

DELEGATE MARY A. LEHMAN
Legislative District 21
Prince George's and
Anne Arundel Counties

Environment and Transportation
Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 317
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3114 · 410-841-3114
800-492-7122 Ext. 3114
Mary.Lehman@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HOUSE BILL 146
Spay/Neuter Fund - Extension and Fee and Report

March 24, 2021

SUPPORT

MR. CHAIRMAN, MADAM VICE CHAIR AND ESTEEMED MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE: I AM HERE TO REQUEST YOUR SUPPORT OF HB 146, WHICH REAUTHORIZES THE STATE'S SPAY/NEUTER GRANT FUND. THAT FUND WAS CREATED BY A FEE ON COMMERCIAL PET FOOD. GRANTS ARE MADE ANNUALLY TO COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTERS AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS THAT SPAY AND NEUTER CATS AND DOGS.

THIS SUCCESSFUL LAW WILL SUNSET IN SEPTEMBER OF 2022, BUT ADVOCATES DID NOT THINK IT WAS WISE TO WAIT UNTIL THE 2022 LEGISLATIVE SESSION TO CONSIDER CHANGES TO THE LAW IN THE EVENT THERE WAS A FAILURE TO REACH CONSENSUS. I AM BRINGING THIS BILL FORWARD NOW BECAUSE I AGREE.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS LAW IS TO FUND SPAY AND NEUTER SERVICES TO REDUCE ANIMAL SHELTER OVERPOPULATION AND EUTHANASIA RATES. THE BILL EXTENDS THE LAW FOR ANOTHER 10 YEARS, AND INITIALLY RETAINS THE PET FOOD LICENSE FEE AT THE CURRENT LEVEL OF \$100 PER PRODUCT LABEL

WHILE THE PROGRAM HAS RESULTED IN THE SPAY/NEUTER OF 65,216 DOGS AND CATS, MARYLAND IS STILL EUTHANIZING A STAGGERING NUMBER OF ANIMALS. ACCORDING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, BETWEEN 2014 AND 2019, MARYLAND SHELTERS TOOK IN 86,384 DOGS AND 146,859 CATS. OF THOSE, 22,287 DOGS AND 75,061 CATS WERE EUTHANIZED.

DESPITE THESE GRIM STATISTICS AND THE PROMISE LOW-COST SPAY AND NEUTERING SERVICES PROVIDE, NEITHER THE PET FOOD INDUSTRY NOR THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COULD AGREE ON AN APPROPRIATE PET FOOD LICENSE FEE INCREASE.

I HAVE WORKED WITH ANIMAL ADVOCATES AND THE DEPARTMENT ON WHAT I BELIEVE IS A GOOD COMPROMISE. IT REQUIRES THE DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE TO EVALUATE AN EXPANSION OF SPAY/NEUTER SERVICES AND AN INCREASE IN THE FEE BASED ON MARKET (PET FOOD INDUSTRY) CONSIDERATIONS THAT WOULD ENHANCE THE PROGRAM.

THIS IS A CRITICAL LAW FOR REDUCING THE POPULATION OF UNWANTED DOGS AND CATS, AND THE EUTHANIZATION RATES OF THOSE ANIMALS. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE REAUTHORIZE IT AND GET THE FUNDING FORMULA RIGHT OVER THE NEXT DECADE.

AN EVALUATION OF AN APPROPRIATE INCREASE IN THE FEE SEEMS TO BE THE BEST WAY FORWARD AND THE MOST FAIR WAY OF DETERMINING HOW TO ENHANCE THE GRANT PROGRAM AND REDUCE OUR STILL TOO HIGH EUTHANASIA RATE.

MR. CHAIR, MADAM VICE CHAIR AND EHEA COMMITTEE MEMBERS, I ASK FOR YOUR FAVORABLE REPORT.

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