



February 24, 2022

Rep. Michael Nelson, Chair  
State Government Finance and Elections Committee

Re: Opposition to HF 208 – Companion Animal Board

Dear Chair Nelson and members of the Committee:

The Minnesota Pet Breeders Association (MnPBPA) has been in existence since 2005 and is comprised of professional and hobbyist dog breeders. Our members raise family pets, show dogs, hunting dogs, sporting dogs, therapy dogs, small dogs, large dogs, sled dogs, and more. Our membership is also open to those who raise any other types of companion animals such as cats, birds, and rabbits.

MnPBPA offers continuing education by hosting professional seminars each year where information about the latest canine health care practices, nutritional studies and industry news is shared. Speakers at these seminars are veterinarians, University professors, national experts in canine reproduction and rearing, nutritional experts, etc. These seminars are offered FREE to both members and non-members alike.

Our organization promotes responsible pet ownership and breeding practices, and we also try to highlight the positive impact that our industry provides to the State of Minnesota's economy. Our professional and hobby businesses contribute by providing employment opportunities and by supporting other Minnesota businesses such as dog food manufacturers, veterinarians, and retail supply stores. Shows and trials held by various organizations attract exhibitors who patronize local hotels, restaurants, and shopping.

**We oppose HF 208 and its proposal to form a Companion Animal Board.**

**The Companion Animal Board (CAB) proposal is a solution looking for a problem that simply doesn't exist**

One genuine difference between the BAH and the CAB is the provision of animal care advice to pet owners. An abundance of programs and services are now provided by nonprofit groups and by businesses and pet breeders, and seemingly endless sources are available on the internet. The BAH does not have an information and referral service. There is no need to use tax dollars to replicate or replace what private organizations are providing with donation, sales, and program fees. If the legislature finds that a "pet care clearing house" to serve pet owners should be operated by state government, it can simply appropriate money for that to the BAH at a small fraction of what is proposed in HF 208.

**The proposed CAB make-up is problematic; proposed powers of CAB are unnecessary and concerning**

Several of the organizations represented on the proposed CAB would be likely to receive, or at least request, money their representatives would have a voice in disbursing, and which would

have the benefit of the CAB in promoting their campaigns, which may include influencing legislation and fundraising.

The CAB would have power to conduct rulemaking, apparently to try to adopt rules that go beyond care standards already enacted into law by the legislature, or cover different, undisclosed aspects of animal ownership.

HF 208 would splinter the Board of Animal Health and make the CAB the “primary authority for regulating companion animals in the state” when this is not needed.

It’s also highly concerning that the CAB would be empowered to “collect, analyze and disseminate quantitative and qualitative data relating to companion animals in Minnesota.” In previous years, the CAB advocates have tried to persuade the legislature to repeal the clause protecting commercial breeders’ animal premises, licensing and inspection data from public disclosure, on the premise that they need to know about breeders’ operations so they can inform the public who they should not buy pets from.

**The Minnesota Board of Animal Health (BAH) is the appropriate and professional state authorized board for oversight and providing resources to companion animals/breeders**

The BAH oversees the Commercial Breeder law, enacted in 2014 largely at the request of animal rights activists and some of the same proponents of a CAB. Existing statutes articulate certain measures of care all companion animal owners must provide. The statutes also set very specific standards of care for animals kept in pet shelters (called “kennels” in the statute) and for those belonging to commercial dog and cat breeders. BAH has been enforcing standards of care by kennels since 1968. In 2014 the legislature enacted standards of care to be applied to dogs and cats used for breeding on a commercial scale, and the standards are essentially the same as those for pets in shelters. There are about 80-100 licensed kennels (shelters) in the state, and about 120 licensed commercial breeders.

**Conclusion**

The BAH has extensive experience applying the care standards enacted by the legislature to dog and cat breeders and to those sheltered by nonprofit groups and should continue to enforce those regulations. BAH recognizes the value of seeking expertise from other government entities and from advisory groups established under its authority, such as the one appointed to review and make recommendations on tracing and preventing the spread of zoonotic diseases in companion animals.