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SPEAKER PRO TEM
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Environment and Transportation
Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Environment

Natural Resources,
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The Maryland House of Delegates ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Delegate Dana Stein Testimony in Support of HB 1152 Pet Policy Transparency Act

Chairman Korman, Vice Chairwoman Boyce, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

The current housing shortage has caused many problems for people looking for affordable housing. One issue that can exacerbate the problem of is pet ownership. Nearly three-fourths of renters have pets, but rental housing that is affordable and that will accept pets can be hard to find—a problem that is compounded by restrictions such as breed, weight, and number limits that create additional barriers for pet-owning tenants. Often, people looking for housing don't learn about a rental unit's policy until they've signed a lease, then they are often forced to give up their pets.

A cursory review of 400 rentals listed recently on mdhousingsearch.org found only 67 that would accept pets and most of those required the potential renter to call to find out what pets were accepted.

An article last year in the *Baltimore Banner* was headlined: “How Bad is Maryland’s Housing Crisis? Check the Animal Shelters.” In 2023, Baltimore County Animal Services’ shelter reported that more than a quarter of the nearly 2,000 animals they took in were surrendered for housing-related reasons. According to a study commissioned by the Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter (BARCS), the primary reason for pet surrenders in Baltimore City was housing related.¹

This legislation simply requires all rental housing providers to make their policies regarding pets more transparent by publicizing their policy on a property’s website, providing it in digital advertising and on residential rental search engines, and giving a written copy of the policy with application forms.

Pet policies must include any breed and weight restrictions, restrictions on the number of pets allowed, fees and deposits, vaccination requirements, and any other requirements.

To many people, their pets are family, and many would rather be homeless than give up their pet. When they must give them up, those pets end up in our animal shelters. While the requirements in this bill won't increase the amount of pet-friendly housing available, it will make it easier for renters with pets to locate housing that will allow them to keep their pets.

¹ Meredith Cohn and Hallie Miller, “How bad is Maryland’s housing crisis? Check the animal shelters,” *The Baltimore Banner*, January 20, 2024.