

Committee on Agriculture

Member Day Hearing | December 6, 2023

TESTIMONY OF REPRESENTATIVE BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK

Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Scott, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding this Member Day hearing and providing me with the opportunity to share the concerns of my constituents and community.

As you continue the critical task of authoring a Farm Bill, I strongly urge the Committee to continue to address issues of animal welfare. Recent findings of neglect and abuse in puppy mills across our country have stained the reputation of the industry, negatively impacting law-abiding breeders. To address bad actors in the commercial breeding industry, I was proud to introduce H.R. 1624, the *Puppy Protection Act*. The reasonable protection of animals is essential, and the federal government has a responsibility to raise the currently insufficient standards of care for commercially bred puppies and dogs. By amending the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and cleaning up facilities that maintain blatantly inhumane conditions, the bipartisan *Puppy Protection Act* will meet that obligation. The increase in cases of countless dogs and puppies being kept in cruel and inadequate facilities around the country is a failure of the federal government to administer its own regulations. By strengthening the commonsense standards for large, commercially licensed breeders, Congress can ensure that USDA inspectors do the job expected of them rather than continuing to place an unnecessary burden on our community law enforcement officers.

The *Puppy Protection Act* has received broad support, with over 216 cosponsors since it was introduced in April. This includes 21 members of the Agriculture Committee. I would also like to thank the co-leads of this legislation, Rep. McGovern, Rep. Reschenthaler, and Rep. Panetta for their leadership. I look forward to continuing to work with the Agriculture Committee to find a path forward on this and other animal welfare issues.

Another issue being addressed by this Committee that I would like to highlight is nutrition. Title IV (4) programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), are essential and impactful programs to many families across the nation. One topic of concern is combatting hunger among seniors and adults with disabilities. Food insecurity is persisting amid post-pandemic recovery, and it is affecting our most vulnerable communities. This is why I introduced H.R. 4706, the *Senior Nutrition Task Force Act*. This bipartisan-bicameral legislation will establish a special working group to combat malnutrition among senior citizens and disabled adults. I am proud to be leading legislation dedicated to improving nutrition outcomes and benefits. I urge my colleagues to continue to support commonsense initiatives that will modernize our bureaucracy to support vulnerable groups.

In another effort to modernize nutrition programs, I was proud to join my colleagues in introducing H.R. 3519, the *Hot Foods Act of 2023*. This bipartisan legislation would amend SNAP by removing an outdated prohibition which prevents recipients from purchasing hot foods with SNAP benefits. By allowing SNAP customers to purchase nutritious hot items, such as rotisserie chickens, there will be greater flexibility for families. I look forward to my colleagues

joining me in working to streamline this program and address preventable red tape which restricts business owners, program administrators, and SNAP recipients.

Finally, I would like to address the issue of conservation. My community of southeastern Pennsylvania has a strong tradition of conservation practices, and I encourage this Committee to embrace policies that preserve our land. I was proud to join my colleagues in supporting H.R. 3174, the *Invasive Species Prevention and Forest Restoration Act*. This bipartisan legislation would expand access to the USDA and APHIS to eradicate or contain pests that are damaging the environment. Notably, the increased prevalence of Spotted Lanternflies throughout Pennsylvania has been devastating to crops and damaging to family farmers. As a Congress, we must take serious action to protect our farms and crops against invasive species and preserve our lands for the next generation. I thank the Committee for your leadership on this issue.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Committee and all my colleagues on common-ground, commonsense solutions to agriculture issues in the 118th Congress and the completion of a successful Farm Bill.