

Memo

To: Munster Town Council Members and Town Manager Dustin Anderson

From: Samantha Morton, Indiana State Director, The Humane Society of the United States.

Date: 12/16/21

Re: Munster Humane Pet Store Ordinance

Dear Honorable Members of the Munster Town Council and Mr. Anderson:

Thank you for considering a humane pet store ordinance in the Town of Munster. There are several key reasons why Munster should pass a humane pet store ordinance:

A significant number of puppies and kittens sold at pet shops come from large-scale, commercial breeding facilities where the health and welfare of the animals are not adequately provided for. The documented abuses endemic to puppy and kitten mills include over-breeding; inbreeding; minimal to non-existent veterinary care; lack of adequate and nutritious food, water and shelter; lack of socialization; lack of adequate space and lack of adequate exercise.

The inhumane conditions in puppy and kitten mill facilities lead to health and behavioral issues in the animals bred in those facilities, which many consumers are unaware of when purchasing animals from pet shops due to both a lack of education on the issue and misleading tactics of pet shops in some cases. These health and behavioral issues, which may not present themselves until sometime after the purchase of the animals, can impose exorbitant financial and emotional costs on consumers.

Prohibiting the retail sale of puppies and kittens is likely to decrease the demand for puppies and kittens bred in puppy and kitten mills and is likely to increase demand for animals from animal shelters and rescue organizations. Prohibiting the retail sale of puppies and kittens will likely reduce pet overpopulation and thus the burden on such agencies and financial costs on local taxpayers.

Across the country, thousands of independent pet shops as well as large chains operate profitably with a business model focused on the sale of pet services and supplies and not on the sale of dogs and cats. Many of these shops collaborate with local animal shelters and rescue organizations to offer space and support for showcasing adoptable homeless pets on their premises. Further, this ordinance will not affect a consumer's ability to obtain a dog or cat of his or her choice directly from a breed-specific rescue organization or a shelter, or from a hobby breeder where the consumer can see directly the conditions in which the dogs or cats are bred, or can confer directly with the hobby breeder concerning those conditions.

We urge the Town of Munster to join the over 400 communities across the county (including six in Indiana) and five states that have already adopted humane pet store ordinances. A humane pet store ordinance will reduce the demand for puppy mill puppies, protect puppies from the puppy-mill-pet store pipeline, protect consumers from a wide range of problems and will support responsible pet businesses and pet acquisition. We also urge Munster to pass this ordinance to prevent future puppy-selling pet stores moving from Illinois into the Munster community, as has already occurred in Hammond, Portage and Schererville. The Illinois state law prohibiting the sale of dogs and cats in pet stores takes effect in February 2022.

Please let me know if you have any questions that I can answer before the December 20, 2021, Town of Munster Council Meeting. Thank you for your consideration!