



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB®

Phil M. Guidry, J.D.
Director, Policy Analysis
Government Relations

Tuesday, February 8, 2022

The Honorable Michael Nelson
Chairman, Minnesota House State Government Finance and Elections Committee
585 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

RE: AKC Opposes House File 208 – Creation of Minnesota Companion Animal Board

Chairman Nelson and members of the House State Government Finance and Elections Committee:

The American Kennel Club (AKC), which was established in 1884 and promotes the study, breeding, exhibiting, and advancement of purebred dogs, represents over 5,100 dog clubs nationally, including 101 clubs in Minnesota. The AKC advocates for the purebred dog as a family companion, advances canine health and well-being, protects the rights of dog owners, and promotes the ideals of responsible dog ownership. The AKC and our affiliated clubs are both happy and proud to serve lawmakers and communities by sharing with them our animal care and responsible ownership principles. Today, we write to share our concerns with House File 208 and respectfully request committee action in line with our recommendations.

In our view, Minnesota Code already appropriately regulates kennels in the state, including licensing requirements and extensive regulations regarding kennel sizes and the care and conditions in which dogs should be kept. However, House File 208 seeks to create the Minnesota Companion Animal Board, which will be given broad powers to regulate animal welfare in the state. Although it requires that, “one member must be a companion animal breeder”, the rest of the Board would be comprised of 12 other members, many of whom will neither have the level of animal husbandry expertise and experience that breeders and sportsmen do, nor will they be directly impacted by the Board’s actions. It would include:

- 1) Two members must be accredited, licensed veterinarians who practice veterinary
- 2) medicine;
- 3) One member must be a Minnesota animal control officer;
- 4) One member must be employed by a Minnesota licensed animal shelter located in
- 5) the seven-county metropolitan area;
- 6) One member must be employed by a Minnesota licensed animal shelter located in
- 7) greater Minnesota;
- 8) One member must be from the University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine;
- 9) One member must be a current board member for the past two years of a Minnesota nonprofit animal rescue and re-homing organization qualifying as a nonprofit under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code;
- 10) One member must be employed by the board of animal health;

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- 11) One member must be employed by a county or municipality representing community needs and local governance;
- 12) One member must represent public human health and welfare issues and the relationship between companion animal and human health and welfare;
- 13) One member must be a companion animal breeder; and
- 14) Two members must be at-large public members.

As currently written, HF 208 would give the Board an overly broad and vague range of powers to establish rules for, “the collection, analysis, and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative data as it relates to companion animals in Minnesota”. The board will also be given powers to establish rules for, “the licensing, enforcement, and inspection of kennels and dealers and the licensing, enforcement, and inspection of commercial breeders.”

The American Kennel Club (AKC) is concerned that, as introduced, HF 208 does not provide adequate representation to those who will be most impacted by the Board’s policy. The AKC believes greater representation of licensed entities will better ensure that reasonable policies may be set. Moreover, instead of creating a new board, AKC believes that the state should continue to focus on enforcement of the state’s current substantive animal welfare and public health laws and regulations.

We appreciate your consideration of our concerns. We are happy to further assist you in crafting reasonable and effective laws that respect Minnesota’s responsible dog owners and breeders. Please feel free to contact me at (919) 816-3503 or phil.guidry@akc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phil Guidry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Phil M. Guidry, J.D.
Director, Policy Analysis
AKC Government Relations