

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

CSA1 Bill Id:AB 519 Author:(Berman)

As Amended Ver:July 2, 2025

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Prohibits pet brokers, as defined, from selling, making available for sale, or adopting out a dog, cat, or rabbit to a consumer in California, subject to specified exemptions.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Adds specific definitions for "animal rescue group" and "public animal control agency or shelter", for purposes of this bill, that are consistent with other sections of existing law.
- 2) Revises the previous exemption for "public or privately-operated animal shelters, humane societies, or rescue organizations" to instead apply to "a public animal control agency or shelter, or animal rescue group".
- 3) Clarifies that current exemptions for "guide, signal, or service dogs" must be consistent with the definition found in Section 54.1 of the Civil Code.
- 4) Adds the following exemptions to the bill:
 - a. The sale or transfer of an animal conducted by, or on behalf of, the bona fide owner to a new owner, so long as the bona fide owner does not sell or transfer an animal more than three (3) instances per calendar year.
 - b. Nonprofit organizations engaged in youth education related to animal care and rearing.

COMMENTS

Legislative Reforms Regarding Animal Welfare. Building off existing federal and state laws, such as the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and the state's Polanco-Lockyer-Farr Pet Protection Act, the Legislature has made additional reforms in recent years to the sale of animals coming from large-scale animal "mills" and other cruel commercial operations. In an effort to reduce the flow of pets sourced from breeder mills, AB 485 (O'Donnell, Chapter 740, Statutes of 2017) was enacted in 2018 to prohibit pet store operators from selling a live cat, dog, or rabbit unless the animal is offered through a public animal control agency or shelter, specified nonprofit, or animal rescue or adoption organization. Pet store operators who violate these provisions are subject to a civil penalty of up to \$500 for each animal offered for sale. To address loopholes that resulted from the implementation of AB 485, in which commercial breeders guised their businesses as nonprofit organizations to circumvent prohibitions, further legislation enacted in 2021 (AB 2152, Gloria & O'Donnell, Chapter 96, Statutes of 2020) specifically defined the type of animal rescue organizations that pet stores could source animals from. Additionally, AB 2152 prohibited pet stores from displaying animals except for cases of providing display space for nonprofit partners. In 2023, AB 2380 (Maienschein, Chapter 548, Statutes of 2022) was enacted to further curb the importation of commercially-bred pets into California, and address unscrupulous and predatory lending practices in the pet market, by prohibiting online pet

retailers from offering or brokering a loan or other financing option for the adoption or sale of a dog, cat, or rabbit.

LA Times Exposé. Despite California's many past efforts to address animal welfare in pet sales broadly, and more specifically, to eliminate large-scale, commercially-bred animals from retail channels, a 2024 investigative report by the *Los Angeles Times* titled "Inside California's Brutal Underground Market for Puppies" exposed loopholes being exploited by some breeders and pet sellers that allow them to serve as brokers, reselling or arranging the sale of dogs bred in "puppy mills". Through analysis of more than 88,000 certificates of veterinary inspection—or "travel certificates"—from states throughout the country, the *Times* identifies more than 71,000 were imported into California. Individual pet dealers and businesses then rebrand and resell these imported dogs as "California-bred" to unknowing consumers. According to the report, many of these pets develop future health problems and consumers are left with little knowledge as to the original source of their pet, nor recourse for the fraudulent sale.

According to the *Times* investigation, more than 70% of dogs imported into California come from Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Iowa, areas which the report notes have high concentrations of commercial breeding facilities. Among other egregious cases, the report details "photos and videos of... dogs with bleeding open wounds, decaying teeth and crusty infected eyes" documented in the federal inspection reports of a particular Iowa breeder, who was previously suspended by the USDA, that exports puppies to California via brokers. Once in the state, individuals often use fake names and addresses to obfuscate the original source of the dog and "launder" the records to imply it is locally bred and raised. The same Iowa breeding operator, for example, did not list their name directly on the travel certificates of dogs imported into California. Rather, they arranged transfers through a former employee who used a portion of the breeding grounds as a "separate" business. In some cases, puppies may move through multiple brokers before being sold to a final consumer, further complicating the tracking and retention of veterinary health certificates.

In response to this investigative report, the author and sponsors have put forward this measure to expressly ban most types of pet brokering in California. Specifically, the bill defines a "broker" as a person or business that "sells, arranges, negotiates, or processes" the sale of a dog, cat, or rabbit that was bred by another person or business in exchange for a profit. This would also include facilitating the transfer of one of these animals for a profit. The bill contains exceptions for dog procurement by government agencies, such as police dogs, as well as the transfer of a guide, signal or service dog. Additionally, the bill exempts private or publicly operated animal shelters, human societies, and rescue organizations, consistent with existing law. In order to address concerns raised by stakeholders representing outdoor sports and agriculture, amendments taken in the Senate further exempt sales or transfers of an animals conducted by, or on behalf of, the bona fide owner to a new owner, so long as the bona fide owner does not sell or transfer an animal more than three instances per calendar year. Further amendments exempt nonprofit organizations engaged in youth education related to animal care and rearing, such as 4H programs.

Notably, this bill is part of a wider "Close the Puppy Mill Pipeline" legislative package put forward by the sponsors to address issues raised in the *Times* investigation. In addition to this bill which bans pet brokers, the package also contains AB 506 (Bennett), which would establish specific contract stipulations and consumer restitution measures related to pet sales, and SB 312

(Umberg), which would require the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to retain and make available information related to certificates of veterinary inspection.

According to the Author

As Chair of the Business and Professions Committee, every year I see advocates and animal lovers push for improvements to animal welfare in California. After reading the LA Times exposé, and as a dog dad myself, it was clear to me that we must do more to improve both animal welfare and consumer protection in our state. My bill will crack down on those that represent to be small, local home breeders, when they are actually importing puppies bred in puppy mills in states with inhumane animal welfare laws.

Arguments in Support

A coalition of supporters including the sponsors of the measure, as well as the California Animal Welfare Association (CalAnimals), Best Friends Animal Society, San Francisco SPCA, and more, write: "California has been a leader in enacting strong protections for companion animals, and AB 519 continues that legacy. At a time when our state's shelters are overwhelmed with adoptable animals in need of homes, we must prioritize ending the exploitative business practices that fuel the demand for mass-bred puppies and kittens while disregarding the welfare of animals."

Arguments in Opposition

Pet Advocacy Network, a trade association representing retailers, companion animal suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, and other stakeholders, writes in opposition: "AB 519 risks repeating and compounding the policy failures of the 2019 retail pet sale ban. It targets the wrong actors, undermines federal standards, and would be incredibly difficult to enforce. We urge you to reconsider this legislation and work toward solutions that focus on enforcement, consumer empowerment, and real accountability for bad actors—not those operating transparently and within the law."

FISCAL COMMENTS

This bill has been keyed non-fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

VOTES:

ASM BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS: 17-0-1

YES: Berman, Flora, Ahrens, Alanis, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Caloza, Chen, Elhawary, Hadwick, Haney, Irwin, Jackson, Krell, Lowenthal, Nguyen, Pellerin

ABS, ABST OR NV: Macedo

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 74-0-5

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Bains, Ellis, Macedo, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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