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Media Contact:

Dustin Siggins
(202) 452-1525 x1080
Dustin@pijac.org

**Leading Companion Animal Advocacy Group Condemns Misleading Rescue, Shelter Practices
Uncovered by *The Washington Post***

ALEXANDRIA, VA— A leading companion animal advocacy group representing pet owners and pet care professionals called for federal and state authorities to address the practices of 86 rescues and shelters uncovered by a *Washington Post* report.

“*The Washington Post’s* report on shelters and rescues buying dogs from auctions and characterizing them as ‘rescues’ is disturbing but unfortunately not surprising,” said Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) President Mike Bober. “At least 86 groups from across the country have engaged in this practice, including several named in the *Post’s* well-researched article.”

According to the *Post*, the groups used over two million dollars – often raised through crowdsourcing – to buy healthy, purpose-bred dogs at auction, with some groups engaged in a bidding process that increased the price of the dogs. The groups allegedly then portrayed those dogs to the public as rescue animals in desperate need of a home.

“Thousands of Americans have been misled into thinking their dogs were ‘rescued,’ when in fact they were raised in high-quality, well-socialized circumstances like those illustrated in the *Post’s* story and the *Post’s* profile of one licensed commercial breeder,” continued Bober. “Like dogs found in pet stores, these well-socialized and healthy animals were purchased and then offered for resale.”

Bober said that PIJAC is concerned about the story because his group stands for transparency, animal care, and consumer protection. “Animal care should be the priority of *everyone* who connects people with pets,” Bober said. “It’s not negotiable.”

Federal and state laws regulate licensed and inspected commercial dog breeders. Pet stores are regulated by state authorities. Bober said that the rescues and shelters engaging in business transactions should be treated the same way as licensed dealers who purchase dogs and then resell them. “This kind of activity by shelters and rescues should be similarly regulated at the state and federal level to protect animals and the public,” he explained. “Record-keeping and reporting requirements would ensure that – when possible – accurate information is provided to prospective pet owners. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) oversight would ensure these groups provide appropriate care for the dogs for which they are receiving compensation.”

“Much of this information is readily available – one auction owner told the *Post* that he requires vaccination records for all dogs.”

“We urge the USDA and authorities in all 50 states to take steps to ensure that *all* providers of dogs are well-regulated and properly overseen,” concluded Bober. “Like pet stores and USDA-licensed dealers,

shelters and rescues must be required to provide health and history records for dogs they offer. These dogs deserve protection and oversight, and the dog-loving public deserves truth and transparency.”

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Since 1970, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) has protected pets, pet owners and the pet industry – promoting responsible pet ownership and animal welfare, fostering environmental stewardship, and ensuring the availability of pets. PIJAC members include retailers, companion animal suppliers, manufacturers, wholesale distributors, manufacturers’ representatives, pet hobbyists, and other trade organizations.