

**Rep. Fitzpatrick's Testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture Member Day,
12/11/19**

Good morning Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway, I am here today to urge the committee to take up 2 important bills relating to animals.

H.R. 1002, the Welfare of our Friends or WOOF! Act introduced by me Congressmen Crist, G.T. Thompson, and McGovern has garnered 195 cosponsors.

This bipartisan bill would amend the Animal Welfare Act to prohibit the issuance or renewal of a license to dog breeders and exhibitors until they demonstrate compliance through facility inspection.

This common-sense bill will help to stop puppy mills and abusive dog breeders from continuing to get licenses in a direct family member's, spouse's, or cohabitant's name. It also ensures that those that have had licenses suspended or revoked in the last 10 years do not procure one.

This legislation helps to bolster the actions that the Department of Agriculture is currently taking with their rule proposal which seeks to eliminate automatic license renewals. It suggests that reapplication would be necessary every 3 years. While I am supportive of the USDA's proposed rule, I think that the WOOF! Act goes a step further in protecting dogs from abusive handler, by making the licensing requirements stricter.

I would also like to bring the committee's attention to H.R. 2442, The Puppy Protection Act. This bill was introduced by me, Congressmen Crist, Reschenthaler, and McGovern.

This bipartisan bill would amend the Animal Welfare Act to ban harmful practices such as cage-stacking and wire flooring in the pet areas. It requires the following: that dogs over 12 weeks old have room to exercise, all dogs be fed at least twice a day and have access to clean unfrozen water at all times, all dogs receive annual veterinary examinations, it also includes many other common-sense measures meant to ensure reasonable well-being for canines.

While some of the provisions in the bill are in USDA's proposed rule the Puppy Protection Act provides additional standards of care to ensure that dogs in USDA licensed facilities are treated humanely.

Both of these bills have the strong support of the Humane Society, ASPCA and numerous other animal advocacy groups.

I hope that the committee will consider these two important bills that will help protect our friends that need protecting the most.

Thank you.