

New England State Capitol Issues May 2024

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Connecticut – [HB 5223](#) seeks, among other changes, to amend the legal definition of “grooming facility” to include those doing business in “any vehicle or trailer”. During a February 28 Joint Committee on Environment hearing, AKC and the Connecticut Federation of Dog Clubs requested a bill amendment to ensure that the bill’s language would not be broadly interpreted to include professional handlers exhibiting in the state. Following AKC’s request and a meeting with legislative and administrative staff, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture determined that those who groom a dog in preparation for a competitive event would not be impacted by the language. Read more [here](#). On May 1, the House [added text](#) requiring dog and cat rabies vaccinations to take place between 12 and 14 weeks of age before voting passage. The amended bill was further amended by the Senate on May 8 and the House concurred with the final changes. [Amended HB 5223](#) is headed to the Governor’s desk.

Connecticut – [SB 339](#) would require restitution be paid by anyone that injures or kills a police K-9 or volunteer search and rescue dog, including costs for incurred veterinary services and costs incurred in the purchase and training of a replacement dog. AKC supported the bill in the Public Safety and Security Committee on March 7, 2024. The committee voted it favorably and the Senate voted passage on May 2. The House voted it favorably on May 8. Follow [AKC’s update](#) on how to register support with the Governor.

Connecticut – [SB 427](#) would (1) increase the penalty for intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team; (2) establish a penalty for annoying, teasing, tormenting or harassing a police animal confined in a motor vehicle; (3) allow emergency medical services personnel to provide emergency treatment and transportation to an injured police animal under certain circumstances; and (4) establish a grant program to provide canine officers with body armor. AKC supports this bill, which the Joint Judiciary Committee voted favorably on March 26. The session adjourned without further action.

Connecticut – [HB 5304](#) would designate the Siberian Husky as the state dog and the lollipop as the state candy. The Joint Government Administration and Elections Committee held a public hearing on March 8 and voted it favorably on March 22. It passed the House on April 17 and the Senate on May 8. Follow [AKC’s update](#) on how to register support with the Governor.

Connecticut – [HB 5176](#) would establish a task force to study the provision of emergency treatment and transportation to an animal that is injured in the performance of its duties under the supervision of a peace officer. After a favorable public hearing by the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Security, on March 14 the bill was placed on the House calendar for consideration. AKC supports the bill but, the session adjourned without further action.

Massachusetts – [Amendment #856](#) to the Senate Ways and Means state budget bill, [SB 4](#), would provide law enforcement, animal control officers, judges and district attorneys with greater discretion in how to approach animal cruelty situations and prohibit convicted abusers from ownership or access to animals for a minimum of five years, with the option to petition a judge for defined exceptions after meeting certain criteria. The Senate begins budget debate on May 21.

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 would authorize animal control officers to inspect and tell you how many dogs you are allowed to own and enforce a new “personal breeder kennel” license for anyone with more than 4 intact female dogs over 6 months who transfers any offspring. Personal breeder kennels and commercial breeder kennels would be held to the same future regulations. Details are in AKC’s [alert](#). In April 2024, the Joint Municipalities and Regional Government Committee favorably released Senate and House companion mirror bills, [HB 4564](#) and [SB 2731](#), which have moved to their respective Ways and Means Committees. AKC is appreciative the committee removed the anti-breeder text from the bill. More details are [here](#).

Massachusetts – [HB 314](#) would provide consumer protections at dog day care businesses and is supported by multiple animal welfare organizations, including AKC. It was incorporated in part with the Joint Municipalities and Regional Government Committee’s redraft of Ollie’s law as described [here](#).

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. The bills were referred to the Joint Committee on Housing, which gave HB 1367 a favorable recommendation in March and is now pending in the committee on House Ways and Means. AKC supports the bill.

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. After a public hearing in the Joint Municipalities and Regional Government Committee the committee requested an extension until June 14 to consider it. Read AKC's [alert](#).

Massachusetts – [HB 801](#) would eliminate a 48-hour facility quarantine requirement when animals are imported from neighboring states for resale or imported directly to permanent or temporary Massachusetts foster homes. AKC is concerned HB 801 may reduce compliance and increase the risk of communicable disease spread to animals and people in Massachusetts. The Environment and Natural Resources Committee heard the bill but has taken no further action.

Massachusetts – [HB 747](#), [HB 826](#), [SB 549](#), and [SB 550](#) would require Massachusetts licensed pet shops or future pet shops to only provide the public with dogs and cats sourced from animal shelter or rescue organizations. In AKC's experience, the number of puppies produced by responsible breeders does not satisfy demand. Shelter and rescue animals are not the best option for every family that wants a pet. AKC issued [an alert](#) and provided testimony in opposition to these bills at the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources' public hearing. The committee has been given until June 14 to consider HB 826. AKC is opposed and issued [an update](#).

Massachusetts – [HB 4241](#) is an abuse and exploitation prevention bill that would also define "coercive control" allowing issuance of restraining orders when a person commits or threatens to commit cruelty or abuse to animals connected to the family or household member. AKC supports the bill. It has passed the House and been amended in Senate Ways and Means Committee and released for amendment and adoption by the full Senate as [SB 2703](#). A conference committee is resolving differences in the two bills.

Massachusetts – [HB 1718](#) and [SB 1142](#) would establish a taskforce of Massachusetts lawyers and MSPCA/ARL-Boston to review cruelty laws and make recommendations including whether to establish a domestic animal cruelty misdemeanor charge; prohibit sale of animals under 8 weeks and transferring animals roadside with few exceptions; and allow for animal seizure and owner's payment of board pending court action for suspected neglect. AKC testified in support of the humane care provisions of the bills and requested the committee ensure due process protections and consistent terminology. The Joint Judiciary Committee released a re-draft, now [SB 2757](#), on May 2, 2024 that narrows the bill's scope to prohibit selling of animals under 8 weeks and transferring animals roadside with few exceptions.

Massachusetts – As introduced in 2023, [SB 190](#) would prohibit the declawing of cats unless a therapeutic reason offered by a veterinarian deemed it necessary and performed the surgery. After a favorable report by the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure it was sent to Senate Ways and Means Committee. In January, SB 190 was amended and released as [SB 2552](#) before passage in the Senate. SB 2552 is before the House Ways and Means Committee and would prohibit the declawing of animals unless a therapeutic reason offered by a veterinarian deemed it necessary to perform the procedure. AKC is in discussion with organizations representing field and hunting dogs to determine whether injury preventing canine dewclaw removal would be considered cruelty under the bill.

New Hampshire – [HB 1102](#) would label brachycephaly a “birth deformity” and make the breeding or sale of any animal that has a “birth deformity” that causes suffering a criminal act. A public hearing was conducted on March 5, 2024. AKC worked closely with its New Hampshire federation (Dog Owners of the Granite State) to establish a broad coalition in opposition, and to organize and prepare extensive testimony, alerts and public outreach, scientific rebuttal and educational information. Following the hearing, at which more than 80% of submitted testimony was in opposition, the committee voted the measure “inexpedient to legislate”. AKC and DOGS continued to educate and advocate in opposition to this radical bill, and on March 28, the full House voted to lay the bill on the table to impede its forward progress for the remainder of the session. [Read more](#).

New Hampshire – [SB 385](#) would allow payments from the cost of care fund to be distributed to a third party for the care of animals during animal cruelty cases. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a public hearing and voted it ought to pass. It passed the Senate on March 21. It had a hearing in the House Environment and Agriculture Committee on April 16 and was voted favorably May 2.

New Hampshire – [SB 587](#) allow animals as part of a litter transported into the state to be quarantined together. As filed, the bill could result in additional quarantine exemptions. AKC submitted testimony expressing concern and, with NH DOGS, requested an amendment. [The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources adopted the amendment](#) and the [amended bill](#) passed the Senate. It had a hearing in the House Environment and Agriculture Committee on April 16 and was voted favorably May 2.

New Hampshire – [HB 1233](#) would exempt individuals who have completed a nationally recognized animal chiropractic program, as determined by the executive director of the office of professional licensure and certification, from veterinary licensure requirements. After passing the House, the Senate Executive Departments and Administration

Committee held a hearing on March 6, 2024. It was voted ought to pass by the committee and then the full Senate on April 18.

New Hampshire – [HB 1526](#) would enable the board of veterinary medicine to issue a conditional veterinary license for veterinarians who are educated in other countries. Multiple reports of a New Hampshire veterinarian shortage exist. AKC submitted testimony on February 6 in support of enhancing access after issuing [this alert](#). The committee voted the bill favorably and the full House passed it on March 28 by voice vote. It was referred to the Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee, which held a hearing on May 1. AKC submitted testimony in support. The committee voted favorably and [amended HB 1526](#) to make the conditional license good for two years.

New Hampshire – [HB 1626](#) would repeal certain designated funds and change where dog licensing fees are distributed. The House Environment and Agriculture Committee and Ways and Means Committee both voted it ought to pass. An April 2 public hearing before the Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee resulted in [an amendment](#) regarding reimbursement to veterinarians performing spay/neuter surgeries. A favorable vote on the bill as amended happened April 30.

Rhode Island – [HB 7236](#) and [SB 2655](#) are companion bills that would amend the domestic violence prevention act to include cruelty to animals owned or cared for by a household member in the crime. AKC supports these bills and submitted testimony to the House Judiciary and Senate Judiciary committees respectively for the April 4 public hearings. The committees recommended the measures be held for further study.

Rhode Island – [HB 7294](#) would prohibit captive hunting for domestic or wild animals without prohibiting the release of upland game birds for hunting on licensed shooting preserves. AKC negotiated a clarifying amendment to ensure that it would not interfere with lawful field trials. The bill was amended with the AKC clarifying amendment requested and voted favorably May 14 by the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee. On March 8, [SB 2732](#) was introduced in the Senate with the AKC clarifying amendment included. It passed the Senate on April 9 and is pending before the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Rhode Island – [SB 2539](#) would permit the town of Smithfield to enact ordinances that would allow the animal control officer to issue citations which could be paid by mail and to prescribe penalties for violations of the town's ordinances regulating dogs. A public hearing took place on March 13 and the committee recommends passage. The Senate

passed it March 21 and the House voted it favorably on April 19. It became law without the Governor's signature on May 2.

Rhode Island – [HB 8060](#) was introduced March 13 to allow the town of Hopkinton to enact ordinances increasing the fines for violations of any dog ordinance and increasing the fee to be paid before an animal in impoundment may be released to its owner. It was heard by the House Municipal Government & Housing Committee and voted favorably April 11. The full House passed it April 23.

Vermont – [H. 626](#) is a comprehensive animal welfare bill to establish a Division of Animal Welfare at the Department of Public Safety that would develop, implement, and administer a centralized program for investigating and enforcing animal welfare requirements in the State. It also would amend or establish standards for the operation of animal shelters and animal rescue organizations and detail requirements for the importation or transportation of animals into the State. The bill was referred to the House Government Operations and Military Affairs Committee which has held multiple meetings and ultimately reviewed and approved an [amended H. 626](#) that is much narrower in scope. It would establish a new Director responsible for developing a legislative roadmap on how to move forward in creating, and funding, a new division with comprehensive responsibility for all activities. The new position would be funded by the state and an additional \$3 surcharge on dog licenses advocated for by the Committee on Ways and Means. The bill was amended on April 16 to provide an extended implementation date and approved by the Committee on Appropriations. Upon passage in the House, amended H. 626 was [further amended](#) by Senate Government Operations Committee on May 2 to require animal care standards for animals imported, in addition to animals housed; and to require state agencies to estimate the number of animal welfare complaints received annually. It passed in the Senate and the House concurred with the Senate amendment on May 10. Next stop is the Governor's desk. Details are [here](#).

Vermont – [HB 567](#) prohibits a pet shop in the state from selling dogs, cats, or wolf-hybrids, unless the pet shop is providing space to an animal shelter or a rescue organization offering these species to the public for adoption for an adoption fee, or the pet shop was selling these animals prior to July 1, 2024, and the pet shop maintains its ownership and license and does not exceed the number sold in calendar year 2023. The bill has been pending before the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry. Although the March 17 deadline for action has passed, the committee scheduled testimony from multiple witnesses and on April 25 amended a miscellaneous Senate Agriculture bill, S. 301, with the text of H. 567 starting on page 22. AKC issued [this alert](#) and provided testimony in opposition. After review by the Ways and Means Committee, [amended S. 301](#) passed the House on May 3. The Senate Committee on Agriculture [further amended S. 301](#) with text banning the sale of bear

parts and accepted the House amendment on May 9. The House and Senate accepted all changes on May 10.

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