May 19, 2020

The Honorable Ralph Abraham
U.S. House of Representatives
417 Cannon HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kurt Schrader
U.S. House of Representatives
2431 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20511

The Honorable Ted Yoho
U.S. House of Representatives
1730 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: American Kennel Club support for the Healthy Dog Importation Act of 2020

Dear Representatives Abraham, Schrader, and Yoho:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the American Kennel Club (AKC) and our more than 5,000 dog clubs in all 50 states, to express AKC’s strong support and to thank you for the introduction of the Healthy Dog Importation Act of 2020. This bipartisan legislation will ensure that all dogs entering the United States are healthy and are accompanied by documentation of required vaccinations and health certification from an accredited veterinarian.

In January of 2019, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that up to 1.245 million dogs are imported into the U.S. annually. This is nearly a 400 percent increase in the number of dogs CDC reported that were imported into the U.S. in 2006. Currently, the only requirements for dogs entering the U.S. are that they appear in good health, be at least 6 months old if they are being imported for resale (including those dogs intended for adoption), and that they be accompanied by a rabies vaccination certificate, if they do not come from a rabies-free or low-risk country as determined by CDC.

While the importation of dogs is essential to fulfilling public demand for personal pets and working dogs, such as explosive detection canines, the number of sick and diseased dogs entering the country increasingly alarms public health officials. The CDC and other public health officials have noted a recent uptick in instances of zoonotic diseases such as rabies, canine distemper and influenza. In May 2019, the CDC banned the import of dogs from Egypt due to multiple instances of rabid dogs being brought into the U.S. In March 2019, Scientists at Cornell University’s Animal Health Diagnostic Center identified a strain of Asian canine distemper virus never before reported in North America, determining that the source was likely a dog “rescued” from a Korean livestock market. The Cornell scientists also attributed a 2015 Chicago area outbreak of canine influenza to dogs rescued from Korea. In November of 2019, the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association raised concerns about importation of dogs with African Swine Flu from certain regions of the world, including China.

As our country focuses on ending the COVID-19 pandemic and preventing the introduction and spread of other zoonotic diseases such as coronaviruses, we must work together to ensure
that all animals, including dogs, entering the U.S. are healthy and not a risk of spreading diseases that could adversely impact public health. The Healthy Dog Importation Act will ensure that all dogs entering the U.S. are healthy, accompanied by a health certificate from an accredited veterinary authority in the country of origin, that each dog is identified by microchip, and that a centralized, publicly available data-ake of health certificates of imported dogs is established that can utilized by CDC and Customs and Border Protection for verification of health records upon arrival in the U.S.

The American Kennel Club thanks you for your leadership in sponsoring and introducing the Healthy Dog Protection Act. We look forward to working with you to pass this legislation to protect public health and the health of all dogs imported into the U.S.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 919-816-3721 or shg@akc.org if you have questions or I may be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Sheila Goffe
Vice President, Government Relations

*Founded in 1884, the American Kennel Club is a non-partisan, not-for-profit purebred dog registry and educational organization dedicated to promoting responsible dog ownership, advocating for dogs as family companions, advancing canine health and well-being and working to protect the rights of all responsible dog owners.*