked with mud and feces. Because the greyhounds are fed fresh meat, if you do not take the time to clean up after them, the bowls and kennels were filled with maggots and flies. The greyhounds at the other kennels had fly strikes on their ears from living outside with no relief indoors from the heat or cold. Their injuries were not treated as urgently and often not treated at all because it was so costly. Once injured, many of the dogs were euthanized as surplus, or taken out in a field to be shot.

These are kennels registered and overseen by the National Greyhound Association. These are the kennels that will provide the dogs for the tracks that reopen, and after a day of racing, this is the life the greyhounds will come back to. In the three years I worked at the greyhound farm, it was never once inspected.

Make no mistake - this is a business. Greyhounds are forced to train and race as commercial commodities, not run as companion animals. I love greyhounds, but I hate to see their fragile bodies race.

I urge you to vote NO on House Bill 2173.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kaleb Harwood". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kaleb Harwood
Lawrence, KS