



March 7, 2023
Room 251
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and our Maryland supporters, we write in strong support of House Bill 1039, which will serve to protect the bonds between Maryland renters and the pets that are important members of so many of our families.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, in the face of an unprecedented public health emergency, our nation took immediate action to keep families stably housed by swiftly enacting eviction moratoriums and funding emergency rental assistance—critical tools that helped keep families and their pets at home. Likewise, many organizations, including HSUS, helped by supporting vulnerable communities and delivering vital services to pet owners including affordable, accessible veterinary care, supplying pet food and resources, and by advocating for pet-inclusive subsidized housing because a deep connection with pets transcends boundaries of socio-economics, race, ethnicity and geography, and no one should be denied the opportunity to experience the benefits, joy and comfort that come from the human-animal bond. Despite assistance at all levels of government, many renters find difficulty securing housing suitable for their entire family.

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. One explanation found by a recent industry report showed that 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.¹ 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. To the detriment of many owner/operators, this disconnection is a hindrance and leaves money on the table as vacant units in pet-inclusive properties fill faster than those in non-pet-friendly housing and on average, residents stay 21 percent longer. The study found additional financial benefits as well, including that fewer than 10 percent of all pets cause damages of any kind and the average pet deposit will cover any damage that is caused.

Now more than ever, with so many of us experiencing unparalleled isolation, the importance of companionship cannot be overstressed. HB 1039 will identify incentivize that would enable housing providers to welcome families and their beloved pets and help relieve common restrictions that disproportionately impact low-income households. In Maryland, 33% of households rent their homes² and approximately 16 percent of renters are behind on their rent³. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), a person earning minimum wage would have to work 82 hours each week to afford a modest, 1-bedroom rental home at fair market rent in Maryland.⁴

Pet-inclusive properties are not only good for tenants, but they’re good for housing providers. This bill is a thoughtful and compassionate effort to identify tools that will ultimately benefit our communities and make them more humane. We thank the committee for consideration of this important legislation and urge your support of HB 1039.

¹ “2021 Pet-Inclusive Housing Report.” Michelson Found Animals and HARBI. Accessed January 31, 2022.

<https://www.foundanimals.org/pets-and-housing/2021-pet-inclusive-housing-report/>.

² “Maryland.” National Low Income Housing Coalition. Accessed January 31, 2022.

<https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/maryland>.

³ “ERASE Tenant Protections Resource Page”. NLIHC Tenant Protections Database. February 1, 2022.

⁴ “Out of Reach: Maryland.” National Low Income Housing Coalition, February 1, 2022.

<https://reports.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/files/reports/state/md-2021-oor.pdf>.