



## **THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES**

**March 24, 2021**

**Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**

**HB146**

***Department of Agriculture - Spay/Neuter Fund - Extension and Fee on Commercial Feed***

**FAVORABLE**

The Humane Society of the United States, on behalf of our members and supporters in Maryland, urges a favorable report on HB146 with the amendments added in the House, which refine provisions of the bill related to changing the fees.

This committee should be proud of its work to create the Spay/Neuter Fund, which provides a national model for how to raise revenue for this critical, lifesaving work. We are grateful to the Sponsor and the legislature for proactively looking to renew the Fund and to ensure that it continues to operate. While the Fund does not sunset until next year, 2020 has shown us that planning pays, and we are grateful for this bill which would re-authorize the program in advance of its technical sunset date.

We also appreciate the intent behind the fee increase in the bill as introduced. However, we are concerned that the flat fee structure proposed initially might not be calibrated to recent market changes and do not feel confident that we have the information we need to determine a new level at this time. We appreciate that the House added amendments that modify the bill to require the Department of Agriculture to provide a program evaluation detailing the optimal fee structure that would increase revenue for the program and ensure it is functioning at full capacity. Such an analysis would provide this committee with the data we need to determine a fee structure for legislative action in 2022.

With these amendments, this is a life-saving and valuable bill that will position legislation next year to ensure the fees are structured at the optimal level. We urge a favorable report and look forward to working with this committee next year to right-size the fees.