



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Delegate Dana Jones
Before the Environment and Transportation Committee**

**In Support of HB 1039
Task Force on Financial Incentives for Pet-Friendly Housing
March 7th, 2022, 1pm**

Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein, and fellow members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

For the record - I am Delegate Dana Jones.

I come before you today to introduce a bill in response to the unprecedented rates of housing insecurity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. HB 1039 aims to explore ways we can respond to this crisis through financial incentives to promote pet-friendly rental housing.

A record number of households and nearly three-fourths of renters have pets, and while a majority of Americans consider their pets to be family members many tenants say they have trouble finding “pet friendly” properties. A recent industry report showed, although 76 percent of owner/operators say their properties are pet-friendly, 72 percent of residents surveyed said that pet-friendly housing is hard to find, and 59 percent say it’s too expensive. Additionally, the scarcity in properties that welcome all pets is often associated with policies that include arbitrary restrictions such as breed, weight and number limits that create unnecessary barriers for pet-owning tenants.

The Humane Society and other advocates have been working closely over the past 3 years with housing insecure individuals desperate to find a place to stay. They shared with me their personal accounts and expressed that the lack of pet-friendly

housing is a significant driver of housing insecurity and homelessness. It is clear from these conversations the importance of pets in their lives, and the unfortunately detrimental effect this can have on their ability to find housing.

Last year, this bill was brought to me by the humane society, originally in the form of a tax credit. However, for this Session, we reconsidered our approach to this legislation considering the stake-holders involved. The advocates and I spent the summer looking at various mechanisms including a grant program as well as legislation that is moving in California and Colorado. Ultimately, we decided the best path forward would be a small, focused task force that can analyze the best policy for Maryland.

The Humane Society worked in concert with the Maryland Multi Housing Association. This task force was kept intentionally small to ensure it is focused and productive, but we will welcome additional entities to be part of the discussion. All parties mentioned are willing and ready to serve, and we are committed to bringing legislation back to this committee next year that will address this crisis.

We know that pet owners need help finding housing and this task force is an important way to find the right tools to help them. I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 1039.

Sincerely,



Delegate Dana Jones