



The American Federation of Aviculture Inc.

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Dear Members of the House of Representatives

I am Lewis Waskey the president of the American Federation of Aviculture, Inc., a 50 year old educational nonprofit that represents all avenues of Aviculture. This includes pet owners, commercial companies, breeders, rescues, sanctuaries and conservation groups. Our organization opposes proposed House Bill 5214, introduced on January 29, 2025, that seeks to prohibit the sale of all psittacine species (parrots) within the borders of the State of Rhode Island by all legally licensed pet stores that otherwise would be within their legal rights to do so.

The State of Rhode Island contains 39 distinct municipalities. Approximately 75% of these contain at least one pet store within their borders, approximately 95% of these contain at least one pet store or veterinary clinic within their borders, and every one of them has at least one pet store, veterinary clinic, or grooming facility. While these numbers do not represent those businesses with financial stakes in parrots per se, they do speak volumes towards the love of pets that is felt in this great state, the jobs created and revenue earned. For a state that is only just over 1,200 square miles in area, to have the sheer quantity of pet animal related businesses is quite a feat.

Rhode Island has one bird specialty store. The owners are highly respected in the community, and have maintained their business in this state, without any issues for over 35 years. Other businesses will also be impacted by this law. While many of these stores are small, local businesses, they also include a local chain and two national chains that operate in this state with great success for themselves, pet owners, the State of Rhode Island, and its municipalities through the generation of tax revenue and jobs. While not all veterinarians specialize in avian medicine, there are several such as Dr. Stephen Dyer, DVM, Dr. Susanne Saslaw, DVM, and Dr. Lucy Spelman, DVM, DACZM practicing in Rhode Island.

If H5214 is enacted, it leads to several issues that may, or may not, have been thought of previously. It will require residents who wish to obtain a parrot, legally, to choose between three options. The first, is to purchase directly from a breeder. The second, is to go to one of the two rescues that this bill expressly endorses by vesting them with express advisory powers: Foster Parrots, Ltd. and Rhode Island Parrot Rescue. With the USDA already regulating birds, there is issue of these two rescues to which Rhode Islanders looking to obtain a parrot are being funneled. Why would these rescues have more authority than the USDA? The third, is for Rhode Island residents to go out of state to make their purchases. This directly takes money and taxes dollars away from local businesses, the state and its municipalities.

As the USDA is already regulating birds and licensing breeders and brokers, it is unlikely H5214 would serve any greater benefit to the animals than if the stores continued to be monitored for following the previously well-established laws for properly caring for the animals in their care.

Please vote no on H5414. The USDA already regulates birds. This proposal is needless and overreaching, with unknown consequences to store owners and voting residents of Rhode Island.

Respectfully,

Lewis "Buddy" Waskey, President

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