



Formerly called the Humane  
Society of the United States and  
Humane Society International

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**February 3, 2026**

**Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**SB314 - Immunity from Liability - Donation of Pet Supplies**

**FAVORABLE**

Chair Smith and distinguished members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

Humane World for Animals, on behalf of our supporters across the state, urges a favorable vote on SB 314, legislation that will expand access to desperately needed pet food donations by providing sensible protection for donors who give in good faith. As the State Director for Maryland, I work closely with shelters, rescues, and community partners across our state, and I see every day how this legislation will make an immediate and measurable difference.

Animal shelters throughout the U.S., including here in Maryland, are experiencing a convergence of pressures from rising operational costs and capacity strain. At the same time, retailers routinely discard large quantities of perfectly usable pet food because of cosmetic damage, nearing or slightly past sell-by dates, or return policies. The disconnect between shelters in need and retailers unwilling to risk liability represents a solvable problem.

SB 314 addresses this gap by making a simple, targeted fix: It provides civil and criminal liability protections for businesses that donate pet food in good faith, ensuring that if a product is "apparently fit," donors cannot be held liable for age, packaging, or condition. This mirrors the protections provided under federal food donation law for human food, which has worked safely and effectively for decades.

Similar protections proposed federally under the BARK Act have been widely praised as a common sense, bipartisan solution that unlocks donations and prevents waste. SB 314 follows this same principle, expanding donation capacity without imposing costs on the state.

SB 314 is essential for Maryland because it provides immediate relief to overburdened shelters by allowing them to redirect scarce resources away from food costs and toward urgent needs like veterinary care, staffing, and behavior support. It also reduces waste by ensuring that large quantities of safe, usable pet food that are currently discarded by retailers are redirected to animals who need it. By establishing clear liability protections, the bill removes the primary barrier preventing businesses from donating, encouraging wider participation from retailers who want to help but fear legal repercussions. With these protections in place, SB 314 strengthens long-term partnerships between shelters, stores, distributors, and manufacturers, creating reliable pipelines of support that benefit animals during both routine operations and crisis surges.

This legislation will also have a substantial impact on Maryland's pet food pantries, which are operated by many shelters and animal services agencies across the state. These pantries are often depleted due to high community need, yet they are vital in helping families keep their pets which is an important strategy in preventing unnecessary relinquishment and slowing the ongoing shelter capacity crisis. By opening the



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door to largescale, consistent donations from retailers and distributors, SB 314 ensures that these pantries can remain stocked and continue serving as a critical lifeline for households experiencing financial hardship.

### **A Simple Fix with Powerful Impact**

This bill does not require significant state expenditure, new programs, or complex regulations. Instead, it removes a legal barrier and unleashes the generosity already present in Maryland's business community.

SB 314 offers Maryland an opportunity to reduce waste, support shelters, strengthen community safety nets, and improve animal welfare throughout the state. On behalf of Humane World for Animals, our supporters across Maryland, and the animals who rely on us, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 314.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to Maryland's animals and communities.

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