From: Stephanie Friesen
To: dencc - City Council
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Pit Bull Ban: An Unwelcoming City Stigma
Date: Monday, February 24, 2020 1:41:51 PM

Hello Counsel,

This is a topic that I have been heavily impacted by and followed progress for Denver and all affected metro area cities' toward repeal. It is now time for me to provide my experience to help weigh your vote.

Last April, my partner and I found a doggy daycare located within Denver city limits that we were intending to purchase. To run the business, I would need to move from Washington state, and, in my search for housing, discovered that Denver and many cities in the metro area are under a pit bull ban.

I adopted my dog, Velcro, from a vizsla rescue as a puppy, and, while he was listed as a vizsla mix, he had that big pit bull smile. As a responsible pet owner, I found an apartment in Littleton—where no ban exists—and I took him in to the Denver animal shelter to be evaluated. In preparation, I compiled an information packet for Velcro, including up-to-date vet records, letters of character reference from various sources, obedience education certificates, and an overview write-up, detailing Velcro's demeanor, socialization, and home life. When we arrived for his scheduled assessment, I provided each animal control officer with a copy of the packet only to have them promptly handed back to me along with the information that the assessment is strictly appearance-based.

Velcro failed.

He was entered into the database and I was handed a letter, notifying me that Velcro is not welcome in the city of Denver. All the while, the staff at the animal shelter and the animal control officers repeatedly informed me that Velcro was extremely well behaved and they did not consider him a danger; he wasn't the type of dog who would have animal control called on him. But, knowing that Velcro is in the Denver system, that is not a risk I can take.

We did not buy that doggy daycare because Velcro couldn't attend.
We recently purchased a home, and, though we would have loved to look within the city limits, we purchased outside of the city because Velcro is not welcome in Denver.
We regularly make decisions to go to parks, restaurants, veterinary clinics, doggy daycares, etc. where Velcro can safely attend.
We have been alienated and exiled strictly based on Velcro's appearance, without any regard to his behavior.

Aggression is not a breed, it is a learned behavior. The Denver ban on pit bulls does not prevent aggressive dogs from living within the city; it prevents responsible pet owners from entering the city.

Kind regards,
Stephanie Friesen