

To the Editor:

The author of your recently published Letter to the Editor ([Pass the Pet Store Ordinance](#)) is misguided in his overzealous pursuit of a ban on pet stores. Only Mr. Cohen and his fellow extremists could call an effort to ban the only regulated source to obtain puppies with health guarantees and consumer protections “a smart, compassionate, business-savvy, pro-active move.”

Not one puppy mill across the country has been closed as a result of these ban ordinances promoted by the activist community. Rather, the goal of the national lobbying interests who developed this ordinance has been to monopolize the retail pet marketplace with fee-based adoptions. Rescues and shelters offering such adoptions already dominate the pet marketplace, but the approval of this ordinance is designed to help give shelters and rescues the monopoly they seek. There are no good public policy reasons for this ordinance, only ones that benefit special interests who have a self-serving, monopolistic goals.

Over the last few decades in New Jersey and elsewhere, campaigns to end “pet overpopulation” have been so successful that there are simply not enough dogs available for our residents. New Jersey’s shelters and rescues import at least 10,000 known dogs into the state and many more that occur without any regulatory oversight and tracking statistics. Gone are the days when shelters actively sought to have zero dogs available for adoption. Today, shelters and rescue organizations publish advertisements seeking puppies and will pay significantly for the most desired breeds. “Retail rescue” operations are a big business in New Jersey where each “adoption” brings in \$250 to \$750 or more. These rescue dogs come from the very puppy mills the activists publicly shame and from which New Jersey’s nation leading Pet Purchase Protection Act (PPPA) prohibits pet shops from obtaining animals. Puppy mill dogs are bundled together and distributed to shelters and rescues by hundreds of puppy brokers across the country with little to no oversight, concern about animal welfare, or disease prevention. Summit’s proposed ordinance removes all consumer protections and leaves consumers to only purchase a new family pet from under-regulated shelters and rescues.

Each and every puppy in my store is required by the PPPA to come from a breeder licensed and inspected by the United States Department of Agriculture. I cannot sell dogs obtained from hobby breeders or even puppies born and raised in my own homes. There are only about 1,500 USDA licensed breeders in the entire United States and none in New Jersey. The PPPA already requires that the breeders we use have near perfect inspections, which eliminates breeders with animal welfare concerns and those who have administrative deficiencies. Personal requirements further limit the number of breeders with whom I and my fellow store owners will work. As such, pet stores in New Jersey will obtain animals only from 60-80 breeders each year.

Despite what Mr. Cohen would have you believe, the maintenance of a USDA license is very demanding. Most breeders with USDA licenses are further subject to additional state, county and local requirements and inspections. Many participate in regular breeder conferences and

continuing education from organizations like the American Kennel Club to improve animal care and stay up to date on emerging best practices. Each and every puppy I receive is microchipped by the breeder to ensure proper identification and that its animal history and health certificate follows the animal for life.

Upon receiving a puppy, the New Jersey PPPA requires that a state-licensed veterinarian examine the animal within five days to ensure that it is healthy. I must also have each puppy re-examined at least every fourteen days. The PPPA guarantees animal health and consumer protections by requiring a full refund for sick puppies or a requirement that the store cover the costs of veterinary care up to two times the cost of the puppy. None of these animal welfare and consumer protections are applicable to the shelters and rescues model being pushed by the extremist community.

Mr. Cohen fails to recognize is that efforts to successfully close substandard pet stores proves that New Jersey's complementary state laws and existing ordinances proves the system works to remove bad actors from our business community. There are currently no pet shops in Summit that offer dogs and there may never be. But, I share my concerns here because the lies that the likes of the Humane Society of the United States and other animal activists continue to tell in an to promote their agenda is not right. As a pet industry professional, I need to stand up for small businesses who may want to open up in the future. I ask the residents of Summit where does it end? Should we tell groomers that they can only groom shelter and rescue dogs? Do you tell the veterinarians they can only give medical attention to shelter and rescue dogs? Do you tell PetSmart they can only sell food to people who buy shelter and rescue dogs?

To be very clear, there are many reputable shelters in New Jersey who offer great pets. However, stores like mine are regulated, shelters and rescues are not. There are no meaningful rules for shelters and rescues in New Jersey and no consumer protections required if your adopted puppy gets sick. The residents of Summit should keep this in mind when they begin their search for a pet. Shop or adopt - the choice should be yours alone.

Jeff Morton is the owner of Shake A Paw Pet Store in Union Township and a founding member of the New Jersey Coalition of Responsible Pet Stores.