



February 10, 2021

Environment and Transportation Committee

HB 563

***Local Government – Animal Control Facilities – Adoption Fee Waiver for Veterans
(Pets for Vets Act of 2021)***

FAVORABLE

The Humane Society of the United States, representing our members and supporters in Maryland, supports HB 563 introduced by Delegate Long to waive adoption fees for veterans at county and municipal animal shelters.

Studies have shown that many veterans struggle after leaving the military. As many as 20 percent of veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and feelings of isolation, anger or aimlessness are not uncommon. Many veterans consider obtaining a service animal to assist with their physical and mental ailments. Unfortunately, the average wait time for a service animal is eighteen months, and it can be quite a lengthy process.

Even without being trained service animals, there is huge value in the human-animal bond. Pet ownership has long been known to have a beneficial effect on people suffering from depression and other mental health issues, loneliness and even high blood pressure. While a companion animal cannot replace a service animal for specific medical needs, the healing power a pet can provide is immense.

Programs that support veterans in obtaining companion animals are based on the growing body of popular and scientific literature that generally confirms the link between animals' social support and improved human health and happiness. For all of us, veterans and non-veterans alike, the presence of animals in our lives brings myriad psychological, social and medical benefits. And petkeeping is all about loyalty and devotion, something that every veteran understands.

We support HB 563 and respectfully request a favorable report.

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