

Lou Mansolillo

From: Nicole Kosmopoulos <nicolekosmopoulos@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 14, 2025 6:59 AM
To: House Corporations Committee
Subject: Support for House Bill H5214

Dear House Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of bill H5214, which would ban the sale of parrots at pet stores. Parrots are not suitable for just any pet owner and special considerations must be made for placing them in homes. Most people are unaware of the amount of time and effort it takes to properly care for these complicated birds. Instead they are intrigued by their brilliant colors and undeniable intelligence, thinking they will make a fun addition to their homes. They are not prepared for the reality.

The tactics used in the letter from the American Federation of Aviculture asking you to oppose this bill are concerning. This bill was written because we sincerely care about parrots and how they are mistreated in the pet industry. As a volunteer at Foster Parrots who works closely with avian care specialists, I know we do not in any way personally benefit from adoptions and to say this bill is an attempt to monopolize pet sales is absolutely false. Adoption fees do not even come close to covering expenses at shelters. If anything it shows how little the author of that letter cares for the welfare of parrots in the pet industry. Again the importance is placed on sales rather than quality of life for parrots in captivity. This is not a complete ban and people interested in purchasing parrots will still be allowed to do so in Rhode Island. The American Federation of Aviculture can try to misdirect and say this bill goes against the pursuit of liberty and happiness, but I would like to counter that this bill would not infringe on anyone's rights as pet owners. It is only a measure to promote better education for owners and better care for parrots that deserve happiness as well.

It is unconscionable that so many pet stores are allowed to sell parrots without providing the necessary care and healthy social interactions they require. Smaller parrots like cockatiels, lovebirds, and parakeets made up about 60 percent of the surrender requests received by Foster Parrots last year. Their size may give the impression that they are more appropriate for beginners, but their social needs are no less demanding when compared to larger parrots. All parrots regardless of size are built for life in a flock and they do not adjust well to being the only bird in a home, especially when you consider how many hours a day they spend alone. Parrots cannot thrive when they are taken from their parents too young and forced to endure conditions at pet stores that stress them on a daily basis. They are either isolated and starved for attention or forced into small, overcrowded cages with very little in the way of enrichment. It is surprising to me that I can walk into so many pet stores in Rhode Island and see parrots in rough shape. If stores are so heavily regulated, why is this commonplace?

The sad truth is that parrots break under these conditions. Through no fault of their own, they develop undesirable behaviors that often lead to negative outcomes. Stress and isolation trigger a profoundly alarming response. Parrots will over preen, self mutilate, bite, and screech for hours in protest. Another very real issue is how destructive parrots can be when their social needs are unmet. Owners are often unable to tolerate such intrusive behavior and seek to rehome them. It is not uncommon for a parrot to have gone through multiple homes before being surrendered. After having no stability or consistent care, they are deemed too aggressive and no longer adoptable. The lucky ones find placement at a caring sanctuary, but I hate to think of what happens to those who do not.

Unfortunately, there is not enough space to accommodate all of the requests that come in every year.

As for the concern regarding educational programs, there are plenty of engaging and insightful documentaries that can stand in place of what would essentially be a traveling show. Another great way to learn about parrots would be to volunteer at rescue organizations. There is plenty of work to be done! Parrots are wild animals. They will never be truly domesticated like other pets we can welcome into our homes. To respect their place in this world and how they fit into their native habitat, we have to understand this.

Foster Parrots and other rescue organizations work tirelessly to clean up a mess created by a pet industry that pushes for far more parrots than can ever be responsibly placed in homes. We need to do better. Parrots require too much care and owner education to be a flippant purchase. If the abuse and neglect of parrots were given equal attention to that of cats and dogs, there would be a public outcry. The practice of selling parrots without any limitations is short sighted and leads to impulsive buys that have disastrous consequences. This bill would finally offer some protection for parrots. I hope you can stand on the side of compassion and support this bill. It would lead to fewer surrender requests and lessen the strain felt by parrot rescue organizations that do not enjoy the same level of support and financial assistance that dog and cat rescues receive.

Sincerely,

Nicole Martinez
Richmond, RI