



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

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February 7, 2024

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chairman, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Department of Agriculture – Spay/Neuter Fund – HB 85 -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 Chairman 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 vote favorably for Department of Agriculture - Spay/Neuter Fund - HB 85.

This bill would establish a process through which a person may make a voluntary contribution to the Fund. In addition to financing selected competitive grant proposals submitted by a local government or an animal welfare organization to facilitate and promote the provision of spay and neuter services for cats and dogs, it would include financing for routine vaccinations during the time of spay and neuter services, mobile veterinary clinic transportation, and transportation services for animals to a clinic from an underserved area. Additional consideration would be given for eligible services using a mobile clinic to serve multiple jurisdictions that have been previously underserved. The fee increase on this bill from \$100 to \$130 is limited to manufacturers who have a gross income of over \$500,000 from the distribution of pet food products and for qualifying pet food distributors, would be phased in over three years.

The Maryland Spay and Neuter Fund is a model program that was created to reduce the number of cats and dogs surrendered and euthanized in shelters across Maryland. Using small fees collected from pet food companies doing business in Maryland, the program provides competitive grants to local governments and non-profit animal welfare organizations for free spay and neuter services for dogs and cats owned by low-income residents and for colonies of feral cats.

The first of its kind in the nation in 2013, the Maryland Spay/Neuter Fund has been hugely successful program. As of 2023, the program has funded 247 projects that provided 110,114 spay and neuter surgeries for dogs and cats of low-income families and community cat programs. Several states, including Delaware, have passed legislation to create similar programs. In 2023, the Spay/Neuter Fund awarded \$849,085.31 for 14,556 Spay/Neuter procedures to 31 organizations across Maryland. In 2024, the Fund awarded grants to local governments and non-profit welfare organizations across the state with the goal of performing 14,590 Spay/Neuter procedures by the end of the year.

While Maryland passed legislation to extend this program for another ten years, there is a need to not only expand services provided at the time of spay/neuter surgeries but also to ensure access to these services for more underserved jurisdictions.

Thanks to Delegate Lehman for sponsoring HB 85. I urge the committee for a favorable report.