THE CAT FANCIERS' ASSOCIATION
WE KNOW CATS | SINCE 1906

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March 4, 2024 Online Testimony Submission

New Hampshire House of Representatives
Environment and Agriculture Committee
107 North Main Street, LOB Room 301-303
Concord, NH 03301

Attention: Jami Wyman, Committee Assistant

Re: HB 1102 "relative to the definition of animal cruelty"
Hearing date March 5, 2024 **OPPOSE**

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc. (CFA)[1] in opposition to HB 1102, "relative to the definition of animal cruelty". We oppose the bill as written and submit the following in **OPPOSITION.**

The Cat Fancier's Association supports the well-being of all cats and responsible breeding practices for cats. However, this bill seeks to criminalize the sale and breeding of brachycephalic cats, by defining them as suffering from a "birth deformity." This bill not only creates criminal offenses but positions them within the animal cruelty offenses that are subject to additional consequences, both statutory and otherwise where convictions, in addition to incarceration and fines, may bar employment, licensing, or other benefits or eligibility for individuals who did no harm to animals or otherwise.

Other alleged deformities in cats and dogs are criminalized in the bill but are not defined. In humans or animals, brachycephaly refers only to the shape of the head and the ratio of the short length to longer distances of the head width. It is just a description of the heads of certain breeds of animals and can appear

[1] The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc. (CFA) is a non-profit organization founded in 1906. As the largest registry of pedigreed cats in the world, CFA's mission is to "preserve and promote the pedigreed breeds of cats and to enhance the well-being of all cats." CFA participants, who breed and show pedigreed cats, are active in cat health promotion, cat breed rescue, shelter support, and other animal-related programs throughout the world. CFA is a positive force that has helped to educate the public about proper cat care, spay/neuter, and responsible pet ownership. CFA is proud of its self-regulation programs to encourage high standards of care for cats in multi-cat breeding environments. A voluntary "Cattery of Excellence" program and breeder mentoring program are part of ongoing efforts to ensure responsible breeding and good cattery environments.

both pathologically or non-pathologically as a result of normal variation in skull shape. It is not, by itself, a "birth deformity." Brachycephaly is perceived as a cosmetically desirable trait in some domesticated dog and cat breeds. While these breeds have unique physical characteristics, labeling brachycephaly as a "birth deformity that causes suffering" vastly oversimplifies the issue. Additionally, the word "suffering" is the keyword of European political radicals seeking to eliminate purebred cat breeding, leaving no doubt of eventual intention in New Hampshire.

Among our primary concerns with House Bill 1102 is its failure to acknowledge the complexity of feline genetics. Breeds are developed through selective breeding to emphasize certain traits, whether companionship, or aesthetics. Attempting to categorize an entire group of cats as suffering from a birth deformity trivializes the intricate genetic makeup that defines each breed.

It's important to recognize that brachycephalic traits are not inherently harmful. Many brachycephalic cats, such as Persians, are among the most popular and these cats lead healthy and happy lives without any veterinary issues. Responsible breeding practices involve addressing potential health issues associated with certain traits, such as potential respiratory difficulties in brachycephalic cats. Instead of criminalizing an entire group of breeds, the focus should be on promoting responsible breeding and providing education on the specific needs of each breed.

The bill's focus on criminalizing the sale and breeding of cats with perceived birth deformities may inadvertently penalize ethical breeders who actively work to eliminate genetic disorders within their breeding programs. Criminalizing the sale and breeding of cats, especially breeds sought by the public, would intentionally discourage these experienced breeders and encourage the proliferation of backyard breeders who lack the knowledge and commitment to animal welfare.

Moreover, eliminating the breeding and sale of brachycephalic cats overlooks the fact that many responsible breeders prioritize the health and welfare of their animals and actively work to address health concerns through selective breeding and health screening programs. These breeders collaborate closely with their veterinarians to ensure that their cats receive the appropriate care and attention throughout their lives. Rigid laws are not a substitute for the relationship between breeders and their veterinarians, which is essential for promoting responsible breeding practices and ensuring the welfare of the cats. Codifying prejudice against breeds of cats for cosmetic reasons is neither good governance nor animal protection.

We **oppose** HB 1102 "relative to the definition of animal cruelty" and ask it be rejected by the Committee.

Very truly yours,

George J. Eigenhauser, Jr.
CFA Legislative Coordinator