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*Chicago Aims to Limit Your Ability to Acquire a Purebred Dog as Your Next Pet:
Proposed City Ordinance Eliminates Consumer Pet Choice, Threatens Pet Safety*

Washington, D.C. – Chicago’s proposed ordinance that will force the closure of pet stores that sell animals creates new dangers for consumers and does nothing to protect pets. Why? Because right now, licensed United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) breeders – and Illinois regulated pet stores – are held to a higher standard of humane treatment. Once the option to purchase a pet from a pet store is removed, those who wish to purchase purebred, or specific breeds of animals, will have no choice but to use sources outside of Chicago, possibly outside of Illinois, and many of them will be unregulated breeders who make deals over the Internet and in parking lots where there are no protections for pets nor any – zero! – for the consumer.

Consumers who purchase pets from retail pet stores have both a greater degree of consumer protection *and* the greatest opportunity and access to the highest quality veterinary care – in the rare incidents that an animal becomes seriously ill within the first year of life. This set of facts was highlighted by The Chicago Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) in a statement they just released regarding this ill-conceived City of Chicago proposed ordinance.

This document further states that “The Chicago Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) strongly believes that ongoing education is a much more effective method to increase pet owner awareness and bring about the desired positive change necessary to address valid concerns regarding unethical, unscrupulous breeders who are the ultimate problem.” The entirety of the statement is available here <http://www.chicagovma.org/article/cvma-statement-city-chicago-proposed-companion-animal-and-consumer-protection-ordinance#.Uw4HZPJjuQbU.email>.

Ken Oh, president & CEO of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC), encourages the Chicago City Council to change its proposed ordinance to one that strictly prohibits the purchase of pets from unlicensed, out-of-state breeders or USDA licensed breeders who have recent, uncorrected, direct USDA inspection violations which reflect serious issues that could be harmful to animals. Mr. Oh went on to say that most animals purchased in pet stores in Chicago come from USDA licensed breeders with solid federal government inspection records.

PIJAC has long promoted programs which encourage the adoption of best practices in pet stores including educating individuals and families on proper pet care and assisting the public in finding the right pet for their families.

Presently the IL Public Act 098-0509 exists to protect the pet owners in the City of Chicago and State of Illinois. The Act provides for pet retailer penalties and remedies for consumers if they purchase a pet with medical problems. If the City of Chicago passes this proposed ordinance these protections will disappear as the public will no longer have access to highly regulated pet stores from which to acquire their pets.

“Consumers should have the right to choose a pure bred, shelter or rescue pet.” says Oh. “Some politicians in Chicago want to take that right away from its residents. Pet stores offer one option, shelters and rescues other options, but people should be able to have a choice when it comes to choosing their pets.”

PIJAC knows that the elimination of consumer choice via pet store animal sales would be a regrettable for both animals and consumers – putting pets and consumers at risk, increasing transactions with unregulated breeders with no consumer protection and, certainly, none for the animals who will be purchased from unregulated sources.

The Chicago City Council Committee on License and Consumer Protection will meet on the ordinance to amend the Municipal Code of Chicago regulating the retail sale of cats and dogs on Tuesday, March 4, 2014 at Noon, Room 201A, City Hall.

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The Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) is comprised of members of the pet industry, nationwide, including pet food and pet supply manufacturers, veterinarians, retailers, pet day care and boarding facilities, groomers among others. PIJAC provides its members a voice in state and national legislative issues and has supported pro-pet legislation and regulations for forty years. With over \$183 million donated in the form of food and general supplies, as well as direct monetary aid, the pet industry has helped more than 7.5 million homeless and shelter pets in the last two decades. More information can be found at www.pijac.org.