



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

February 16, 2024

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

SB641

Department of Agriculture - Spay/Neuter Fund

FAVORABLE

The Humane Society of the United States, on behalf of our members and supporters in Maryland, urges a favorable report and speedy action on SB641.

This committee should be proud of its work to create the Spay/Neuter Fund, which provides a national model for how to raise revenue for this critical, lifesaving work. We are also grateful to this committee for renewing the Fund to ensure that it continues to operate.

The Spay/Neuter Fund is one of the most effective and cost-effective tools existing today for supporting pet owners, easing the burden on our shelters, and improving the lives of companion animals. Since the Fund was established in 2014, euthanasia of companion animals across the state have decreased 55% and overall animal intake has dropped 17%. It is estimated that spaying and neutering just one male and one female cat can prevent more than 2,000 unwanted births over four years!

However, the impact of the Spay/Neuter Fund is limited by the fact that the fee has not increased since it reached its initial levels in 2015. Since then, inflation has skyrocketed across all the expenses associated with these procedures – especially staff costs to hold clinics and perform surgeries. To compound that problem, shelters are experiencing historically high levels of surrenders, and euthanasia rates are rising again for the first time in many years.

We appreciate the work by the sponsors over the interim to amend the bill. They worked to streamline and lower the fee increase, in recognition of the current fiscal climate. The bill before you this legislative session reflects that work and is a fair and moderate proposal.

This is a life-saving and valuable bill that ensure the fees for the Spay/Neuter Fund increase in a moderate way to offset inflation, ensuring this critical program can continue to function at the highest level. We urge a favorable report on SB641.