



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HOUSE BILL 365

Department of Agriculture - Spay/Neuter Fund

February 13, 2023

SUPPORT

MR. CHAIRMAN, MR. VICE CHAIRMAN AND ESTEEMED COLLEAGUES:

I AM PLEASED TO PRESENT HB 365, WHICH ALTERS THE STATE'S SPAY/NEUTER GRANT FUND BY REQUIRING THAT THE FUND BE ADJUSTED FOR INFLATION, ESTABLISHING A PROCESS FOR VOLUNTARY DONATIONS TO THE FUND, AND SUPPORTING GRANT PROPOSALS THAT SERVE UNDERSERVED AREAS. THIS FUND WAS ORIGINALLY CREATED IN 2013 AND SUPPORTS ANNUAL GRANTS TO COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTERS AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS THAT SPAY AND NEUTER CATS AND DOGS. THE PURPOSE OF PROGRAM IS TO REDUCE ANIMAL SHELTER OVERPOPULATION AND EUTHANASIA RATES.

THE GRANT PROGRAM HAS BEEN FUNDED BY FEES PLACED ON COMMERCIAL PET FOOD PRODUCTS. DUE TO INFLATION AND THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, THE COSTS OF PROVIDING SPAY AND NEUTERING SERVICES HAVE RISEN SUBSTANTIALLY AND HAVE THEREFORE STRAINED THE LIMITED FUNDS OF THE GRANT. AT THE SAME TIME, THE COST OF PET FOOD HAS INCREASED AS DRAMATICALLY AS THE COST OF FOOD FOR HUMANS.

HB 365 ADDRESSES THIS ISSUE BY REQUIRING THE FEE, WHICH HAS BEEN \$100 PER PRODUCT LABEL OF COMMERCIAL FEED SINCE OCTOBER 2015, TO BE ADJUSTED ANNUALLY FOR INFLATION. THAT ADJUSTMENT WILL BEGIN WITH THE RATE OF INFLATION IN 2013 WHEN THE PROGRAM BEGAN AND WILL PHASE IN THE AVERAGE 2.45% RATE OF INFLATION BETWEEN 2013 AND 2022 OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS. BEGINNING IN OCTOBER 2026, THE FEE WILL BE ADJUSTED ANNUALLY BASED ON THE RATE OF INFLATION.

BEING MINDFUL OF THE IMPACT THE INCREASED FEE WOULD HAVE ON THE SMALLEST COMPANIES, THE BILL EXEMPTS PET FOOD MANUFACTURERS THAT HAVE AN ANNUAL GROSS INCOME OF LESS THAN \$500,000. THAT WAY, SMALLER BUSINESSES ARE NOT OVERLY BURDENED BY THE HIGHER FEE.

ADVOCATES BELIEVE HB 365 IS NECESSARY BECAUSE WHILE THE PROGRAM HAS RESULTED IN THE SPAY/NEUTER OF 95,442¹ DOGS AND CATS SINCE 2013, MARYLAND IS STILL EUTHANIZING A STAGGERING NUMBER OF ANIMALS. ACCORDING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, MARYLAND SHELTERS TOOK IN 58,041 ANIMALS IN 2021 AND HAD TO EUTHANIZE 8,431 (14.5%). THIS IS A HUGE DIFFERENCE FROM 2014, THE FIRST FULL YEAR OF THE PROGRAM, WHERE 74,433 ANIMALS WERE TAKEN IN AND 24,435 WERE EUTHANIZED (32.3%)². BETWEEN 2014 AND 2019, MARYLAND SHELTERS TOOK IN 86,384 DOGS AND MEANS THIS STATE PUT DOWN NEARLY 100,000 PETS OVER FIVE YEARS.

WE CAN DO BETTER. WE MUST DO BETTER. THE WAY TO DO THAT IS TO GROW THE SPAY/NEUTER FUND SO THAT WE REDUCE THE NUMBER OF UNWANTED PETS AND OUR EUTHANIZATION RATE. THANK YOU AND I URGE YOUR FAVORABLE REPORT.

¹ THIS NUMBER IS RECENT AS OF JUNE 30, 2022 AND IS REPORTED ON THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE WEBSITE.

² MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SPAY AND NEUTER GRANDS PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT, AUGUST 2022