

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4437

To amend the Animal Welfare Act to establish additional requirements for dealers, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 29, 2026

Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. SCHIFF, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. ALSOBROOKS, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. BOOKER, Ms. SMITH, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. WARNER, Mr. COONS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. WYDEN, and Ms. ROSEN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

A BILL

To amend the Animal Welfare Act to establish additional requirements for dealers, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Puppy Protection Act
5 of 2026”.

1 **SEC. 2. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR DEALERS.**

2 (a) HUMANE TREATMENT OF DOGS BY DEALERS.—

3 Section 13(a) of the Animal Welfare Act (7 U.S.C.
4 2143(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

5 “(9) In addition to the requirements under paragraph
6 (2), the standards described in paragraph (1) shall, with
7 respect to dealers, include requirements—

8 “(A) that the dealer provide adequate housing
9 for dogs that includes—

10 “(i) completely solid flooring;

11 “(ii) indoor space sufficient to allow the
12 tallest dog in an enclosure to stand on his or
13 her hind legs without touching the roof of the
14 enclosure;

15 “(iii) with respect to dogs over 8 weeks in
16 age, primary enclosures that, with the length of
17 the dog measured from the tip of the nose to
18 the base of the tail, provide at least—

19 “(I) 12 square feet of indoor floor
20 space per each dog measuring not more
21 than 25 inches long;

22 “(II) 20 square feet of indoor floor
23 space per each dog measuring more than
24 25 but less than 35 inches long; and

1 “(III) 30 square feet of indoor floor
2 space per each dog measuring not less
3 than 35 inches long;

4 “(iv) enclosures that are not stacked or
5 otherwise placed on top of or below another en-
6 closure; and

7 “(v) temperature control that—

8 “(I) is appropriate for the age, breed,
9 and condition of each dog in the enclosure;
10 and

11 “(II) is between 45 and 85 degrees
12 Fahrenheit, when dogs are present in the
13 enclosure;

14 “(B) that appropriate and nutritious food be
15 provided to each dog at least twice per day, in an
16 amount sufficient to maintain the good health and
17 physical condition of each dog;

18 “(C) that each dog has continuous access to po-
19 table water that is not frozen and is free of feces,
20 algae, and other contaminants;

21 “(D) that each dog has adequate exercise, in-
22 cluding, for each dog over the age of 12 weeks—

23 “(i) except as provided in clause (ii), unre-
24 stricted access from the primary enclosure of

1 the dog during daylight hours to an outdoor ex-
2 ercise area that—

3 “(I) is at ground-level;

4 “(II) is a solid surface;

5 “(III) is enclosed by a fence or other
6 structure;

7 “(IV) is properly controlled for the
8 safety of the dog; and

9 “(V) allows the dog to extend to full
10 stride, play, and engage in other types of
11 mentally stimulating and social behaviors;
12 or

13 “(ii) if the dealer obtains a certification
14 from the attending veterinarian stating that a
15 dog should not have unrestricted access to an
16 outdoor exercise area for a specific medical rea-
17 son, an alternative exercise plan prescribed by
18 the veterinarian for the dog that meets the ap-
19 plicable requirements under section 3.8 of title
20 9, Code of Federal Regulations (or successor
21 regulations);

22 “(E) that each dog has meaningful socialization
23 with humans and compatible dogs for at least 30
24 minutes each day that—

1 “(i) includes positive interaction with a
2 human such as petting, stroking, grooming,
3 feeding, playing with, exercising, or other
4 touching of the dog that is beneficial to the
5 well-being of the dog; and

6 “(ii) does not include time spent in veteri-
7 nary care;

8 “(F) that each dog receives adequate veterinary
9 care, including—

10 “(i) prompt treatment of any disease, ill-
11 ness, or injury by a licensed veterinarian;

12 “(ii) a thorough, hands-on examination by
13 a licensed veterinarian at least once each year,
14 which shall include a dental exam;

15 “(iii) core vaccinations recommended by
16 the latest version of the American Animal Hos-
17 pital Association Canine Vaccination Guidelines;
18 and

19 “(iv) medications to prevent intestinal
20 parasites, heartworm disease, fleas, and ticks
21 that are approved by a licensed veterinarian for
22 canine use;

23 “(G) with respect to safe breeding practices for
24 dogs, including—

1 “(i) a screening program for known preva-
 2 lent inheritable diseases that may be disabling
 3 or likely to significantly affect the lifespan or
 4 quality of life of the mother or the offspring;

5 “(ii) prohibiting breeding, unless each dog
 6 bred—

7 “(I) has been screened by a licensed
 8 veterinarian prior to each attempt to
 9 breed; and

10 “(II) is found in the screening under
 11 subclause (I) to be free from health condi-
 12 tions that may be disabling to, or likely to
 13 significantly affect the lifespan or quality
 14 of life of, the mother or the offspring;

15 “(iii) prohibiting the breeding of a female
 16 dog to produce—

17 “(I) more than 2 litters in any 18-
 18 month period; or

19 “(II) more than 6 litters during the
 20 lifetime of the dog;

21 “(iv) that a female dog of any small breed
 22 (having a maximum weight range at maturity
 23 that is less than 40 pounds) not be bred—

24 “(I) before reaching the age of 18
 25 months; or

1 “(II) after reaching the age of 9
2 years;

3 “(v) that a female dog of any large breed
4 (having an expected weight range at maturity
5 that includes 40 or more pounds) not be bred—

6 “(I) before reaching the age of 2
7 years; or

8 “(II) after reaching the age of 7
9 years; and

10 “(vi) that any canine caesarian section be
11 performed by a licensed veterinarian;

12 “(H) that dogs be housed with other dogs, un-
13 less health or behavioral issues make group housing
14 unsafe; and

15 “(I) to make all reasonable efforts to find hu-
16 mane placement for retired breeding dogs—

17 “(i) such as with an adoptive family, res-
18 cue organization, or other appropriate owner for
19 that dog; and

20 “(ii) not including selling at auction or
21 otherwise placing a retired breeding dog with
22 another breeder for breeding purposes.”.

23 (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section
24 13(a)(2)(B) of the Animal Welfare Act (7 U.S.C.

1 2143(a)(2)(B)) is amended by inserting “subject to para-
2 graph (9),” before “for exercise of dogs”.

3 (c) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 18 months after
4 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall issue
5 final regulations establishing the standards for the care
6 of dogs by dealers, as required by this section and the
7 amendments made by this section.

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