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TESTIMONY ON MICHIGAN S.B. 560
Presented by Vicki Deisner, State Legislative Director, Midwest Region
Before the Michigan Senate Agriculture
Committee Thursday, October 31, 2013

Chairman Hune, Majority Vice-Chair Booher, Minority Vice-Chair Smith and distinguished members of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I am Vicki Deisner, State Legislative Director for the Midwest Region of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). The ASPCA, founded in 1866, is the first humane organization established in the Americas and serves as the nation's leading voice for animal welfare. The ASPCA's mission is to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States. As part of our national effort to assist local anti-cruelty efforts on the ground the ASPCA provides grants to local communities. In fact, over the last several years we have awarded over \$600,000 to communities throughout Michigan. On behalf of our approximately 2.5 million members and supporters, including over 73,000 Michigan citizens, we **respectfully urge the Senate Agriculture Committee to vote YES on S.B. 560 – a bill that would require large-scale dog breeders to register with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and follow guidelines to help ensure the humane treatment of dogs and puppies in these facilities.**

Michigan must move forward to regulate large-scale breeders to improve the quality of life for dogs that are destined to spend their entire live in these facilities – often in substandard conditions. Currently, 36 other states regulate large-scale breeders, including other states in the Midwest such as Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Iowa and Missouri (ASPCA national map of large-scale breeding operations). The ASPCA has observed that when neighboring states pass large-scale breeding regulations, some of the breeders that choose not to comply with regulations move to non-regulated states. For example, a number of breeders moved from Pennsylvania to Ohio and upstate New York when Pennsylvania passed their regulations in 2008. Ohio's large-scale breeding regulations just went into effect October 10, 2013. With Michigan now surrounded by states with regulations, you could see an influx of breeders from Ohio and other Midwest states who want to operate without oversight. Unfortunately, breeders looking to avoid oversight are often the worst actors in the industry, making Michigan a very attractive state to puppy mills operators.

Over the years, the ASPCA has devoted significant time and resources to rescuing dogs from puppy mills and assisting shelters and rescues that rehabilitate and rehome animals rescued

from irresponsible breeders. Our Field Investigation and Response team investigates puppy mills across the country, rescuing countless dogs from cruel conditions. Often the facilities are USDA licensed. In 2011 alone, the ASPCA spent more than \$660,000 and nearly 200 days rescuing and rehabilitating dogs from puppy mill raids.

The ASPCA assisted in a puppy mill rescue earlier this year at J.R.R.T. Kennels in Lake City, Missaukee County, Michigan. The ASPCA was asked to assist in this effort by the Missaukee County Sheriff, the Roscommon County Animal Shelter and the Michigan Humane Society. The ASPCA entered J.R.R.T. Kennels on May 23, 2013 to assist in taking possession of the dogs. The facility had 169 Jack Russell terriers, Border Collies, and Shiba Inus in outdoor pens year-round. Except for the whelping area housed under a temporary canvass carport, the dogs, even the tiny Jack Russell terriers, were subjected to extreme weather conditions year-round including the long, cold Northern Michigan winters. In the photos taken by ASPCA included in this testimony, you will see the dogs rescued from J.R.R.T. Kennels living in poor environmental conditions – at the time of rescue the dogs were wallowing in a river of mud.

The rescue dogs were found to have no food and the water available was muddy and contaminated. Many of these dogs were found to have medical complications – including eye and ear infections, overgrown nails that in some cases were growing back into the skin and tissue, and open wounds. Out of the 169 dogs that were rescued, approximately one-third had moderate to severe behavioral problems. In fact, approximately 10 of the animals had such severe behavioral problems they had to be relocated to our behavioral rehabilitation center in New Jersey for extensive therapy so they could have a chance at becoming adoptable. Only 18 animals were socially adapted enough to stay with the Roscommon County Animal Shelter. The remaining animals, approximately 148 dogs, had to be relocated to the Michigan Humane Society and other shelters throughout Michigan and Wisconsin that had the capacity to rehabilitate these dogs with their behavior issues so they could be adoptable. It was and remains the commitment of the ASPCA and our partners in this Michigan rescue to work with each and every dog until they are rehabilitated and adopted.

Behavioral conditions exhibited were anti-social and extreme – an absolute fear of humans. The cause of anti-social behavior exhibited in puppy mill dogs spans the gamut – from simply never having been touched by a human to neglect and cruelty. The ASPCA documented anti-social behavior in the J.R.R.T. Kennel dogs that included fractious behavior – literally trying to climb the fence to escape the rescuers – to self destructive behavior where the dogs would hurt themselves by trying to run through the back of the caged area. These dogs were terrified of humans, kept in extreme weather conditions without proper food, water and veterinary care. Since the charges brought in this case were civil, there is nothing that exists in the law at this time to stop the owner of J.R.R.T Kennels from setting up a puppy mill again – and keeping more dogs in substandard conditions.

One way to prevent this problem is for Michigan to pass S.B. 560 that will add a registry for large-scale breeders to existing registration and basic veterinary care requirements already in place for the state's animal shelters and pet stores. The answer is not to fall back on the USDA program. The USDA program is not adequate and does not prevent the majority of cruelty and

inhumane treatment of dogs in puppy mills.

For all of these reasons, the ASPCA respectfully urges the Senate Agriculture Committee to support S.B. 560, a bill that would require large-scale dog breeders to register with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and follow guidelines to help ensure the humane treatment of dogs and puppies in these facilities.

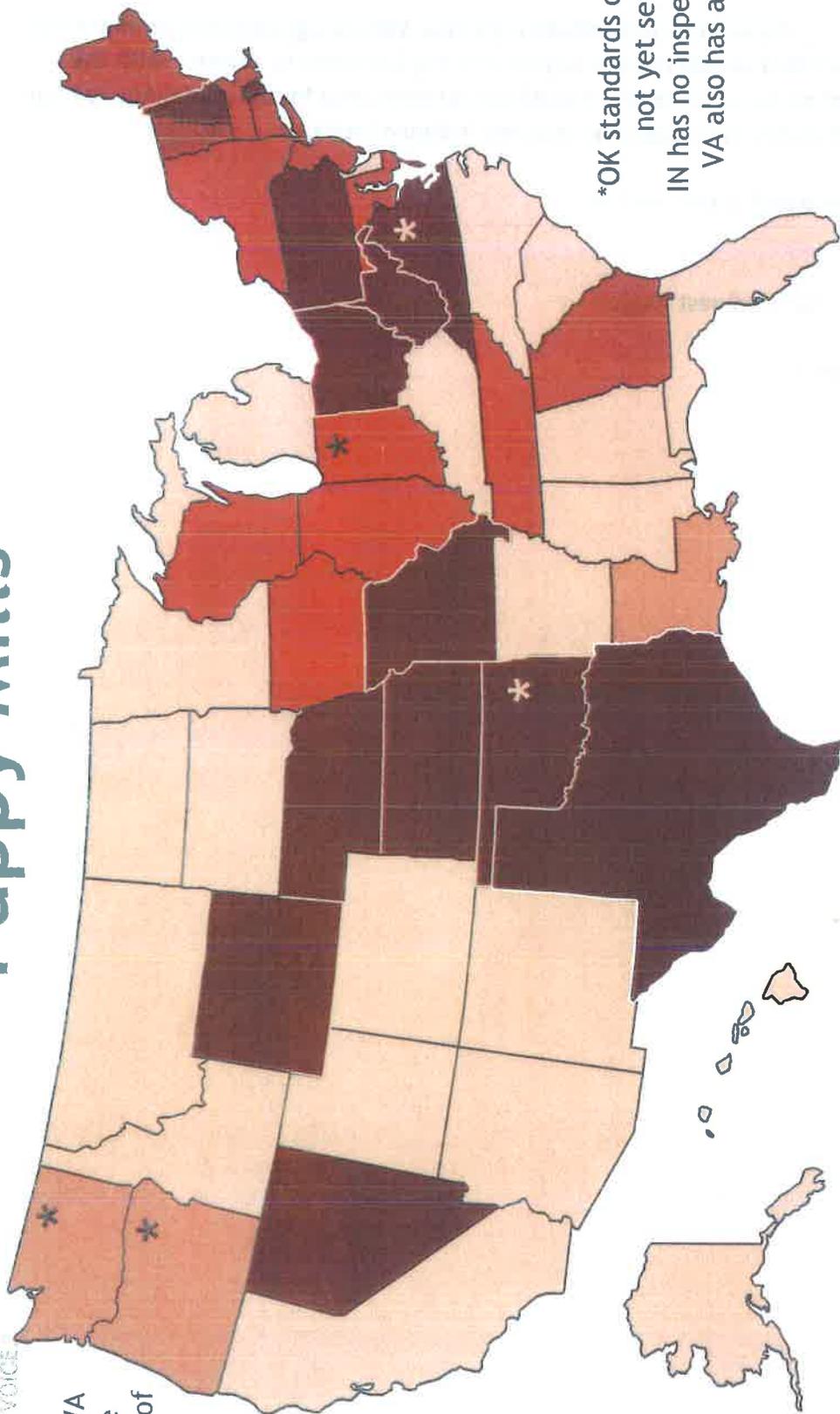
Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Puppy Mills

October 2013

*OR and WA also have standards of care



*OK standards of care not yet set;
IN has no inspections
VA also has a cap

Has Licensing, Inspections, and at Least Some Standards of Care (13)
 KS OH PA WY
 MO RI TX
 NE NV NH VA
 OH WV

Has Licensing, Inspections, But No Substantive Standards of Care (13)
 CT MD MA WI
 GA IL IN IA ME
 NJ NY TN VT

Cap Only (3)
 LA OR WA

No Regulation (21)
 AL DE MN
 AK FL MS
 AZ HI MT
 AR ID NM
 CA KY NC
 CO MI ND
 SC SD UT



















