

New England State Capitol Issues July, 2024

Massachusetts – Four dog-related amendments were filed to an omnibus economic development bill, [H.4789](#). AKC issued [an alert](#) and specifically encouraged Massachusetts residents to oppose [Amendment #133](#), because it would require new Massachusetts licensed pet shops to provide the public with dogs and cats sourced solely from animal shelter or rescue organizations. Substituting a source of pets that provides purchase protections, like pet stores, with a source that does not, like shelters and rescues, puts consumers at risk. None of the dog-related amendments were adopted before House passage. The Senate then debated the bill and two of the four House amendments previously introduced were dropped. More details are [here](#).

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](#). 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 – [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](#), 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. On June 24 a House amendment to H. 4789 was filed with text removing AKC’s concerns by clarifying that the ban would pertain only to cats. The amendment was not adopted.

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 and was voted favorably. The Governor signed it into law on June 14, effective August 13.

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 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. AKC also submitted testimony in support of the bill when it was considered by the Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee. The committee voted favorably and [amended HB 1526](#) to make the conditional license good for two years. It passed the House and Senate and AKC submitted a letter of support to the Governor and issued this [call to action](#). Governor Sununu signed it into law on June 19.

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. The bill was approved as amended and the Governor signed it into law on June 19.

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. After review by the Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee, it was voted favorably on June 4. In addition, [SB 2732](#) was introduced in the Senate with the AKC clarifying amendment included. Final passage of both measures took place on June 11 and the Governor signed it into law on June 24.

Rhode Island – [HB 8060](#) was introduced 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 voted favorably by the House Municipal Government & Housing Committee and then passed by the full House. The Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee accepted testimony on June 4 and sent the bill to the Governor on June 12. It became effective without the Governor's signature on June 20.

Rhode Island – SB 2538 testimony was received by the Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee 4. 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 RISPICA be responsible for the costs. The amended bill passed the Senate and the House concurred with passage. It was signed by the Governor on June 24.

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. 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. The Governor signed it June 26.

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