

**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO**

DAVE YOST,	:	
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL	:	
Charitable Law Section	:	Case No.
30 East Broad Street, 25th Floor	:	
Columbus, Ohio 43215,	:	Judge
	:	
Plaintiff,	:	
	:	
v.	:	COMPLAINT OF OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL DAVE YOST
	:	
DOGS TO THE RESCUE, INC.,	:	
c/o Opal Mustain, Statutory Agent	:	
1883 Greenbriar Rd.	:	
Portsmouth, OH 45662	:	
	:	
NATHAN BAZLER,	:	
17201 Keller Road	:	
Butler, OH 44822	:	
	:	
SARA BAZLER,	:	
17201 Keller Road	:	
Butler, OH 44822	:	
	:	
OPAL MUSTAIN,	:	
1883 Greenbriar Rd.	:	
Portsmouth, OH 45662	:	
	:	
LITTLE PUPPIES ONLINE, LLC	:	
c/o Nathan Bazler, Statutory Agent	:	
16149 Wooster Road	:	
Mt. Vernon, OH 43050	:	
	:	
Defendants.	:	

Plaintiff Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost (the “Attorney General”) states the following allegations as his Complaint against Dogs to the Rescue, Inc. (the “Rescue”), Nathan Bazler (“Nathan”), Sara Bazler (“Sara”), Opal Mustain (“Opal”) and Little Puppies Online, LLC (“Little Puppies”).

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Attorney General, having reasonable cause to believe that violations of Ohio's charitable laws have occurred, brings this action in the public interest and under the authority vested in the Attorney General by RC 109.23 *et seq.* ("Ohio Charitable Trust Act"), Revised Code 1716.01 *et seq.* ("Ohio Charitable Organizations Act"), and the Attorney General's common law authority to enforce charitable trusts.

2. This is an action for equitable relief, injunctive relief, civil penalties, and damages for Defendants' violations of the common law, the Ohio Charitable Trust Act, and Ohio Charitable Organizations Act.

II. DEFENDANTS, JURISDICTION, AND VENUE

3. The Rescue, Nathan, Sara, Opal and Little Puppies participated in violations of the law described in this Complaint, or through their actions or inaction authorized, directed, adopted, ratified, allowed or otherwise caused or permitted such violations to occur.

4. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction in this case pursuant to R.C. 2305.01.

5. This Court may exercise personal jurisdiction over the Rescue, Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler, Opal Mustain and Little Puppies pursuant to R.C. 2307.382 because the acts and omissions alleged in this Complaint arose from the Rescue's, Nathan's, Sara's, Opal's and/or Little Puppies' actions in Ohio.

6. Venue is proper in Franklin County pursuant to R.C. 109.16, the Attorney General certifying that the amount in controversy exceeds Five Hundred Dollars (\$500).

III. ACTIVITIES GIVING RISE TO THIS COMPLAINT

7. The Rescue was incorporated with the State of Ohio effective June 4, 2018 “for charitable or educational purposes as authorized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.”

8. The Rescue received its 501(c)(3) status from the IRS effective June 4, 2018.

9. The Rescue is a “charitable trust” as that term is defined in R.C. 109.23.

10. The Ohio Secretary of State cancelled the Rescue’s incorporation on February 6, 2024.

11. According to the information submitted by the Rescue to the Attorney General, the Rescue’s purpose was: “Welfare of animals and education of public concerning this issue.”

12. The Rescue solicited charitable donations from the public through its website. The Rescue’s website stated: “Dogs to the Rescue accepts donations to assist us with our operations and care of our puppies. 100% of your donation is used to find permanent homes for our puppies, If you want your donation to be applied to a specific sector of our business, you can note that along with your contact information.”

13. The Rescue’s board of directors consisted of three individuals. Nathan served as the President for the Rescue, Opal was the Vice President and Sara was the Rescue’s secretary and treasurer.

14. Nathan and Sara are married. Since the Rescue’s board consisted of only three individuals, the majority of the Rescue’s board was not free from personal conflicts of interest.

A. The Rescue’s Conflicted Board and Lack of Internal Controls

15. Nathan, Sara and Opal reported working a nominal number of hours for the Rescue. In fact, annual reports submitted by the Rescue to the Attorney General, indicated that Nathan, Sara and Opal each worked an average of only two hours per week for the Rescue.

16. Conversely, the Rescue's 2022 IRS Form 990 differed in the number of nominal hours the board members worked for the charity. According to the Rescue's 2022 Form 990, Nathan and Sara each worked an average of just five hours per week, and Opal worked ten hours on average per week.

17. During the pre-suit investigation, a records request was issued by the Office on April 19, 2023, to the Rescue. As part of the records request, the Rescue was asked to provide copies of board meeting minutes and copies of treasurer's reports from the period of April 1, 2020 through the present date. In response, counsel for the Rescue indicated there were not any board meeting minutes or treasurer's reports.

18. Pursuant to the 2022 Form 990, the Rescue claimed to have program service expenses totaling \$163,753. Yet, the Rescue did not have treasurer's reports to provide to the Attorney General.

19. Nevertheless, despite working nominal work hours, the Rescue reported that during 2022, Nathan was paid \$245,000 by the charity. Also, during 2022, the Rescue paid Sara \$99,000 and Opal was paid \$10,000.00.

20. In response to the Attorney General's request for audit reports, the Rescue's counsel indicated there were not any to provide.

21. In the years prior to 2022, Nathan, Sara and Opal did not report being paid by the Rescue.

22. In its 2022 annual report to the Attorney General, the Rescue stated that it had only \$42.00 remaining in total assets. As such, virtually all of the Rescue's assets were liquidated or revenues flowed to and paid out to Nathan, Sara and Opal.

23. Since the Rescue's board did not have any meeting minutes, there is not a record that discusses the board's reason for the disbursement of virtually all of the Rescue's funds to its conflicted board members.

B. Little Puppies Online, LLC and Maryland Puppies Online, LLC

24. While serving as directors for the Rescue, Nathan and Sara also owned and operated two for-profit businesses that sold puppies: Little Puppies Online, LLC, ("Little Puppies") and Maryland Puppies Online, LLC ("Maryland Puppies") aka Foot McGuffin, LLC. Nathan incorporated Little Puppies with the Ohio Secretary of State on February 11, 2009 and Foot McGuffin was incorporated in Ohio on September 27, 2021.

25. In addition to Maryland Puppies, Nathan and Sara have also owned and operated for profit businesses known as: Indiana Puppies Online, Pennsylvania Puppies Online, Florida Puppies Online and Georgia Puppies Online.

26. Little Puppies is a for profit business operating in the State of Ohio. Little Puppies sold dogs to consumers from its principal place of business and via the Internet from its website. Pursuant to its website, Little Puppies business address is: 16149 Wooster Road, Mt. Vernon, OH 43050. And according to its 2009 Ohio Secretary of State filing, 16149 Wooster Road, Mt. Vernon, OH 43050 is the address for Little Puppies' statutory agent, Nathan Bazler.

27. Further, at the same time, 16149 Wooster Road, Mt. Vernon, OH 43050, had also served as the principal business address of the Rescue.

28. During the pre-suit investigation, the Rescue advised the Office that Little Puppies was the organization the Rescue chose to find families to adopt its dogs. The Rescue's counsel also stated that the Rescue's dogs were delivered to Little Puppies at 16149 Wooster Road, Mount

Vernon, Ohio 43050 for Little Puppies to complete the process of finding families to adopt the rescued dogs.

29. Maryland Puppies was a for profit entity that had its principal place of business located at 227 Gateway Drive, Bel Air, Maryland 21014. Maryland Puppies sold dogs to consumers from its principal place of business and via the Internet from its website.

30. Maryland Puppies is no longer operating as a result of actions taken by the Maryland Attorney General.

31. Nathan, Sara, and Maryland Puppies (collectively referred to as the “Respondents”) were accused of violating Maryland statutes known as the Puppy Mill Act and on August 4, 2022, Nathan, Sara and Maryland Puppies entered into an Assurance of Discontinuance (the “AOD”) with the Maryland Attorney General.

32. In part, the AOD prohibited the Respondents from offering, selling or otherwise transferring dogs in the State of Maryland and from making misleading oral or written statements that have the capacity, tendency or effect of deceiving or misleading consumers.

33. Further, the AOD required Respondents to pay a \$250,000.00 civil penalty (the “Civil Penalty”). The amount of \$175,000 from the Civil Penalty was waived as long as the Respondents remained in compliance with the AOD terms. As a result, the Respondents paid \$75,000.00 as a civil penalty to the Maryland Attorney General.

34. Prior to its closing, Dianna Burkindine (“Burkindine”) worked as the manager of Maryland Puppies.

35. As part of the Office’s pre-suit investigation, Burkindine was interviewed by Major Case Investigator Christina Hall (“MCI Hall”). When questioned about the Rescue and Maryland Puppies, Burkindine stated that the Rescue *was* Maryland Puppies.

36. Further, during the course of Burkindine's employment at Maryland Puppies, Burkindine was provided with an American Express ("AMEX") credit card issued in the name of the Rescue.

37. When questioned about the AMEX card, Burkindine indicated that she was provided the Rescue's AMEX card by Nathan. Burkindine also stated that Nathan instructed her to use the Rescue's AMEX card for Maryland Puppies' expenses.

38. Records obtained as part of the pre-suit investigation show that additional AMEX cards were issued under the name of the Rescue and provided to both Nathan and Sara.

39. Nathan and Sara used the AMEX cards issued in the name of the Rescue for the benefit of their for-profit businesses.

40. The Rescue's AMEX cards were used to pay for animal medical center expenses in Bel Air, Maryland; pet supplies from Chewy.com and other pet supply vendors; purchases were made from Home Depot, Dollar Tree and IKEA in Maryland; as well as purchases at Ashley Home Furniture, multiple restaurants in Georgia, airline tickets, storage facilities in Maryland, and numerous other purchases of good or services from various vendors or businesses not connected to the Rescue's mission or related to its operating expenses.

41. Even though charges incurred on the Rescue's AMEX card were not its expenses, funds from the Rescue's checking account at PNC Bank were used to pay the credit card debt.

42. The Rescue does not have any board minutes authorizing the use of its credit cards by, or for, another entity. Further, there are not any Rescue board minutes approving the payment of the AMEX charges.

C. Attempts to Interview Nathan Bazler and Sara Bazler

43. Pursuant to Revised Code Sections 109.24 and 1716.15, the Attorney General has the power to investigate charitable trusts and charitable organizations.

44. In July 2025 and again in August 2025, MCI Hall attempted to schedule interviews of Nathan and Sara through their legal counsel. Interview dates were requested by MCI Hall. However, legal counsel for Nathan and Sara did not provide any interview dates in response to MCI Hall's requests.

45. Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and/or Opal Mustain personally participated in the violations of law described in this Complaint, or, through their actions or inaction, authorized, directed, adopted, ratified, allowed or otherwise caused or permitted such violations to occur. This action is being initiated against Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain both individually and in their respective capacities as directors, trustees, officers and/or agents of the Rescue.

IV. ATTORNEY GENERAL'S CLAIMS

COUNT ONE: CONVERSION

46. Plaintiff Attorney General incorporates all prior paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully rewritten herein.

47. Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler, Opal Mustain And Little Puppies wrongfully took possession of assets of the Rescue for their personal benefit to the detriment of the Rescue and its intended charitable beneficiaries.

48. The conversion of the Rescue's assets by Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler, Opal Mustain and Little Puppies was intentional and contrary to the rights and interests of the Rescue and its intended charitable beneficiaries in an amount exceeding \$25,000.

COUNT TWO: BREACH OF FIDUCIARY DUTIES, COMMON LAW

49. Plaintiff Attorney General incorporates all prior paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully rewritten herein.

50. Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain owed fiduciary duties to the charitable beneficiaries of the Rescue including the duty of care, the duty of loyalty, the duty to properly manage accounts, and the duty to comply with the law, as well as other duties, including, but not limited to, the duty not to waste charitable trust assets, and to act in the best interest of the charity.

51. Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain breached fiduciary duties by diverting charitable assets for their own personal use and placing their personal interests above the interests of the Rescue and its charitable beneficiaries.

52. Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain breached fiduciary duties to preserve the charitable trust property of the Rescue for intended charitable trust purposes and to properly manage and maintain charitable trust property for the benefit of the charitable beneficiaries.

53. Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain breached fiduciary duties to account for all assets of the Rescue collected and expended for charitable purposes.

54. Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain breached fiduciary duties to use the money or assets collected on behalf of the Rescue for charitable purposes.

55. The breaches of fiduciary duties committed by Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain as alleged in this Complaint directly and proximately caused a waste of charitable assets and/or damages to the charitable beneficiaries in an amount not yet known but exceeding \$25,000.

56. The actions of Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain were willful, wanton, and in reckless disregard of the legal rights of the charitable beneficiaries of the Rescue, and are of the nature for which the recovery of punitive damages is appropriate.

COUNT THREE: BREACH OF FIDUCIARY DUTIES, STATUTORY

57. Plaintiff Attorney General incorporates the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully rewritten herein.

58. R.C. 1716.17 provides: “Every person who solicits, collects or expends contributions on behalf of a charitable organization or for a charitable purpose or who conducts a charitable sales promotion, and every officer, director, trustee, or employee of that person who is concerned with the solicitation, collection, or expenditure of those contributions shall be considered a fiduciary and as acting in a fiduciary capacity.”

59. The duty under R.C. 1716.17 requires fiduciaries to perform their duties in good faith, in a manner reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the organization, and with the care that an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would use under similar circumstances.

60. Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain solicited, collected, and/or expended contributions on behalf of a charitable organization or for a charitable purpose as fiduciaries and acting in a fiduciary capacity.

61. Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain by their actions as alleged above in this Complaint, breached their fiduciary duties in violation of R.C. 1716.17 and/or 1716.14(A)(1) *et seq.*

62. R.C. 1716.14(A)(13) provides that it is unlawful to operate “in violation of, or failing to comply with, any of the requirements” in R.C. Chapter 1716.14(A).

COUNT FOUR: ABUSE OF A CHARITABLE TRUST, R.C. 109.24

63. Plaintiff Attorney General incorporates the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully rewritten herein.

64. R.C. 109.24 provides that the Attorney General “shall institute and prosecute a proper action to enforce the performance of any charitable trust, and to restrain the abuse of it whenever he considers such action advisable.”

65. The acts and omissions of Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and/or Opal Mustain constitute, jointly and/or separately, an abuse of a charitable trust, in violation of R.C. 109.24.

COUNT FIVE: DECEPTIVE ACTS OR PRACTICES IN CHARITABLE SOLICITATIONS, R.C. 1716.14(A)(1)

66. Plaintiff Attorney General incorporates the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully rewritten herein.

67. R.C. 1716.14(A)(1) provides that “The following acts and practices are hereby prohibited and declared unlawful as applied to the planning, conducting, or executing of any solicitation of contributions for a charitable organization or charitable purpose or to the planning, conducting, or executing of a charitable sales promotion: Committing any deceptive act or practice...”

68. Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and/or Opal Mustain solicited donations and operated a sham charity that de facto funded and supported for profit businesses.

69. Nathan Bazler’s, Sara Bazler’s and/or Opal Mustain’s acts, omissions and imminent additional facts identified in this Complaint constitute deceptive acts or practices in violation of R.C. 1716(A)(1).

COUNT SIX: MISLEADING PERSONS AS TO MATERIAL FACTS CONCERNING SOLICITATION, R.C. 1716.14(A)(2)

70. Plaintiff Attorney General incorporates the preceding paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully rewritten herein.

71. R.C. 1716(A)(2) provides that “The following acts and practices are hereby prohibited and declared unlawful as applied to the planning, conducting, or executing of any

solicitation of contributions for a charitable organization or charitable purpose or to the planning, conducting, or executing of a charitable sales promotion:...(2) Misleading any person as to any material fact concerning the solicitation of contributions for a charitable organization or charitable purpose or concerning a charitable sales promotion....”

72. Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and/or Opal Mustain solicited donations to support the Rescue when they actually diverted to and used charitable funds for the for-profit businesses and/or for their own personal benefit.

73. Through Nathan Bazler’s, Sara Bazler’s and/or Opal Mustain’s acts, omissions and imminent additional facts identified in this Complaint, Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and/or Opal Mustain have or has misled one or more individuals as to material facts concerning the solicitation of contributions for a charitable organization or chartable purpose in violation of R.C. 1716.14(A)(2).

COUNT SEVEN: FILING FALSE OR MISLEADING INFORMATION
R.C. 1716.14(A)(9)

74. Plaintiff Attorney General incorporates all prior paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully rewritten herein.

75. R.C. 1716(A)(9) provides that “The following acts and practices are hereby prohibited and declared unlawful as applied to the planning, conducting, or executing of any solicitation of contributions for a charitable organization or charitable purpose or to the planning, conducting, or executing of a charitable sales promotion:...(9) Filing false or misleading information in any document required to be filed with the attorney general under this chapter.”

76. Through Nathan Bazler’s, Sara Bazler’s and/or Opal Mustain’s acts, omissions and imminent additional facts identified in this Complaint, Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and/or Opal

Mustain have filed false or misleading information in a document required to be filed with the attorney general under R.C. 1716.

COUNT EIGHT: UNJUST ENRICHMENT

77. Plaintiff Attorney General incorporates all prior paragraphs of this Complaint as if fully rewritten herein.

78. Upon information and belief, Dogs to the Rescue conferred a variety of benefits on Dogs to the Rescue, Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler, Opal Mustain and Little Puppies including financial benefits.

79. Upon information and belief, the Rescue, Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler, Opal Mustain and/or Little Puppies had knowledge of the benefits conferred upon themselves and received these benefits under circumstances that have resulted in the Rescue, Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler, Opal Mustain and Little Puppies being unjustly enriched at the expense of the intended charitable beneficiaries of the Rescue.

80. Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler, Opal Mustain and/or Little Puppies received and retained funds intended for the charitable beneficiaries of the Rescue in an amount exceeding \$25,000.00.

81. The Attorney General, in his role as *parens patriae*, protects charitable trusts and the beneficiaries who should have benefitted from the operation of charitable trusts

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, pursuant to his statutory and common law authority, Plaintiff Ohio Attorney General respectfully requests this Court grant the following relief:

- A. Order Dogs to the Rescue, Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and/or Opal Mustain, jointly and/or separately, to pay restitution and compensatory damages, including interest

for all amounts unjustly or illegally retained or received by Dogs to the Rescue, Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler, Opal Mustain and/or Little Puppies, to the Ohio Attorney General to be deposited in accordance with R. C. 109.112 into the AGO Court Order and Settlement Fund for transfer, upon the Attorney General's request, to the Charitable Law Distributions Fund for distribution for charitable purposes at the sole discretion of the Attorney General;

- B. Order Dogs to the Rescue, Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler, Opal Mustain and/or Little Puppies, jointly and/or separately, to pay punitive damages to the Ohio Attorney General to be deposited in accordance with R.C. 109.112 into the AGO Court Order and Settlement Fund for transfer, upon the Attorney General's request, to the Charitable Law Fund established under R. C. 109.32;
- C. Order Dogs to the Rescue, Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler, Opal Mustain and/or Little Puppies, jointly and/or separately, to pay a civil penalty of up to \$10,000 for each violation of R.C. Chapter 1716, including any violations occurring after the filing of the Complaint, to be deposited in accordance with R.C. 109.112 into the AGO Court Order and Settlement Fund for transfer, upon the Attorney General's request, to the Charitable Law Fund established under R. C. 109.32;
- D. Issue permanent injunctions prohibiting Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain from holding a position as an officer or director of any charitable trust or charitable organization incorporated, organized, formed, or operating in the State of Ohio;

- E. Issue permanent injunctions prohibiting Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain from incorporating organizing or otherwise starting any nonprofit corporation, company, entity, or association;
- F. Issue permanent injunctions prohibiting Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain from soliciting, collecting, or expending charitable donations in the State of Ohio or from Ohio residents;
- G. Issue permanent injunctions prohibiting Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and Opal Mustain from having any rights or responsibilities for charitable funds;
- H. Order Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and/or Opal Mustain to provide an accounting for any funds withdrawn or disbursed from all of Dogs to the Rescue's checking accounts and financial accounts;
- I. Order Nathan Bazler, Sara Bazler and/or Opal Mustain to provide an accounting of all of Dogs to the Rescue's expenses;
- J. Award Plaintiff Attorney General his reasonable attorney's fees and costs of investigation and litigation, as permitted by R.C. 1716.16(B); and,
- K. Grant Plaintiff Attorney General all other relief as the Court deems proper and necessary.

Very respectfully submitted,

DAVE YOST
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF OHIO

/s/ Tracy Q. Wendt

Tracy Q. Wendt (0069355)(Trial Attorney)
Senior Assistant Attorney General
Andrew M. Parra (0105182)
Assistant Attorney General
Ohio Attorney General's Office

Charitable Law Section
30 E. Broad St., 25th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215
Tel.: (614) 779-0154
Facsimile: (866) 470-6470
Tracy.Wendt@OhioAGO.gov
Andrew.Parra@OhioAGO.gov
Counsel for Plaintiff Ohio Attorney General