



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

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March 5, 2024

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chair, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Housing and Community Development - Pets in Housing Developments- HB 1179 – Support

Chair Korman, Vice - Chair Boyce, members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chair of Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across the State of Maryland, I respectfully ask that the House Environment & Transportation Committee to vote favorably for Housing and Community Development - Pets in Housing Developments – HB 1179.

This bill would prohibit an owner or agent of an owner of a housing development that on or after January 1, 2025, received an allocation of certain tax credits from the Department of Housing and Community Development from imposing certain prohibitions and costs related to a resident's possession of pets in certain housing developments.

Many renters experience impediments such as No Pets policies, limitations on the number or type of pets, restrictions on the breed or weight of a pet, costly pet deposits, and additional monthly "pet rent. A national study conducted by the ASPCA revealed that those who rent are more likely to need to rehome their pets for housing-related issues than for any other reason. Furthermore, according to the study, a primary housing issue cited by families relinquishing a pet to an animal shelter or rescue is financial eviction from their current housing and a lack of suitable, pet-friendly alternatives in the rental market.

While some landlords may believe that all pets will create significant damage, recent studies have found that there is little, if any, difference in damage between tenants with and without pets. In fact, there are a number of benefits that both landlords and the community enjoy when pets are allowed. For example, according to one study, 83% of owners/operators say that pet-friendly vacancies can be filled faster. Furthermore, 21% of residents in pet-friendly housing stay longer than those who don't allow pets. Even if landlords allow some or all pets, many require exorbitant and/or non-reimbursable pet deposits.

The need for pet-friendly rental housing is growing. A survey of 1,000 renters by Apartments.com reinforced the importance of including pets as part of a renter household. Of those surveyed, more than 80% of respondents said a pet-friendly policy played a major role in where they chose to live, and nearly 90% said they have a pet. Of the renters surveyed who do not currently own pets, more than half plan to become pet owners within the next year. Survey respondents who said they were forced to give up their pet(s) cited not being able to find an apartment with a pet-friendly policy (65%) or not being able to afford the pet deposit (27%) as the two main causes.

Passing this bill has several benefits: Pet-friendly housing promotes happier and healthier families, better futures for the family pet, and a reduced financial burden to shelters and the public.

I want to thank Delegate Stein for his sponsorship of HB 1179 and urge this committee to give this bill a favorable vote.