

DATE: February 25, 2025

BILL NO.: Senate Bill 896

TITLE: Real Property – Residential Rental Property – Pet Policy Disclosure (Pet Policy Transparency Act)

COMMITTEE: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Letter of Support

Description of Bill:

Senate Bill 896 would require landlords of rental residential properties to explicitly state the property’s pet policy on the property’s website, in digital advertisements, in information on postings on residential rental search engines, and in applications for rental units. It also standardizes the information that must be included in the property’s pet policy, including breed and weight restrictions, fees, limitations on the number of pets in a unit, vaccine requirements, insurance requirements, and any additional rules or information, if applicable.

Background and Analysis:

In Maryland and several other states around the country, housing-related issues are the main reason pets are surrendered to animal shelters. Compliance with pet policies, such as grooming standards or vaccination requirements, can also often lead to an unexpected financial burden. The pressure put upon renters with fewer properties available, rising rent costs, and overall financial stress makes the choice between becoming unhoused or surrendering a pet to obtain housing an ever more prevalent dilemma, especially among low-income Marylanders.

In 2024, 48% of Marylanders said there were too few places to rent, and 81% said the cost to rent was too high. While continuing efforts to increase housing supply, including rental properties, it is necessary to clearly establish and expand renters’ rights for Maryland renters to protect those facing precarious housing situations. Senate Bill 896 establishes clear guidelines for landlords to follow when providing their property’s pet policy, ensuring that renters have full information at the beginning of the renting process. This increased transparency lets renters know if a rental property is compatible with their current pet situation and would prevent pet surrenders due to an incompatibility with property’s pet policies that were not previously made known.

By passing Senate Bill 896, Maryland would increase protections for renters and their pets by requiring landlords to display their pet policies transparently, as they would with any other property policy, easing the burden on renters to find compatible housing options and keeping pets out of shelters.

DHCD Position:

The Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 896