

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade Hearing on “The Pet
Medication Industry: Issues and Perspectives.”
April 29, 2016**

Today’s hearing on the pet medication industry is an interesting look at a large industry that most of us have a personal connection to. From dogs and cats, to guinea pigs, fish, and turtles, you name it - millions in Michigan and across the country have opened their homes to pets of all shapes and sizes.

In my personal office, we have always been a “nine to Fido office” where more often than not in my years on the Hill, we have had four legged friends greeting folks from Southwest Michigan. These days we have Gideon - a silky terrier, Buggy - a Boston terrier, and a Pomeranian named Scout. Our beloved pets provide a constant source of joy and levity as well as companionship and unconditional love.

To fully appreciate how large the marketplace is and how important veterinarians are to keeping our companions healthy, all you have to do is stop and think about how many of our friends, loved ones, colleagues, and neighbors have pets. Two-thirds of American households have a pet and in 2015 those same families spent over \$60 billion on food, supplies, medications, etc.

There is an entire ecosystem - from the manufacturers, distributors, retailers, veterinarians, pharmacies, all the way to the pet owners themselves. It’s no surprise that over 700 public comments were filed after the FTC’s workshop examining the industry back in 2012. Folks care about their pets.

The stats reveal visits to the veterinarian are down. The economy is still on shaky ground after a lackluster recovery. Affordable options for chronic and acute medical conditions are a kitchen table issue. Pet safety is also of highest importance.

We should strive to strike a balance between consumers having a marketplace of options to choose from to make sure their pet safely receives the care it needs, but doing so without breaking the bank. We also need to make sure that consumers have the information they need to make an informed decision with their veterinarians about the best care for their pets.

I'm interested in hearing from all the witnesses about the state of the pet medication industry today, what the states are doing to address these issues, and what we can learn from the Federal Trade Commission's deep dive into the nuisances of this industry.

I want to be clear that just as our pets are a part of our extended family; our veterinarians are a trusted part of the equation to keep them healthy and happy. Today we are here to listen and understand what role, if any, the federal government should play. I think we can all agree that the health and safety of the pets is a top priority for folks in Michigan and families across the U.S.