



**HUMANE
RESCUE
ALLIANCE**
Animals. People. Community.

March 2, 2022

Judicial Proceedings Committee
Maryland Senate
11 Bladen St
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Humane Rescue Alliance SUPPORT for SB 816 – Real Property - Actions for Possession - Pet Protections

Dear Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and Honorable Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

On behalf of the Humane Rescue Alliance and our thousands of supporters in Maryland, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 816, legislation to help protect pets and their owners by putting in place basic guardrails for pet owners when evictions happen.

The Humane Rescue Alliance honors more than 150 years of commitment to protecting animals, supporting families, and advocating for positive change to create a world where all animals can thrive. Located in Washington, DC, we are the largest animal services provider in our region, touching the lives of over 100,000 animals annually through adoption, community veterinary care and other support services, and lost pet reunification. Last year, we adopted out over 4,000 animals to Maryland families.

According to the American Pet Products Association's National Pet Owners Survey for 2021-2022, pet ownership has increased to an estimated 70% of U.S. households that own a pet, and studies consistently show that the vast majority of people consider pets to be an important member of the family. The tremendous surge in pet adoption and fostering during the pandemic has underscored the value and importance of the human-animal bond. Now more than ever, with so many of us experiencing unparalleled isolation, the importance of animal companions cannot be overstressed, and peer reviewed studies show that the bond between people and their pets is linked to several health benefits including decreased feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and symptoms of PTSD. For someone who is in crisis losing their housing, the added trauma of being separated from their pet is unimaginable.

SB 816 creates basic requirements to help pet owners who are faced with eviction to keep or be reunified with their pets:

- The Department of Agriculture must create a fact sheet with resources for pet owners facing evictions, such as options for caring for your pet and how to contact your local shelter. This fact sheet must be provided to tenants who have pets and to all tenants who are facing eviction.
- After an eviction, the property must immediately be checked for pets, and any pets found should be either reunited with the owner or taken to the local animal shelter.
- Should a pet be taken to an animal shelter, the shelter should have the name and contact information of the owner, and the owner should be given the information for the shelter.
- No pets can be left with property on the curb after an eviction.

Through our direct experience as an animal sheltering organization, backed up by those of housing advocates, we see situations on a regular basis where eviction results in the separation of pets from their families. While these practices seem commonsense, and many jurisdictions and landlords do many of these practices voluntarily, we want to ensure that these practices are codified and universal. These practices are the most basic of protections for pets and their owners. We should do everything we can to keep pets out of animal shelters and with the people who love them.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report for SB 816.

Emily Hovermale
Director of Government Affairs
Humane Rescue Alliance