



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES

January 29, 2021

Environment and Transportation Committee

HB146

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

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

The Humane Society of the United States, on behalf of our members and supporters in Maryland, urges a favorable report on HB146 with amendments, offered below, to 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 this Committee 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 that is detailed in this version of the bill. However, we are concerned that the flat fee structure proposed here 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 urge that the bill be modified 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.

We respectfully request the following amendment to the bill:

Strike the new language page 4, lines 24 – 28

Add at the end of the bill the following language:

AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, that, on or before October 1, 2021, the Department of Agriculture shall report to the General Assembly with a program evaluation identifying any significant programs that are currently not funded, the market capacity to further increase the fees, and a recommendation for the fee structure over the next 5-10 years of the program that would enhance the revenue generated to the Fund.

We have shared this language with the Sponsor and understand that the Delegate has shared it with committee staff as well. We have been working diligently with her office to refine the legislation and appreciate her hard work to strike the right balance with the fee structure, as well as her consideration of this approach. We understand that the Sponsor may be considering amending the fee increase, rather than removing it as suggested above, in addition to requiring this evaluation language, and we are very open to that approach. We look forward to working with her and this committee to finalize these changes and encourage a favorable report with the amendments detailed above.

*For more information contact Jennifer Bevan-Dangel, Maryland State Director
jbevandangel@humanesociety.org | C 202-963-8446*