

Dear Representative

January 1, 2020

I am a constituent and I am writing to urge you to **SUPPORT H.755**

An Act relative to the importation of animals for rescue, shelter, foster, adoption or remote sale.

I care deeply about the welfare of companion animals. Our state has a very active rescue community, dedicated to saving lives and protecting the welfare of companion animals. I am a volunteer with Last Hope K9 Rescue, a MA based rescue organization (www.lasthopek9.org). In 2018 we adopted out approx 1200 dogs, and we have about 600 volunteers. Craig Olson, who wrote this bill, works with Save a Lab. They adopted out approx 450 dogs and have about 200 volunteers.

Our state has a very active rescue community, dedicated to saving lives and protecting the welfare of companion animals. Massachusetts places third in the nation for protecting animal welfare according to the 2017 Humane State rankings by the Humane Society of the U.S. We have an extremely low stray dog population, very good spay/neuter programs across the state, and very low rate of shelter euthanization.

But - dogs in other states do not fare so well. An estimated 1.5 million companion animals were euthanized in U.S. animal shelters in 2016, (From the ASPCA). This is why rescue organizations transport dogs to MA from other states and territories, and there are many people here that want to adopt these rescue animals.

This bill establishes fair standards for animal rescue organizations, which is greatly needed right now in MA.

There is currently NO LAW OR REGULATION that covers the importation of animals into the State for adoption.

The current system relies on a policy issued by the MDAR (Mass Dept of Agricultural Resources) in 2006 that requires all out of state animals for adoption from rescue organizations to be placed in a state approved isolation facility for 48 hours. After 48 hrs each animal receives a MA health certificate from a MA certified veterinarian. This is supposed to ensure that the animals do not have any visible contagious diseases before being adopted or put in a foster home. Most diseases tend to manifest symptoms within 5 days and not 48 hours so the policy can be considered ineffective. (Animals entering MA from other states must obtain a health certificate after a vet and fecal exam immediately before leaving the original state, so the MA health certificate is redundant.)

This policy adds to the stress the animals experience after having spent many hours being transported to MA. The financial burden to the rescue and adopter is significant. A 48-hour quarantine can cost a rescue anywhere from \$80 to \$175 per animal.

In addition to the current policy, MDAR Regulation 330 CMR 12.07(1) also requires an additional 48-hour in-store quarantine before animals can be shown for adoption at one time events in pet related stores (pet supply stores, daycares, etc.). This has ended many of the adoption events that organizations used to hold, which were successful in saving the lives and finding homes for healthy, adoptable animals.

Summary of H.755:

- Establishes fair standards for animal rescue organizations by requiring rescues and shelters have pre-importation plans. It requires a high standard of care for animals and in-depth record keeping, ensuring that only healthy animals are available for adoption.
- Rescue organizations have a choice to either quarantine animals for 48 hours or hold them for 5 days in a foster home or other facility.
- Encourages rescues to be responsible in their operations.
- Allows rescues a formal appeal process.
- Exempts rescues/shelters from regulations preventing marketing and promoting dogs at retail pet stores and similar businesses.

Members of rescue organizations met with Rep. Pignatelli, Chair of the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, in 2018 (last session) and H.755 was reported out favorably from there. PLEASE actively support this bill so it can be reported out favorably again this session.

Thank you
Name
Full address
Email

Visit <https://www.lasthopek9.org/h755-faq/> to learn more about H.755