

HB 297 -- BREED SPECIFIC DOG LEGISLATION

SPONSOR: Hicks

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Special Committee on Urban Issues by a vote of 8 to 0.

The bill specifies that the General Assembly occupies and preempts the entire field of legislation touching in any way the control or regulation of specific breeds of dogs. However, a village, town, city, or county can still prohibit dogs from running at large or to further control or regulate dogs within its boundaries so long as the ordinance, order, policy, or regulation is not breed specific.

This bill is the same as HCS HB 1398 (2018).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that breed specific bills are discriminatory because any dog can have positive or negative traits and breed specific legislation hurts dog ownership, and that breeds are often confusing or misidentified. Supporters suggest that breed specific laws create an unnecessary burden on shelters and are ineffective. Supporters also stated that multiple locations that have implemented breed specific laws saw increases in related incidents and are moving toward repeal of those laws.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Hicks; Gretchen Maune; Missouri Federation of Animal Owners; Mandy Ryan, Missouri K9 Friends; Humane Society Legislative Fund of Missouri; Missouri Veterinary Medical Association; American Society For Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; Brent Toellner, Best Friends Animal Society; Kansas City Pet Project; Missouri Federation of Animal Owners; Missouri Animal Husbandry Association; Heather Gibb; Shannon Wells; Karen Runk; and Andrea Roach, Citizens Against Breed Specific Legislation, Springfield, Mo.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that the bill's changes would greatly impact current municipalities which have breed specific regulations and laws to address overpopulation concerns for specific breeds that are overwhelming shelters. Opponents also stated that certain breeds are specifically designed to be aggressive and that more ferocious attacks come from these breeds, and that this should be a local issue and not a state legislated concern.

Testifying against the bill were Missouri Alliance For Animal Legislation; Dana Strunk, Safety Before Dangerous Dogs; Missouri Municipal League; and Patricia H. Dunaway.