



*Kindness and Care for Animals*

350 South Huntington Avenue  
Boston, Massachusetts 02130  
617-522-7400  
[www.mspca.org](http://www.mspca.org)

November 5, 2007

Ms. Marlena Cevantes  
1000 N West Street, Suite 1200  
Wilmington, Delaware 19801

Dear Ms. Cervantes:

The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was recently alerted to your new business "Flex Petz" and your plans to expand this dog rental business to Boston in the Spring of 2008.

On behalf of our more than 65,000 members, we express strong concerns over the effect Flex Petz will have on both dogs and people in the state of Massachusetts.

Our concern centers on the belief that relationships with dogs are at their best when dogs are considered part of the family and a lifetime commitment is made toward the care of that family member. The strong bond made in a human-animal relationship of this character ensures the welfare of both parties/family members. In contrast, a business which profits from renting dogs out as commodities places the human-animal relationship on a shakier foundation.

At the MSPCA, in order to keep dogs out of shelters and in a safe loving environment, we work hard to promote the human-animal bond as a lifetime commitment. Unfortunately, Flex Petz sends a contrary message to the public, making it socially acceptable to treat dogs as disposable commodities that can be rented for pleasure at their leisure. The MSPCA worries about the impact this message – both in the short and long term – will have on the pet-owning public and the consequent lack of owner responsibility and commitment to a lifetime of care and concern for canine companions.

We are also concerned about the effect short term, multiple renters will have on rental dogs' welfare, temperament and behavior. The lack of a permanent and strong bond with a human companion can result in behavior-related problems. Dogs benefit from consistency and routine. Constant relocation and re-adaptation of rental dogs is potentially stressful and confusing. Without requiring a long-term commitment to the dog, renters do not have the background or understanding of the individual dog's needs, habits, or behaviors. This could cause problems, for both the dog and renters. The resulting behavior problems will make it harder to find a new family and permanent home for the dog.

Inappropriate behaviors, such as jumping up on people, food-stealing, barking, and others, may be inadvertently reinforced (rewarded) by renters, and behaviors that are

reinforced increase. One renter who found it agreeable that a dog jumped up for greeting would make it more likely that the dog might knock the next renter down, marking the dog as a liability for your organization. Subtle signs of beginning behavioral problems that would be noticed by a full-time dog owner could be missed for months at a time in your organization, and the behavior could emerge as a full-blown behavioral issue that needed expensive behavioral intervention. Over time, a dog's increasing bad behaviors could render it as "unrentable." Where will the dog live then?

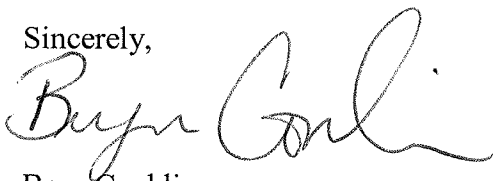
This leads to our final concern which relates to the placement of dogs that are no longer appealing to your customers due to behavior-related problems or increasing age. It can be very difficult to find homes for dogs who have behavior problems – from issues as simple as house training issues to more complicated ones, such as aggression. It is also harder to find homes for aging canines.

The MSPCA requests that you consider the outcome your business will have on the dogs you use, as well as the pet-owning communities where Flex Petz is established. Please consider the long-term impact of running a business that – by its very nature – is based on using dogs as commodities similar to rental cars and recognize the subsequent harm that this can cause, regardless of any policies or protections your company attempts to build into its place.

We ask that you discontinue your plans to open a business in Boston and plan to follow up with you on this matter.

Thank you for your consideration as to the welfare of the animals in your business and those that are impacted by your business. We hope you will reconsider the expansion and existence of your company.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bryn Conklin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Bryn Conklin

Animal Protection Issues Specialist

Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals