



December 10, 2020

Via Regular and Electronic Mail to [sunset@sunset.texas.gov](mailto:sunset@sunset.texas.gov)  
The Texas Sunset Commission  
P.O. Box 13066  
Austin, TX 78711

Re: HSUS' Written Testimony in Support of TDLR's Texas Licensed Breeders Program

Dear Commissioners:

We thank the Texas Sunset Advisory Commissioners and Staff for your continued dedicated work during the COVID-19 pandemic and are grateful for the opportunity to provide written testimony on this important issue. The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ending the cruelest practices impacting animals. Across the nation, we are leading the fight to protect animals kept in inhumane breeding operations, or puppy mills, and have staff with decades of experience researching and addressing the impacts of commercial breeding policies on animal health and safety, as well as consumer protection. Along with thousands of our Texas supporters, we have, for years, worked with Texas policymakers at local and state levels to implement reasonable and highly effective policies to improve animal welfare in our state, including the Texas Dog or Cat Breeder Act.

HSUS supports the Texas Licensed Breeders Program ("Program") and asks the Commissioners to reject Staff's recommendation to abolish the program. Although we believe there are ways that the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) could strengthen the program, our primary objective is that it remain in effect. Repealing this important program would be a significant step backwards for animal welfare and would place Texas squarely on the wrong side of the puppy mill issue as compared to the majority of states.

The Program is not duplicative of the inspection and licensing program conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Perhaps most importantly, nearly 60% of state licensed breeders have no USDA oversight and would have no oversight at all without the state program. Additionally, the Program has stronger animal welfare requirements than USDA's regulations, including providing adequate rest for mother dogs between breeding cycles and requiring grooming—two vital components of animal welfare, but which USDA's regulations don't even address.



State inspectors have a long record of ensuring veterinary care is provided to dogs who gravely need it, enclosures are large enough, exercise is provided, and conditions are sanitary.

Additionally, abolishing the Licensed Breeders Program and relying solely on local law enforcement to address abuses that rise to the level of animal cruelty will almost certainly lead to a larger and more inhumane facilities in our state and will be an immense financial burden on our law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement agencies cannot proactively inspect breeders or hold breeders to standards of care that are currently required by the Program. Without the current animal welfare provisions in the Program, breeders would merely have to provide dogs with the bare minimum of care needed to stay just above the cruelty threshold. This would undoubtedly lead to immense suffering. In the rare instances when law enforcement is able to crack down on problem breeders, we know that seizures place a frequently unmanageable burden on local resources, including animal shelters who end up having care for sick, injured, and traumatized animals. HSUS has participated in many commercial breeder cruelty seizures and have seen associated costs well into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Few local governments can absorb these massive costs in a normal year, much less in the economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The HSUS urges the Commission to reverse its suggestion to abolish the Licensed Breeder Program so that Texas maintains the ability take proactive steps to stop animal care conditions at commercial breeding facilities from getting out of control, rather than merely having law enforcement react to the worst cases. The values of pet-loving Texans cannot be represented by the state turning its back on thousands of breeding animals.

Sincerely,

Lauren Loney

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