

January 27, 2021

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Barve,

I am writing on behalf of Mars, Incorporated regarding House Bill 146, which would reauthorize Maryland's Spay/Neuter Fund, but would also raise the related fee on commercial feed prepared and distributed for consumption by a dog or cat and registered in Maryland.

Numerous Mars commercial feed products are registered in Maryland, and Mars has willingly complied with the existing fee to fund the Spay/Neuter Fund. We are glad to see that the Spay/Neuter Fund has been successful, and has even had a budget surplus for the past five years. Mars remains committed to supporting spay/neuter efforts across our entire Petcare portfolio of nutrition and veterinary services. As one example, PEDIGREE Foundation funded more than 20 grants to spay/neuter programs in 2020, for a total of over \$65,000. Those efforts alone resulted in more than 5300 pets being spayed or neutered.

While we fully support reauthorizing the program, given the surplus in the fund, however, we cannot support an increase to the related fee at this time. Should the Spay/Neuter Fund encounter a funding shortfall in future years due to increased demand for low-cost spay/neuter programs, we would support a reasonable increase to the fee at that time to address the shortfall, as long as the funds are fully allocated to low-cost spay/neuter programs.

At Mars, we know that pets make the world a better place for people. Through our BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™ program, we're working with communities and policymakers across the country to make cities and states better places for pets, so people can have happier, healthier lives with their pets. Programs like the Spay/Neuter Fund are an important pillar of the BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™ model, making sure that pets don't fall through the cracks and pet owners get the support they need.

As pet lovers and as a pet business whose purpose is making a *Better World for Pets*, and as stated above we strongly support reauthorizing the Spay/Neuter Fund, but urge you to consider amending the bill to remove the fee increase unless and until such a time as there is an anticipated deficit in the fund. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions you may have on this bill or any other pet-related matters. Thank you.

Sincerely,



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