

Illinois May Allow Dog-Friendly Cafés

Proposed legislation will OK dog-friendly cafés in cities with populations over one million.

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Illinois lawmakers are considering legislation that would make it pave the way for dogs to accompany people at outdoor cafes in Chicago.

The law would give Illinois cities with populations over one million the right to enact ordinances allowing dogs to dine in outdoor sections of restaurants. Chicago is the only city in Illinois with a current population of over one million people.

The bill doesn't propose allowing dogs inside restaurants, just their outdoor sections. Restaurants would have to comply with health codes and could refuse service to a dog owner if the animal's behavior threatens the health or safety of other diners.

The legislation, officially known as SB 341, would also require local ordinances to impose controls to ensure compliance with health and safety codes.

Service animals, such as guide dogs, are not covered under the bill, since they are already allowed in restaurants under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

SB 341, sponsored by State Reps. John Fritchey (D-Chicago) and Harry Osterman (D-Springfield), was approved by the Illinois Senate in March and is expected to be heard by the House's rules committee before being presented to the full House in the coming weeks.