

Dear Members of the House of Representatives:

My name is Walter Ducharme, and I am the husband of Renee Ducharme, founder of Jungle Junction.

I am in **complete opposition** to H 5214 as it would cause undue financial hardship for my wife's business, not to mention it would negatively impact many Rhode Island residents, and other clients of ours throughout New England and beyond.

I am not sure how to summarize in a few minutes a lifelong passion, dedication, commitment and overall love of caring for these animals by building a long-standing business and culture based solely on making sure our babies have the very best to help ensure they have a happy and healthy life.

The only benefactor of this bill would be the rescues or sanctuaries, and it would not resolve birds being given up as people's lives will continue to change. Many of the birds that have been relinquished to the rescue have paid, in many instances, hundreds or thousands of dollars to have them as lifelong tenants to these sanctuaries and are not available for adoption. So not all these animals are available for adoption or rehoming as many of the stringent policies and requirements eliminate good potential families. Many of the rescues or hoarding situations come from all over as noted by Foster Parrots themselves. In 2023 Foster Parrots stated they rescued over 63 birds from Puerto Rico and over 40 birds from New Hampshire and the Rhode Island Parrot rescue in 2016 had taken over 130 birds from a hoarding situation in Weston Connecticut. These rescues have a specific need, and their mission is clear, however not all pet owners will fail, and companion animals add a wonderful dynamic to our everyday lives.

It has been proven that living animals bring people into businesses and create long-standing relationships for futures services and repeat business for food, treats, supplies and all the items needed to help insure a happy, healthy pet, be it a dog, cat, small animal or in our case a parrot.

Over the years Jungle Junction has worked with many professionals in the pet industry and community to improve the overall care not only for birds, but for other animals as well, such as the RISPCA, Providence Animal Rescue League, Cumberland, Pawtucket, Lincoln animal control, several Nursing facilities within the State, Department of Public Safety, as well others within the community to educate, train and create healthy environments and provide quality nutrition and supplies for our feathered friends as well as other animals.

Points:

1. 35 year established highly regarded woman owned business, founded 1989
2. In store avian visits for our flock and clients, with the same veterinarian used by both rescues.
3. Free grooming services if the bird is from our store, which makes the customer return to see the bird for overall visual assessment and weight assessment.
4. Educate, train, inform clients to help ensure a proper bonding may be established.
5. Pet stores are already regulated by the State DEM and oversight is given to RISPCA for animal cruelty concerns
6. Professional affiliations – BBB and others.
7. Have supported both rescues with donations of food, supplies and building materials.
8. Adoption criteria very restrictive- income, environment, other pets in the household.
9. Adoption and rescue incur rehoming fees or donations.
10. Bill is over reaching and would give oversight to a non regulatory organization.

Vote No on Bill H 5214

Thank you, Sincerely , Walter R. Ducharme 401-255-1018



1270 MENDON ROAD

CUMBERLAND, RHODE ISLAND 02864

www.junglejunction.com

Dear Members of the House of Representatives:

My name is Renee Ducharme, founder and owner of Jungle Junction, Rhode Island's only bird specialty store, founded in 1989 in the city of Pawtucket and currently located in Cumberland for the last 25 years.

I oppose House Bill H-5214 as a Rhode Island resident, responsible animal owner of 51+ years and as a woman-owned small business proprietor of 35 years.

As a parrot enthusiast, I became a Certified Avian Specialist many years ago, procuring a reputation for my expertise and knowledge of various avian species and becoming a well-respected business owner. I have passionately committed my life to help ensure the highest quality of care for our pets, by educating my customers and their families, friends and the community throughout New England. The culture of our business is to always ensure that we pair our animals with a good owner, making sure to not only educate our customers and emphasize the level of care required, but also to continue this care and commitment through our excellent customer service and constant assistance to all bird owners and their feathered friends. We partner with some of the top breeders in the industry and have visited their facilities to guarantee the birds receive the proper care and quality products to keep them happy and healthy.

This bill not only impacts Rhode Island residents and voters, but many from around New England who depend on Jungle Junction for our expertise in matching hand fed baby birds with their families and ensuring that proper care, education and supplies are available.

This bill implies all bird breeders and pet shops are guilty of animal cruelty, depicting a false narrative that adoption from all retail environments yields a direct path to animal rescues and promotes negligence or neglect. This is absolutely not the case for our retail store. Rhode Island has established animal protection and cruelty laws, and we have never been cited to be in violation of any laws regulating pet stores. Over the years, we have worked with local animal organizations such as the RISPCA, Cumberland/Lincoln/Pawtucket Animal Controls, also assisting both bird rescues by donating food and supplies during their times of need. Additionally, we work with a board-certified avian veterinarian, who provides monthly wellness visits for our birds and our clients' pets and have also been a resource for pet therapy in nursing facilities within the state.

Our small business consists of a variety of care and resources for the avian community. Aside from endangering a woman-owned small business, passing this bill also endangers the accessibility for Rhode Island residents' to obtain food, toys, supplies, education, grooming services, veterinary care, and more for their animals. I ask that you please stop H-5214 before this bill further advances the animal rights agenda to remove all pets from our lives.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Renee Ducharme

Jungle Junction, Cumberland, Rhode Island 02864



The American Federation of Aviculture Inc.

P.O. Box 91717

Austin, Texas 78709

Email: AFAOffice@AFAbirds.org

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 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 unknow consequences to store owners and voting residents of Rhode Island.

Respectfully,

Lewis "Buddy" Waskey, President

American Federation of Aviculture, Inc.

president@afabirds.org

Dear Members of the House of Representatives

My Name is Adrienne Mock, and I am the Legislative Vice President for the American Federation of Aviculture, a non profit 501©3 that just celebrated it's 50th Anniversary. Our membership includes companion parrot owners, bird related businesses, rescues, sanctuaries, rehoming organizations, breeders, researchers, avian veterinarians and others.

I have lived with parrots for 43 years, and have seen many changes in aviculture and bird related businesses. I have purchased birds from rescues and rehoming organizations, from bird specialty stores, from individuals and have had birds given to me when their owners were no longer able to care for them. No one source is any better or any worse than any other.

Animal rights extremists have worked for decades to break the human-animal bond; first by banning the LEGAL RETAIL sales of dogs, cats, puppies, kittens and in some states, rabbits unless they were sourced from a rescue. The premise was that by doing this, the welfare of these animals would improve. Unfortunately, this did not occur. Good breeders and small pet stores, often family owned small businesses, have mostly disappeared leaving prospective owners with few, and often poor options. There are organizations doing workshops to "teach" members of the public how to ban pet stores! This has far reaching effects on local businesses, companies that supply products for birds and local revenue. People looking to purchase a bird will have few options; they may purchase from a breeder, from a rescue (yes, adoptions are legally considered purchases) or will go outside the state to buy a bird and the needed supplies, taking their money and sales tax dollars with them. This will affect the local economy. The goal of such bills is not animal welfare, but NO animals in human care.

"Until there are none". That's the endgame.

I have seen the results of such bills myself.

The proposed House Bill 5214 is along the same lines as the other pet animal bans – to eliminate LEGAL retail sales of psittacines (parrots). While pet stores and breeders are overseen and inspected by the USDA under the revised Animal Welfare Act, rescues at this time are NOT regulated. There is no oversight.

In addition, pet stores have the added factor of "public visibility" where customers are able to observe the birds. Many rescues and most sanctuaries do not. Pet stores often DO work with local rescues and rehome organization, helping to place birds.

In addition, under this onerous and overreaching bill, the brick and mortar store would be forced to take on the responsibility and costs of maintaining birds from the rescue, but receive no benefits. The sale of the birds transfers all proceeds to the rescue.

Proposing a bill in a city, county or state with one (or no!) pet stores, especially small family owned businesses, is a common tactic. Once such a bill passes, it is used to set precedent for neighboring communities or states. This further reduces choices for prospective bird owners.

This bill would also prohibit any "exhibition" of parrots, including fairs, bird shows, eliminating educational opportunities for youth, who may never get the chance to see these amazing creatures "up close and personal". Companion parrot ownership also encourages interest in conservation of wild parrots in their native countries. This is a vital part of the survival of these magnificent animals.

In closing, I have been happy to have had the companionship of my birds. They make me laugh, they keep me company, they have allowed me to meet people from all over the world. Please do not eliminate this opportunity for others.

This bill has no purpose, is a great overreach and will not have any positive effect on the welfare of parrots.

I respectfully request that you OPPOSE House Bill 5214.

Thank you for your time.

Adrienne W. Mock

American Federation of Aviculture Legislative Vice President

Companion parrot owner, Cleaner of cages, Chief Cook and Dishwasher, Bird Toy Builder

legislativevp@afabirds.org

WESTERLY ARMORY RESTORATION, INC.

*A Save America's Treasures Site
& National Register Building*



Connecting the Community & Remembering Its History

DATE: 2 February 2025
TO: Honorable Members of the Rhode Island General Assembly
FROM: Roberta Mudge Humble (President, Westerly Armory Restoration)

Thank you for your attention. I understand that you are contemplating a law forbidding the sale of parrots (and other pet birds) in Rhode Island. Please allow me to say a few words.

1. As an owner and purchaser of pet birds since I was a child, I appreciate these avian creatures and have never returned one or surrendered it to foster care. My first bird was a parakeet. Currently, I have an umbrella cockatoo, a Goffin's cockatoo, and a Vasa parrot. I have had the umbrella for 42 years, the Goffin's for 29 years, and the Vasa for 21 years. My birds give me immeasurable pleasure. They are so much a part of my life.
2. Jungle Junction in Cumberland has been a resource for me and my birds over 30 years. The store has thrived because Renee Ducharme, the owner, is both caring and careful. She sells bird and dog supplies and some birds, mainly small ones such as parakeets. She has, because of her kind demeanor, managed NOT to sell birds to people she knows as pet hoarders. Every day the store is open, she has people coming in to have her trim their birds' nails – and she has a veterinarian come twice a month so people who own birds can make appointments for the birds' care. Her business is well run; the store is immaculate. She lets only customers who want to buy a bird into the bird room. Renee loves birds, has birds of her own, and runs a most respectable business for over 30 years. She buys her birds from respected breeders.
3. I understand the parrot rescue places are often overrun. I've been once – it's hard for me to see. Hence, I am a donator to Rhode Island Parrot Rescue in West Warwick and Foster Parrots in Hopkinton. I am upset to see the birds there. To give credit, however, the people there do a magnificent job.
4. Lastly, it would be rare to find a bird in one of these rescue places that was sold in Rhode Island. Most of them come from outside the country, from online places, and from a few states in our nation.

I urge you **NOT** to pass a law that would stop the sale of pet birds in Rhode Island because 1) it is not the Rhode Island stores selling birds that lead to the large accumulation of rescue birds, 2) it would force people who want birds to go to other states, order online, or find ways that are often not safe for the birds, 3) stores such as Jungle Junction with a stellar reputation and careful management of the sale of birds would lose a portion of business.

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WESTERLY ARMORY RESTORATION, INC.

*A Save America's Treasures Site
& National Register Building*



Connecting the Community & Remembering Its History

A final note: so many people do not understand the intelligence of birds and the affection they can give. I'm glad I have a parakeet when I was 9 – that bird made a big difference in me as a child and, thankfully, led me to continue avian companionship through my entire life. My “boys” are shown below.



Cockatoo Buddy



Vasa Parrot Webster



Cockatoo Caleb

Thank you for your kind attention.

I can be reached at home in Warwick at (401)738-344 or by email at toorobert@aol.com.

Robert DuBois
31 Pocahontas Drive
Warwick, RI 02888

February 3, 2025

To: Honorable Members of the Rhode Island General Assembly

From: Robert DuBois, General Manager at Fillon Technologies North America / Macaw parrot owner

Thank you for taking time to read about my interactions with the Rhode Island Pet rescue and Jungle Junction in Cumberland. This is in response to learning about the potential of law that prohibits the sales of parrots and other pet birds in Rhode Island.

I am the proud owner of a 31-year friendly Blue and Gold Macaw parrot named Niles. I adopted him when he was only two months old back in 1993 from a parrot store owner in Johnston that was going out of business. To be fair, like many macaw parrot owners, my fiancé and I adopted him as an “impulse buy” after interacting with boss’s pet Macaw parrot. Neither one of us knew exactly what we were getting into.

Well, long story short...our engagement broke off, but my fiancé told me that I could keep Niles. So, I purchased some books about caring for Macaws where I learned that these large birds are pretty much lifetime companions. This was not exactly what I was expecting, but I grew to love my feathered friend and decided that for better or worse we’d be lifetime ‘friends’.

Unlike smaller birds, Macaw parrots are quite the handful to take care of, which is why so many of them (sadly) end up in rescue shelters. These birds are highly intelligent and emotional creatures...He literally appears to ‘cry’ whenever I need to travel for business. They are not like dogs and cats where they can simply be dropped off at a friend’s house when you decide you need a getaway vacation.

Macaw parrots will generally bond with whoever takes care of them when the owner is away. Therefore, having a “regular” place for them to stay is critically important. The last thing you want for your bird is for them to feel ‘stressed’... This is where Renee and Walter Ducharme come in... I have been boarding Niles at Jungle Junction for many years. They are second parents to Niles. In fact, they’ve even taken him to my house after I had surgery and couldn’t drive. I cannot begin to thank them for the service and support they’ve given to my pet for so many years.

Last year, I reached out to RI Parrot Rescue hoping that I could use their services occasionally as a ‘back-up’ plan if Jungle Junction couldn’t take Niles for some odd reason. I sent a nice letter explaining my situation and then 2-3 days later I received a response. I cannot remember the woman’s name, but she was friendly but was clearly ‘overwhelmed’. She told me that I had to make an appointment where she’d meet Niles and show me the surroundings. I tried making this appointment twice but the first time she cancelled it at the last minute, and the second time I never received a response. To say it was frustrating would be an understatement.

Please try to understand how stressful it is for responsible Macaw parrot owners like me.... You cannot leave these birds with anybody. They need special care... It's not their fault. It goes with the territory. Personally, I am against breeding large Macaw parrots for pets because of how long they live...Smaller birds like parakeets are a different story. They make wonderful companions for people and are relatively easy to care for. Honestly, you cannot compare the two.

My feeling is that the RI Parrot rescue have their hands full. I need a reliable pet care service for my Macaw because I sometimes have to travel for business. Niles is also a patient of Dr. Anne Bourke, which is wonderful that I can bring him to Jungle Junction for his annual check-ups etc.

If you prohibit the sale of smaller birds to stores that specialize in them like Jungle Junction you will cause an incredible amount of harm to their livelihood.... They won't be able to sustain their business. Honestly, I don't know what I would do if they had to suddenly close their doors. Instead, the smart and responsible thing would be for these two entities to work together to help care for these loveable creatures. I can certainly understand your position for wanting to stop the sales of birds to major pet retail chains like Petco, but Jungle Junction is NOT the same... They SPECIALIZE in birds and provide an incredible amount of love and support to the birds and their owner's that you cannot find anywhere else in the Ocean State!!

In closing, I am begging you to please reconsider and offer your support to Jungle Junction even if it means making them the lone "exception" to this ruling by allowing them to continue their business as it is today because of the major role they play in the RI local bird community. If their livelihood is stripped away and they have to close their doors, the fallout from this would be atrocious.

If you have questions or wish to speak to me personally. Please feel free to contact me on my cell phone at 401-301-0182. Thank you so much for taking time to read my story.

Yours sincerely,

Robert DuBois (Jared")

