

New England State Issues July 2023

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Connecticut – HB 6714 would redefine the crime of sexual contact with an animal, require that veterinarians report suspected incidents of animal cruelty, and prohibit persons convicted of animal cruelty or having sexual contact with an animal from possessing or working with animals for a period of five years. AKC, CFDRDO and veterinarians expressed concern the proposed definition of “sexual contact with an animal” could be interpreted as prohibiting routine canine reproduction procedures, such as artificial insemination. The Judiciary Committee voted favorably on an [amended HB 6714](#) that ensures that bona fide veterinary and animal husbandry purposes would not be inadvertently banned. The bill passed both the House and Senate and was signed by the Governor on June 26 as [Public Act No. 23-149](#).

Maine – [LD 1234](#) would require the Department of Public Safety to reimburse authorized handlers of retired law enforcement dogs that were used in service by the State Police up to \$5,000 per year for health care expenses of their dogs. AKC supported the bill, which was approved by the Joint Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety [as amended](#) to cover all retired law enforcement K9s. In June the expanded bill quickly passed the House and Senate before being sent on June 14 to the special appropriations table for funding consideration in the state’s emergency budget [LD 258](#). It was not included in the committee’s [amended budget](#).

Maine – [LD 598](#) would make it a civil violation for an operator of a motor vehicle to fail to report an accident with a cat, a dog or livestock to a law enforcement officer or to the owner of the animal by the quickest means available. A violation after 3 or more violations within the previous 5-year period would amount to a Class E crime. The Transportation Committee released the bill favorably [as amended](#) to define an accident as “death of an animal or damage to real or personal property” and the House passed it on June 6 and the Senate voted it favorably on June 12. It became [Public Act, Chapter 302](#) without the Governor’s signature on June 25.

Massachusetts – [SB 1056](#) would, among other provisions, require a minimum of 100 square feet per dog for outdoor enclosures and ban the kenneling of any dog outside unattended for more than 5 hours or from 10pm to 6am. AKC opposes the measure as introduced. [Read](#) more.

Massachusetts – In response to dog injuries and deaths at dog day care facilities, [HB 2019](#) and [SB 1309](#) have been re-filed as “Ollie’s Law” and would impose requirements such as staffing ratios for boarding, training, dog day care, breeding and personal kennels. They also would create a new definition for “personal breeder kennel” as anyone with more than 4 intact female dogs who transfers any offspring. Personal breeder kennels and commercial breeder kennels would be held to the same future regulations. They have been referred to the Joint Municipalities and Regional Government Committee and a public hearing has been tentatively scheduled for September 12.

Massachusetts – [HB 314](#) would provide consumer protections at dog day care businesses and is supported by multiple animal welfare organizations, including AKC. It has been referred to the Joint Municipalities and Regional Government Committee and a public hearing has been tentatively scheduled for September 12.

Massachusetts – [SB 1311](#) would eliminate from current law text that exempts from pet shop licensure any person selling, exchanging or otherwise transferring the offspring of their personally owned animals. It has been referred to the Joint Municipalities and Regional Government Committee and a public hearing has been tentatively scheduled for September 12.

Massachusetts – [SB 876/HB 1367](#) would prohibit housing authorities and certain housing agreements from discriminating against tenants based upon the size, weight or breed of dog owned. They also prohibit insurance companies from discriminating based upon dog breed and have been referred to the Joint Committee on Housing.

New Hampshire – [SB 268](#) would allow for pre-hospital treatment and transportation for police canines injured in the line of duty. AKC and many others

testified in support of the bill throughout the process. An amended version passed the House on May 4 and the Senate concurred with the amended bill on June 1. Governor Sununu signed it into law on July 28. Learn more in [this update](#).

New Hampshire – [HB 249](#) would establish regulatory standards for the pet insurance industry. The House Committee on Commerce and Consumer Affairs held a hearing on [an amendment](#) to allow restaurant owners to keep their dog on the premises. The bill is on its way to the Governor.

Rhode Island – [HB 5918](#) is a refiled measure that would create an ownership procedure for pets in divorce and separation proceedings based on the best interests of the animal. This act would not apply to assistance/service animals. AKC worked with the bill sponsor to substitute “ownership” for the word “custody” and submitted House Judiciary Committee testimony consistent with that request for the March 22 public hearing. It was being held in study when the session adjourned.

Rhode Island – [HB 5864](#) would define and prohibit “captive hunting” for domestic or wild animals in enclosed areas. AKC is working with the bill proponent to clarify the text and ensure no negative consequences for legal field trial activities. The committee released the bill to the June 7 House calendar where it passed without the requested change. The Senate filed a mirror bill, [SB 607](#), that had a public hearing on May 17. AKC submitted testimony requesting the same clarifying amendment. No further action occurred before the session adjourned.

Rhode Island – [HB 5114](#) would permit the family court to award custody of household pets to the plaintiff in a domestic abuse complaint, including the enforcement remedy of a restraining order or other injunctive relief. AKC expressed concerns about using the legal term “custody”, given the three types of child custody at the February 14 hearing. It was being held in study when the session adjourned.

Rhode Island – [HB 5207](#) is a re-filed bill that would establish an animal abuser registry and require pet sellers to check the registry before transferring an animal to avoid fines. Everyone can agree that animals deserve a life in a safe, caring, and healthy environment. However, registries can be easily evaded and no evidence suggests they are effective at reducing the rate of subsequent offenses. AKC believes a better use of the State’s resources would be to focus on and utilize enforcement activities that are proven effective and provided this testimony on February 14 before the House Judiciary Committee with other stakeholders. It was being held in study when the session adjourned.

Rhode Island – Elimination of the sales tax for taxi and pet services, such as grooming and boarding, would occur if [SB 83](#) were enacted. AKC supports the bill, and it was referred to the Senate Finance Committee. No further action occurred before the session adjourned.

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