

February 10, 2021

Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building Room 251
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter (BARCS), I applaud and urge your support for HB 563 Pets for Vets Act which would require an animal control facility operated by a county or municipality to waive adoption fees for a veteran to adopt a dog or cat and authorizes the shelter to limit the number of adoption fee waivers granted.

In appreciation of the service that our police, firefighters, active duty military and veterans provide the community, BARCS created a lifetime adoption program approximately ten years ago called "Companions for Heroes", where adoption fees are waived for the brave men and women who protect and save us. Waiving fees is not a cost burden to the shelter and in fact it is more cost effective to place them in a new home rather than provide the continued cost of care at the shelter. Furthermore, it is our way to give back to our first in line heroes who do so much for our communities.

The passing of HB 563 would support the goal of giving back to the men and women who risk their lives for our country, as well as providing homes for deserving shelter pets. There is proven research on the health benefits of the effects that pets have on military veterans including decreased anxiety, depression, PTSD as well as lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

BARCS is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization operating Baltimore City's shelter and Maryland's largest animal shelter. We are an open-admission shelter, granting refuge to every abandoned, neglected, abused, lost or surrendered animal that comes through our door. A staggering 30 or more animals are surrendered to BARCS every day. No matter what the circumstances, we do not turn away any animal in need of shelter, food, medical care and a loving touch. Yearly, this equates to more than 11,000 dogs, cats, kittens, puppies, and even wildlife and exotic animals that need care and placement.

We support HB 563 and hope that you do too. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Brause
Founder & Executive Director
Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter, BARCS