# Advocating for Breed-Neutral Insurance Policies

Despite the industry's historical reliance on using actuarial justification (the demonstrable proof that an insurer's premiums are reasonable) to make determinations about homeowner and renter insurance policies, many insurers have been using unreliable and incomplete data to deny, cancel or increase premiums based not on the individual behavior of an animal, but on assumptions about a dog's breed or perceived breed.
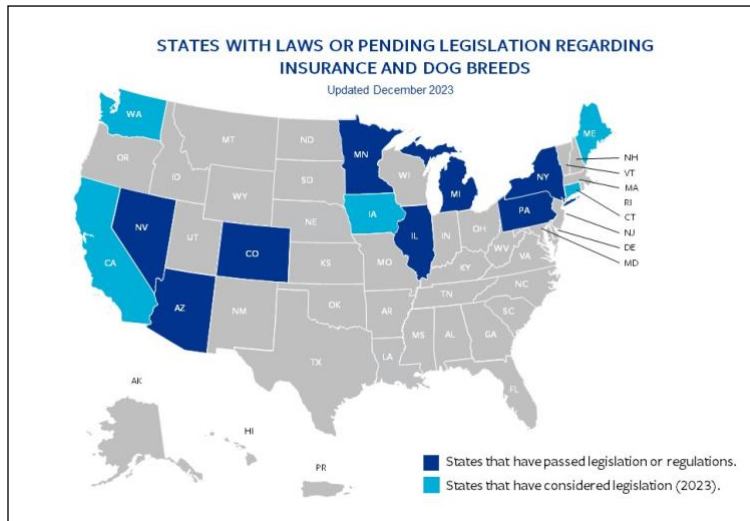
In response to this problem, several states have introduced or passed legislation to prohibit companies issuing homeowners and renters' insurance policies from increasing premiums, dropping, or denying coverage based on a dog's perceived breed or appearance.

Instead of blanket bans, we encourage companies to use sound underwriting practices to evaluate risk based on an individual dog's behavioral history.

Consumer Protections

Biases in the insurance industry pretty much date back to its inception – whether unintentional or not, exclusionary policies like the dog breed list are problematic because insurers are using unreliable, unjustified information to refuse to write an otherwise eligible applicant, exclude animal liability, or place monetary limits on their coverage.

Breed-based policies negatively impact a community.

- Leave consumers underinsured or with questions about why they've been denied coverage and what options they may have as a result.
- Disproportionately impact people of color and consumers with low or moderate means which brings concerns about fair and equitable treatment of consumers.
- Intensifies housing insecurity in a community by limiting options for families with pets.
- Contributes to overpopulation in our animal shelters when families feel they have no choice but to relinquish a beloved pet in pursuit of housing and often required insurance coverage.

Where's the data?

The data the industry currently relies on is bad, in part because of the inherit flaws in its collection. When breed is reported after an incident, typically someone is using visual identification to make that determination. Studies have shown there is a significant discrepancy between visual assessment of breed and actual genetic determination of the dog's breed — even when the visual assessment is conducted by individuals who have substantial experience working with dogs.

In a time of unprecedented housing insecurity, the cost and availability of property insurance stands as an unnecessary barrier to keeping families whole.

A growing consensus of public and private entities have acknowledged that dog breed is not a reliable indicator of behavior and breed-specific laws and regulations do not increase public safety.

In 2022, the National Council of Insurance Legislators, a legislative organization comprised of insurance stakeholders, passed model legislation in support of changing these practices.