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December 10, 2020

Texas Sunset Commission
P O Box 13066
Austin, TX 78711

Re: Written Testimony in Support of Keeping the Licensed Breeder Program

Dear Members:

Since 2004, Houston PetSet (HPS), a Houston-based nonprofit organization, has been making a difference in the lives of suffering, abused, and abandoned animals for more than 16 years. Our mission is to end homelessness and suffering of companion animals and elevate their status in society. HPS's approach to achieving our mission is data-driven and focused on collaborative solutions. Since Houston PetSet's founding, the organization has provided more than \$3 million in funding and outreach to over 100 animal welfare, shelter, and rescue groups. Additionally, we work with multiple government entities and law enforcement agencies on a variety of animal welfare and animal cruelty issues.

We are writing to submit into testimony our State's need to both keep and improve the efficacy of the **Texas Licensed Breeders Program**.

The intent of this bill was to enact basic standards of care in medium to large scale breeding operations in order to reduce the amount of animal cruelty, as well as to create reasonable barriers of entry for prospective "puppy mills."

The considerations for this are varied and vital:

- The Texas Licensed Breeders Program continues to keep breeders in check and without this regulation the state loses a consistent way to track whether breeders with animal cruelty convictions are applying to breed or sell dogs and cats in Texas.
- Abolishing the Licensed Breeder Program is all but certain to mean returning to the days of large-scale seizures of hundreds of animals. Creating burdens for municipalities and their law enforcement agencies, not to mention the harm to the animals.
- Abolishing the Licensed Breeder Program will undermine what little consumer protection there is for Texans buying dogs. Currently the USDA is



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Texas Sunset Commission

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- the only entity overseeing large scale commercial breeders in Texas however, the USDA only covers 65 out of 400 breeders advertising in Texas.
- We have an ethical obligation to take reasonable measures in preventing animal cruelty. Our animals are perhaps some of the most vulnerable in our society and have been left in our care. Our treatment of them is a reflection of who we are.

In order to further refine the efficiency and intent of this bill, we propose to not only keep the Texas Licensed Breeders Program, but to also (1) reduce the number of breeding females from eleven to five in order to bring it into alignment with current USDA standards, (2) incorporate law-enforcement in cruelty checks and seizures, and (3) enact harsher penalties for those found in violation of these laws.

Sunsetting this program will result in undue harm for our state's companion animals and will place a greater strain on municipalities who struggle with this problem every day. The **Texas Licensed Breeders Program** must be kept and improved.

For the Animals,

Tena Lundquist Faust
Houston PetSet Co-President

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Houston PetSet Co-President