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Task Force Hearing December 4, 2013

Legislative Office Building, 300 Capitol Avenue in Hartford, Room 2A.

Dear Representatives,

Please accept my deepest apologies for not being present to share my voice. I want to be completely transparent and ensure that you fully understand that me not being present at this meeting is not an indicator of how important this topic is to me. I have small children and it would be close to impossible for me to make the trip for the hearing from Manhattan. Having said that, please accept my written testimony in the same strongest of thought and meaning as if I were there myself in person to voice it to you.

Myself, and countless other people like me, remain distraught after the harrowing and VERY unfortunate experience I had as a result of purchasing a pet store puppy and that is why I could never drum up the emotional strength to think about this very much. Please note, it has been a highly emotional and devastating activity just for me to pull my thoughts and memories together so I may compose this letter to you. As hard as this has been to write again, my story must be heard...It is my deepest prayer that my story not only be heard, but also used in a productive way to make change that so desperately needs to take place now. I have submitted this information years ago, but nothing ever seems to come out of it, which I find disheartening and so very unfair in so many ways and levels. There really are no words to explain what we went through. However, I will do my very best to give you as much detail as possible.

My family had never owned a dog and we had not been educated on what a "Puppy Mill Puppy" was and the conditions they come from or the abuse of their parents to breed them. We made the worst possible decision to purchase a dog from Puppies of Westport, located in Westport, CT in 2007. Monty and Lauren are the unethical greedy owners of this store, which they making a killing on at the expense of animals' lives, which is meaningless to both of them. Afterwards, I became aware of more and more of their practices, which disgusted me the more I heard. One of my favorites was them hosting "puppy parties" for kids to have sleepovers in their store in Westport. Now, I am sure they will have a long list of back up ways and statements to try and protect themselves, they are good at that. However, I was beyond even being able to process having all these little kids with all the germs they carry in DIRECT contact with these tiny puppy's who have just made the long journey by van or air mostly from MO and are in zero condition to be having any contact with most anyone except the main caretaker. Monty and Lauren brought in big money for these parties, which further disgusted me.

We paid Monty \$1,500 for our baby Oreo. This was after a negotiation off of the price tag of \$2,000. He told us the dog was 100% from a local breeder. However, at a later inspection of Oreo's paperwork from the "breeder," as he calls it, we uncovered that he had traveled the long journey from MO. Additionally, the woman that sold this litter to Money was by the name of Sherrie Zuspahn. In the beginning, I thought she was a breeder of just the Coton de Tulear breed of our Oreo. Little did I know though, this woman was under numerous USDA inspection failures and citations. I also was able to locate a video on line of what her "breeding area" and environment looks like. I believe it would be a serious benefit for everyone here today to watch this video. It was so disturbing I cried for days and even had nightmares about it. Dogs could not even walk; they had no knowledge on how to, as they never made it out of their cage. The heat was 100 degrees that day when it was filmed. All dogs outside, in direct sunlight, zero ventilation. No water. Feces covering the pens and cages. Super matted dogs crying and begging for help. IT was a living version of pure hell. THIS is where my dog came from and THIS is the place that benefits in business with Monty and Lauren at this expense of the animals. Selling these puppies as soon as they are born, shipping long distances (medically documented to make them sick) and then making thousands of dollars off EACH single dog.

After returning home with the dog that evening, Oreo began to cough. We notified Monty the next morning and he told us it was "just kennel cough" and we "could" take him to South Wilton Vet (who he uses) if we wanted, but we would have to pay for it. So we took him. They prescribed some antibiotics and within 6 days we realized they were not working and took him at night to the emergency animal hospital located in Norwalk, CT. They told us that night to our shock how very sick he was and that he had full-blown pneumonia and had a 50/50 chance. Once again we notified Monty. He demanded we take the dog back to South Wilton for care even in light that the Dr.'s at the emergency clinic said there was no way Oreo could make the transfer. He was on 100% oxygen and had 4 different I.V.'s the Dr. there did a bronchial swipe procedure to try and identify the type of antibiotics to use. Unfortunately, they never could obtain an accurate culture to grow. They tried many various types of antibiotics and none took effect. Oreo was in a 100% oxygen tank the whole time struggling for each breath. Some how he mustered up the energy to stand up when he saw us on each visit every single day. After 15 days in that location at \$1,000/day we finally had to make the choice to transfer him to South Wilton because we could no longer afford 24 hour care. (\$15,000). We paid \$500.00 to transfer him in a pet ambulance with oxygen. He then stayed at South Wilton for another week and finally lost his battle. We additionally paid \$350.00 to cremate his little body, which we have the ashes here. The South Wilton Vet was around \$1,500. Total price for the doggy in the window: \$18,500.

Oreo touched the lives of all around him. He was a pure joy and was as much in love with us as we were with him. It was a devastating loss that I can't begin to explain here in

words. I went into a very deep depression for a long time and this entire experience caused such stress and anxiety. My medical bills alone were close to Oreos bills. We returned to Monty weeks later to try and discuss some kind of payment for all this. During Oreos sickness he told us he was not paying the bills and we could return the sick dog to him and he would "take care of him"...we knew what that meant, as Monty is NOT a vet nor does he has oxygen cages there.

He does not return phone calls and I am sure he wishes we would go away. On the day we were there for an attempt for reimbursement purposes, I noticed the current dog we now own. She looked just like Oreos and when I picked her up, she had a tag with the same birthday. I asked if she was from that litter, but wondered why she was still there considering she was now 15 weeks old, not appealing to most looking for a little dog there. They said she had been in the back and sick also, but had now recovered and they had not been able to show her, so she was still there. I know many in some of these CT action group can't understand how I took her, but I did. She was an exchange for Oreos, but he did not cover any of our astounding medical expenses. I was emotional and could simply not leave her there. She was a part of Oreos and that was it. Simple and I don't regret rescuing her.

She has a very weak immune system and is susceptible to nearly anything a dog can catch. Over the years, we have paid thousands and thousands of dollars for her medical care as she gets sick a lot. I full attribute this to early life lung damage and the horrid breeding conditions for the mothers. Additionally, she carries a genetic defective gene, which causes cherry eye. More money.....which we had to pay for an expensive surgery to correct it. Another breeding issue for Montys source I am sure from inappropriate breeding. After all was said and done I looked into the paperwork and the breeder was from Missouri, and the dogs had been flown in at a young age. Another reason the dogs were sick.....transporting long distances at a young age as I stated prior.

This is very painful to think about and recall. Please make sure you use our story in the most serious and effective way possible to allow for change. I can't begin to tell you how horrible Monty and Lauren were as they evaded our calls and played as many games as they could to try and get out of paying for medical bills or for taking responsibility. This made the death of Oreos even more compounded. To be forced to deal with people like this who are only out to scam consumers at the cost of killing dogs. The dogs have no voice. It's time there are some practices and laws put in place to protect them, as they are not being cared for at all. The drama and saga continues daily and Monty and Lauren take in more and more money as each day passes to fund more of their Caribbean vacations.

I would be more than happy to discuss this at a further length if needed. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the above listed information. Please let me know if you have any questions.

It my hope and prayer that I am able to share my voice and you are able to feel my pain and the voiceless animals.

YOU are their only chance.

Sincerely Yours,

Kellie Bazemore