

New England State Capitol Issues June 2024

Connecticut – [HB 5304](#) would designate the Siberian Husky as the state dog and the lollipop as the state candy. After [AKC's update](#) on how to register support with the Governor, it was signed into law on June 5. The Connecticut Valley Siberian Husky Club has offered to attend a ceremonial bill signing with their beloved dogs, if scheduled.

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 – [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](#). The bill was sent to study order on June 17.

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. AKC is opposed and issued [an](#)

[update](#). The bill was re-drafted and voted favorably as [SB 2820](#) before being sent to the Senate Ways and Means Committee.

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 the 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. It is pending in the Senate Rules Committee.

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 believes injury preventing canine dewclaw removal on puppies less than five days would be considered cruelty and has expressed these concerns.

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 587](#) allows 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 on May 2. On May 30 it passed the House and Senate.

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. It passed the Senate and on May 30 the House voted amended HB 1526 favorably. AKC submitted a letter of support to the Governor and issued this [call to action](#).

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 on April 30. After the Senate passed amended HB 1626, the House voted it favorably on May 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 and did not advance prior to adjournment.

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 passed the full House on May 23. After review by the Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee, it was voted favorably on June 4. On March 8, [SB 2732](#) was introduced in the Senate with the AKC clarifying amendment included. It passed the Senate on April 9 and the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee voted passage on May 21. Final passage of both measures took place on June 11.

Rhode Island – [HB 8060](#) was introduced on 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 on April 11. The full House passed it on April 23. The Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee accepted testimony on June 4 and sent the bill to the Governor on June 12.

Rhode Island – SB 2538 testimony was received by the Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee on May 24. An [amended SB 2538](#) would permit euthanasia of vicious dogs upon finding that a dog's condition warrants euthanasia or after the determination that there is no reasonable placement for the dog and requires any municipality that surrenders one to RISPCA be responsible for the costs. The amended bill passed the Senate on June 4 and the House concurred with passage on June 12.

Rhode Island – [HB 7970](#) is a refiled bill that would establish a custody procedure for domestic companion animals in divorce and separation cases by requiring the court to consider the best interest of the animal, including factors such as original ownership, caretaking responsibilities, time spent with the animal, living arrangements, children's attachment to the animal, and shared custody logistics. In 2021, AKC secured amendments to the bill substituting the words "ownership" and "possession" in lieu of "custody" because of the common divorce and separation proceedings' use of the word "custody" in relation to children. However, the sponsor reserved using "shared custody" in relation to court decisions awarding joint ownership. AKC's testimony requested this be removed from the bill. On May 24, HB 7970 was placed on the House calendar with an amendment notice. It passed the House without amendment and was taken up by the Senate on June 13 in concurrence.

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 \$2 surcharge on dog licenses advocated for by the Committee on Ways and Means. An additional amendment provided an extended implementation date and approved by the Committee on Appropriations. Upon passage in the House, amended H. 626 was [further amended](#) by the 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. The Governor signed it into law on June 10. Details are [here](#).

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