



February 13, 2023

Representative Kumar Barve  
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee  
Maryland General Assembly  
Via email

**Re: MD HB 365**

Dear Representative Barve and committee:

The American Feed Industry Association (AFIA) is writing to provide information on MD HB 365 The Department of Agriculture - Spay/Neuter Fund.

The AFIA appreciates the efforts in Maryland to support access to low-cost spay and neuter services as an effective tool to reduce the number of pet euthanasias. However, we strongly oppose any action taken by the Maryland General Assembly which may lead directly or indirectly to an increase in fees collected from pet food manufacturers to expand the program or to provide additional services.

**Support exploration of alternative funding sources.** The AFIA appreciates the bill that proposes a process through which a person may make a voluntary donation to the Fund. Pet food manufacturers are concerned about the plight of unwanted pets and frequently donate product to shelters and other pet care services. A citizen led effort to expand the Fund is an appropriate means by which to support services. If expansion of the spay/neuter fund is merited we encourage the legislature to continue to consider different funding sources and not increase the fees assessed on each brand name or product name of commercial pet food.

**Oppose broadening of services.** The AFIA opposes the use of the existing fee of \$100 on each brand name or product name of commercial pet food to broaden the program to pay for wellness care of cats and dogs at the time of a spay or neuter service, to pay for operation of a mobile veterinary transportation or to pay for transportation services from unserved areas. The proposed addition of these services is creating a welfare program for pets well beyond the initial purpose of the Fund – which was to reduce animal shelter overpopulation and cat and dog euthanasia rates by financing grants that most efficiently and effectively facilitate and promote spay and neuter services for cats and dogs in the State.

The proposed expansion of services is not an appropriate government function and is best addressed by charitable organizations. Maryland citizens can increase the funds available for spay/neuter procedures and broadened services available to pets owned by low-income families through existing or new charitable resources rather than increasing the burden on businesses who do not contribute to the problem of unwanted pets and are already supporting animal shelters in other ways.

*Our Industry. Our Passion. Our Voice.*

The AFIA will not support any continuation of the spay/neuter fund beyond the existing fee of \$100 on each brand name or product name of commercial feed and we urge members of the General Assembly to explore alternative ways to expand and fund the program if that measure is deemed to be necessary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louise Calderwood".

Louise Calderwood  
Director of Regulatory Affairs

Based in Arlington, Va., the AFIA is the world's largest organization devoted exclusively to representing the business, legislative and regulatory interests of the U.S. animal food industry and its suppliers. AFIA's members include nearly 650 domestic and international companies, such as livestock feed and pet food manufacturers, integrators, pharmaceutical companies, ingredient suppliers, equipment manufacturers and supply companies that provide other products or services to feed manufacturers.