

February 21, 2025

Attn: Chair William Smith, Jr.
Maryland Senate Committee on the Judiciary
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Lauren Loney Consulting, LLC Letter of Support for S. 0896

Dear Chair Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Committee Members,

Please accept this letter of support for S. 0896, which would require full and transparent disclosure of pet policies in rental housing in Maryland.

My name is Lauren Loney, and I am the founder of Lauren Loney Consulting, LLC, a public policy and government relations firm where I work with clients on a variety of subject areas, but with a particular emphasis on policies and programming related to increasing access to pet-inclusive housing. I'm a licensed attorney and have been working in the pets and rental housing advocacy space for the last five years. I've co-authored three peer-reviewed publications on the subject and, prior to forming my own firm, I served as Staff Attorney and Policy Specialist for the Human Animal Support Services Project and as the Texas State Director for the Humane Society of the United States (now called the Humane World for Animals).

At Lauren Loney Consulting, I work alongside my clients, who include nonprofit animal rescues and advocacy organizations, universities, and municipal governments, advocating to increase access to pet-inclusive housing, which I define as rental housing that is free from breed, weight, or size restrictions; arbitrary number limitations that are more strict than local health and safety codes; and non-refundable fees, including up-front fees and monthly pet rent. We further argue that equitable access to pet-inclusive housing must include clear, transparently communicated pet policies for all rental housing.

Anecdotal experience surveying subsidized housing providers and my own research suggests that requiring written pet policies and ensuring transparency and consistent application of those policies is particularly important for low-income tenants living in subsidized, affordable rental housing. In collaboration with Denver University's Institute for Human-Animal Connection, my research team led a qualitative research study through which we engaged tenants of subsidized housing in Houston, Texas, for in-depth interviews

about their experiences as current or former pet owners – or as people who *wanted* to keep a pet, but found it difficult to find housing that was both affordable and would accommodate a pet.¹ One of the key themes tenants reported in their interviews was a need for more consistent and transparent pet policies. For example, one tenant shared their experience after they had been approved to sign a lease at a rental property in and subsequently brought her dog to meet the property manager. The property manager told this participant,

“Oh, you can, I mean, you are approved but you have a pit bull. So, I mean, you get rid of the pit bull, you can move in.”

Further, in Maryland and under the rules provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), tenants who receive a housing choice vouchers only have 60 days to find housing that will accept their voucher, with options for two 30-day extensions if the tenant is made aware of the extension forms they can file with their local Public Housing Authority.² The short time frame allotted to tenants to seek housing once they receive a housing choice voucher makes it increasingly important to these tenants to be able to quickly locate a potential housing provider’s pet policies.

For these reasons, I strongly support S.0896 as an important step in the right direction for increasing access to housing that accommodates pets for our most vulnerable renters. I want to thank Senator Love for sponsoring this legislation and respectfully request a vote in favor of S.0896 when it comes before this committee.

Please don’t hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns at laurenaloney@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Lauren Loney, J.D.

Founder

Lauren Loney Consulting, LLC.

¹Mascitelli, T.M., Graham, T., Loney, L., Applebaum, J.W., Murray, C., Binna-Calvey, M., Hawes, S.M., & Morris, K.N. (2024). Barriers to finding and maintaining pet-inclusive affordable housing: Tenant experiences from Houston, Texas. *Frontiers in Veterinary Medicine*. Vol. 11. doi: 10.3389/fvets.2024.1465682

² <https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/housing/housing-programs#:~:text=If%20you%20have%20not%20been,current%20FMRs%20and%20payment%20standards.>

