

## Goldie's Act Restores Welfare to the Animal Welfare Act

### What will Goldie's Act do?

This bill seeks to update the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) to ensure that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) enforces the law intended to protect dogs in puppy mills. The legislation would require USDA to:

- Conduct more frequent and meaningful inspections,
- Confiscate animals who are suffering,
- Impose deterring monetary penalties for violations, and
- Share inspection information in a timely manner with local law enforcement.

### Why is Goldie's Act necessary?

The USDA has consistently failed to properly enforce the AWA, particularly for dogs bred for the pet trade. USDA's policies have enabled glaring welfare problems to consistently go unrecorded by their own inspectors and, as a result, the USDA has failed to enforce the law designed to protect animals under their authority. Over the years violations and enforcement actions have dramatically declined. In 2020, enforcement plummeted when the USDA opened a paltry 30 new AWA enforcement cases—a decline of nearly 90% from the 252 cases it opened in 2014. This troubling trend isn't explained by a sudden change in behavior at puppy mills. Despite observing hundreds of violations and welfare problems, the USDA did not formally record these



glaring issues in formal inspection reports and imposed **no penalties** against any commercial dog dealers in 2018, 2019, or 2020, and 2021. In 2021, the USDA filed a single administrative complaint, only after tremendous public pressure when it came to light that the agency took no action against a licensed facility despite knowing that dogs were suffering and dying from grievous injuries and illnesses. Their failure to enforce the law allows cruelties endemic to commercial dog breeding to persist. The USDA has ignored most welfare violations, causing untold suffering for dogs and other animals left in unspeakably cruel conditions. We cannot let dogs die horrible deaths because the USDA is unwilling to do its job. We need to take action so this can never happen again.

### How would Goldie's Act improve enforcement?

This legislation would mandate that USDA inspectors document and report all observed AWA violations, as intended by the law—ending once and for all the USDA's policy of coddling of bad actors by using “teachable moments” (see below) and other ineffective approaches. It would require the USDA's to consider penalties against every dog dealer who violates the law and improve cross-reporting of animal cruelty at these facilities between the USDA and local and state authorities. We must require proper oversight by adding these critical provisions to the AWA.

### Who was Goldie?

**Goldie, also known as female Golden Retriever #142**, was one of hundreds of dogs in an Iowa puppy mill licensed by the USDA to Daniel Gingerich. The USDA issued a license to Gingerich in 2019 but were denied access to his facilities until April 2021. By this time, dogs were living in abhorrent conditions. USDA inspectors found, but did not record on the official inspection report, a Golden Retriever later described in a DOJ civil complaint as “extremely emaciated.” Indeed, written agency policy prohibited inspectors from recording the violation. The USDA saw Goldie twice after that, taking note of her deteriorating condition but never exercised their discretion to help her. In late July, Goldie was found in a barn along with dead dogs. She had no water, her bones were protruding, she had pressure sores on her body and zero body fat. According to state reports, a veterinarian was called, and USDA inspectors allowed her to be euthanized on site. The USDA allowed Goldie to suffer and deteriorate for months, even though they had the authority and are directed by the AWA to protect dogs in these facilities. In fact, the USDA failed even to document the dog's existence and condition for months. Despite Goldie's suffering and many other clear violations of law, the USDA did nothing to protect Goldie or the other dogs, and permitted Gingerich's continued breeding, selling and profiting from this misery. USDA settled its case against Gingerich in less than two months with no fines issued. In 2022, the agency provided monetary awards to the inspectors that worked this case. To the USDA, this outcome is award worthy. This is why Congress must take action and pass Goldie's Act. Without legislation, dogs will continue to suffer on the USDA's watch.