



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

**February 29, 2024**  
**Judicial Proceedings Committee**  
**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**SB481**  
***Renters' Rights and Stabilization Act of 2024***  
**FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

On behalf of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and our Maryland supporters, we write in strong support of Senate Bill 481, which will enhance protections for Marylanders who are facing housing insecurity. We encourage the committee to also consider provisions that would protect the human/pet bond in relation to housing security.

In Maryland, 33% of households rent their homes<sup>1</sup> and approximately 16 percent of renters are behind on their rent<sup>2</sup>. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), a person earning minimum wage would have to work 82 hours each week to afford a modest, 1-bedroom rental home at fair market rent in Maryland.<sup>3</sup>

We applaud and strongly support this legislation because housing security is essential for keeping people and pets together. The recent surge in pet surrenders overwhelming our shelters is due in large part to the housing crisis facing Marylanders. This connection is documented in a recent Baltimore Banner article, which states: “trouble finding affordable housing that allows pets is now the most common reason animals are surrendered at Baltimore-area shelters.”<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, in the face of an unprecedented public health emergency, our nation took immediate action to keep families stably housed by swiftly enacting eviction moratoriums and funding emergency rental assistance—critical tools that helped keep families and their pets at home. Likewise, many organizations, including HSUS, helped by supporting vulnerable communities and delivering vital services to pet owners including affordable, accessible veterinary care, supplying pet food and resources, and by advocating for pet-inclusive subsidized housing because a deep connection with pets transcends boundaries of socio-economics, race, ethnicity and geography, and no one should be denied the opportunity to experience the benefits, joy and comfort that come from the human-animal bond. Despite

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<sup>1</sup> “Maryland.” National Low Income Housing Coalition. Accessed January 31, 2022.  
<https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/maryland>.

<sup>2</sup> “ERASE Tenant Protections Resource Page”. NLIHC Tenant Protections Database. February 1, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> “Out of Reach: Maryland.” National Low Income Housing Coalition, February 1, 2022.  
<https://reports.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/files/reports/state/md-2021-oor.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> [How bad is Maryland’s housing crisis? Check the animal shelters - The Baltimore Banner](#); January 20, 2024



assistance at all levels of government, many renters find difficulty securing housing suitable for their entire family.

A record number of households and nearly three-fourths of renters have pets, and while a majority of Americans consider their pets to be family members many tenants say they have trouble finding “pet friendly” properties. One explanation found by a recent industry report showed that although 76 percent of owner/operators say their properties are pet-friendly, 72 percent of residents surveyed said that pet-friendly housing is hard to find, and 59 percent say it’s too expensive.<sup>5</sup>

The scarcity in properties that welcome all pets is often associated with policies that include arbitrary restrictions such as breed, weight and number limits that create unnecessary barriers for pet-owning tenants. To the detriment of many owner/operators, this disconnection is a hindrance and leaves money on the table as vacant units in pet-inclusive properties fill faster than those in non-pet-friendly housing and on average, residents stay 21 percent longer. The study found additional financial benefits as well, including that fewer than 10 percent of all pets cause damages of any kind and the average pet deposit will cover any damage that is caused.

Stable, secure rental housing is critical for our families and our companion animals. We applaud the Governor’s leadership on this important issue and encourage this committee to also consider language that would expand the availability of pet-friendly housing for renters. Pet-inclusive properties are not only good for tenants, but they’re good for housing providers. We thank the committee for consideration of this important legislation and urge your support of SB 481, and are happy to work with the committee on amendments to ensure all our family members can find and retain suitable housing.

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<sup>5</sup> “2021 Pet-Inclusive Housing Report.” Michelson Found Animals and HARBI. Accessed January 31, 2022. <https://www.foundanimals.org/pets-and-housing/2021-pet-inclusive-housing-report/>.