

Critics Say Proposed Dog Law Changes Go Too Far

Pennsylvania's agriculture secretary defends the higher standards for kennels outlined in legislation.

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Legislation that calls for big changes to Pennsylvania's Dog Law will benefit dogs in commercial breeding kennels, supporters of a newly introduced bill recently told a state House panel.

House Bill 2525 would force commercial dog kennels to increase the space requirements for cages, stop using wire flooring in the cages, do away with stacking of cages, and provide annual veterinary checkups for dogs as well as an outdoor exercise area. It also mandates daily cage cleaning and sets temperature requirements of above 50 degrees and below 85 degrees.

Opponents, including sporting dog organizations, said that while something must be done about the state's "puppy mill" issue, the bill goes too far. Rob Sexton, vice president for government affairs for the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance, testified before the panel and said his organization does not back legislation that could "criminalize and penalize sportsmen out of existence."

The bill defines kennels as places that house more than 26 dogs per year. A subset called "commercial kennels" is defined as establishments that sell or transfer more than 60 dogs per year. The state's current law treats all kennels the same, regardless of size or function.

Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff told the committee that the new standards would improve commercial dog breeding. "I want to be clear that we are not seeking to end commercial breeding operations in Pennsylvania," he said in a statement. "We, instead, are seeking to raise the bar on these operations, which are clearly different from other types of kennels."