



Maryland Department of Agriculture

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Maryland Department of Agriculture

Legislative Comment

Date: February 16, 2024

BILL NUMBER: SB 641

SHORT TITLE: DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE- SPAY AND NEUTER FUND

MDA POSITION: SUPPORT

SB 641 would alter the contents of Agriculture Articles § 2–1602 and § 2–1603. The alterations would create a means for individuals to make a voluntary donation to the Spay and Neuter Fund, and change/increase the fees imposed on pet food manufacturers who register products with the State of Maryland. HB 85 also codifies eligible services to be funded by grant projects and specifies that certain types of grant projects be given additional consideration when being selected for funding.

In 2013, at the onset of the Spay and Neuter Program, an advisory board (“Spay and Neuter Advisory Board” or “SNAB”) was established based on the recommendations found in the 2012 Final Report of the *Task Force on the Establishment of a Statewide Spay/Neuter Fund*. The task force report stated, in part, that “The state agency, in consultation with the volunteer oversight board, would maintain the spay/neuter fund, ... and set standards for and approve competitive grants. The State agency and advisory board would require a grant recipient to report specific data on how the funding is used as they determine necessary.” The SNAB has created guidelines and applications to ensure that the funding is being used to target the intended goals of reducing shelter intake and euthanasia rates. Since the program's inception it has funded approximately 100,000 spay and neuter surgeries. Despite the setbacks caused by the pandemic the program has continued to see positive results in intake (approximately 29% reduction) and euthanasia (approximately 58% reduction) numbers.

SB 641 would require the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to provide a means for individuals to make a voluntary donation to the fund. This would most likely be achieved by providing information on the Spay and Neuter Program’s website for how to submit a donation.

The bill would increase the Spay and Neuter fee for most registered pet products to \$130.00 per product, scaled in over the next 3-years. While the bill does not specify an exact schedule for

this, the most logical implementation would be used with a \$10.00 increase per year over the next 3 years. Certain smaller businesses will be exempted from the increase in the fees and continue to pay the existing \$100.00 per product fee.

The increased income to the program will be used to offset the rising costs of program administration and provide more funding to be available for grants. Surgical costs have increased and more funding would help the program to continue funding enough surgeries to have a noticeable impact on the intended targets of reducing shelter surrenders and shelter euthanasia rates.

HB 85 also allows for mobile veterinary clinic transportation and transportation services to bring animals to and from clinics. SNAB guidelines already provide for these services as a means of removing the transportation barrier for getting animals spayed and neutered. Additionally, the program has a capital expense grant application that allows for, among other things, the start-up costs of new clinics, including, but not limited to, mobile clinics.

The SNAB currently considers the availability of services in a target area and the amount of funding that has gone to the target area when determining funding recommendations. When possible, attempts are made to provide some funding to underserved areas to ensure funds are provided across the state, as well as the amount that a jurisdiction contributes to shelter intakes and euthanasia statewide.

If you have additional questions, please contact Rachel Jones, Director of Government Relations at Rachel.Jones2@maryland.gov or (410) 841-5886.