

**SB896\_DHCD\_SUPPORT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Chuck Cook

Position: FAV

**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

**SB896\_FAV\_Humane World.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: FAV



Formerly called the Humane  
Society of the United States and  
Humane Society International

1255 23<sup>rd</sup> St. NW, Suite 450  
Washington, DC 20037  
202-452-1100  
humaneworld.org

**February 25, 2025**

**Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**SB 896**

***Pet Policy Disclosure (Pet Policy Transparency Act)***  
**FAVORABLE**

Humane World for Animals, formerly called the Humane Society of the United States, on behalf of our members and supporters in Maryland, offers enthusiastic support for SB896. This bill simply requires all rental units to make their pet policies accessible for prospective tenants and improve transparency in the rental housing market.

According to a recent survey by Zillow, 59% of renters are pet owners. While it is common for renters to make compromises about location, the number of bedrooms, or the cost of a unit, pet owners are less likely to make compromises when it comes to their pets.

Renters with pets face significant challenges in finding suitable housing because it can be difficult to obtain clear and accessible information about a property's pet policy. Renters must navigate through unclear or incomplete listings and spend valuable time contacting landlords or property managers to find out whether pets are allowed or what specific restrictions exist. This is particularly the case for affordable housing. When reviewing rental listings on the Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition's directory, we found that of four hundred listings 67- less than 17%- indicated they accepted pets. Of those, approximately 47% required a prospective tenant to call for more details.

These patterns are not unique to Maryland. A recent study takes a qualitative approach to examine the challenges that tenants face in finding and maintaining affordable housing that welcomes pets, focusing on their experiences and the barriers they encounter<sup>1</sup>. A key finding was the importance of clear, written pet policies that are easily accessible to the public. This will help both tenants and landlords manage expectations and responsibilities. The study further suggests that many tenants experience confusion or frustrations due to inconsistent or poorly defined pet policies, which can make it harder to find appropriate housing that will accommodate their family.

This new bill seeks to address these barriers, for prospective low-income and market rate tenants, by requiring landlords and property management companies to make their pet policies more



1255 23<sup>rd</sup> St. NW, Suite 450  
Washington, DC 20037  
202-452-1100  
humaneworld.org

Formerly called the Humane  
Society of the United States and  
Humane Society International

visible and readily accessible. The goal is to create a smoother and timelier process for renters, allowing them to make more informed decisions and more easily find a property that is suitable for their families and pets.

For these reasons, Humane World for Animals respectfully urges a favorable vote for SB896.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mascitelli, T.M. *et al.* (2024) *Barriers to finding and maintaining pet-inclusive affordable housing: Tenant experiences in Houston, Texas*, *Frontiers*. Available at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/veterinary-science/articles/10.3389/fvets.2024.1465682/full> (Accessed: 21 February 2025).

# **SB896housing.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katherine Flory

Position: FAV

Hello:

Thank you Chair Smith and Vice Chair Waldstreicher for allowing me to testify on SB 896. My name is Katie Flory, and I am the director of community care and advocacy with the Maryland SPCA, as well as the treasurer for the professional animal workers society (PAWS).

Maryland is facing a housing crisis, especially when it involves pets. Shelters across the state receive calls frequently from people trying to find housing for themselves and their pets. We hear the fear and panic in their voices when they are faced with having no place to live with their pets. We have also seen an increase in large dogs coming into shelters because of housing issues.

SB 896 would provide a small step in making it easier for people to locate pet friendly housing. It would require landlords to list their pet policy on their website. We request a favorable report on SB 896.

**Lauren Loney\_S0896 LOS.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lauren Loney

Position: FAV



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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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](mailto:laurenaloney@gmail.com)

Sincerely,

**Lauren Loney, J.D.**

Founder

Lauren Loney Consulting, LLC.

---

<sup>1</sup>Mascitelli, 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

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



# **Real Property - Residential Rental Property - Pet**

Uploaded by: Lisa Radov

Position: FAV



## MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

PO Box 10411  
BALTIMORE, MD 21209

February 25, 2025

To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chairman, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.  
Re: Real Property - Residential Rental Property - Pet Policy Disclosure (Pet Policy Transparency Act) - SB 896 - Support

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 896. My name is Lisa Radov, President and Chair of Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc. We champion legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. On behalf of our board of directors, as well as the thousands of members of Maryland Votes for Animals, I respectfully ask that this committee vote favorably for Real Property - Residential Rental Property - Pet Policy Disclosure (Pet Policy Transparency Act) - SB 896.

This bill would require the landlord of a residential rental property to provide the property's pet policy on the property's website, in digital advertisements, in information provided for residential rental search engines, and in applications for a rental unit on the property.

We need a mechanism to ensure that renters understand the policies of their landlords regarding pets. This bill will help renters avoid signing leases and moving into a rental unit only to find out later that due to the policies of the property they cannot keep their pets. A national study conducted by the ASPCA revealed that renters are more likely to need to rehome their pets for housing-related issues than for any other reason. As we know, pets are treasured members of our family. Having to rehome a pet can be traumatic for both the pet and the family members. Our shelters are already over capacity.

We recognize that there is a legitimate shortage of affordable housing for people with pets. This bill is a small but important first step towards dealing with this issue.

I would like to thank Senator Love for her sponsorship of SB 896 and urge a favorable report.



# **SB 896 - Pet Policy Transparency Act - Love writte**

Uploaded by: Sara Love

Position: FAV

SARA N. LOVE  
Legislative District 16  
Montgomery County

Judicial Proceedings Committee



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 222  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3124 · 301-858-3124  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3124  
Sara.Love@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SB 896 – Pet Policy Transparency Act**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, members of JPR.

For most of us, pets are like family. Surrendering a beloved pet to a shelter would be the option of last resort in difficult circumstances. Yet, unfortunately, animal shelters in Maryland are filling up with pets at an alarming rate due to housing-related issues.<sup>1</sup> There is a growing link between the housing crisis (particularly affordable housing) and the homeless pet crisis.

SB 896 seeks to help keep people and their pets together by requiring more transparency from landlords in communicating their rental unit pet policies. It requires the landlord of any residential rental property to link to the pet policy on their website, in digital advertising, and on rental search engines as well as include the policy with the rental application, stating up front *any*: specific breed or weight restrictions; required fees; limits on number; and vaccination, liability insurance, or additional requirements.

One of the major challenges an individual or family can have when trying to find rental housing that will allow their pet, is simply determining the complete pet policy. While a building may be listed as “pet friendly”, late in the application process, a prospective tenant can learn, for example, that their pet isn’t allowed due to breed or weight restrictions, leading to the loss of a security deposit, precious time in a competitive housing market, or, in a worst-case scenario, their precious pet. This situation is particularly challenging for lower income households who have fewer options. In conducting research for this bill, our advocate Jessica Simpson of Humane World for Animals found that out of 400 low-income housing listings in Maryland, 67 (17%) indicated they accepted pets. Of those, 47% required a call to inquire about their pet policy, an often-cumbersome process that can result in misinformation. Making all rental unit pet policies transparent can help keep more animals out of shelters and with their owners.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your favorable report on SB 896.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/community/housing/maryland-housing-crisis-animal-shelters-pets-adoption-77A2ZPFG4JBYPDCJTTVRSCLKR4/>





**SB 896\_realtors\_unf.pdf**

Uploaded by: William Castelli

Position: UNF



**Senate Bill 896 – Real Property – Residential Rental Property – Pet Policy Disclosure (Pet Policy Transparency Act)**

**Position: Unfavorable**

Maryland REALTORS® oppose SB 896 which requires landlords to provide links to a property's pet policy, requires that it be included in the rental application, and specifies the provisions that must be included in a pet policy.

Most of the properties represented by Maryland REALTOR® property managers are single-family homes. To the extent that SB 896 creates additional complication in advertising, updating rental applications, and specifying pet policies, there is a greater likelihood that some of the mom and pop owners of these units will just choose to not to accept pets.

Many mom and pop landlords are already concerned about the complexity of renting their property, and, for that reason, the Maryland REALTORS® recommend an unfavorable report.

**For more information contact [lisa.may@mdrealtor.org](mailto:lisa.may@mdrealtor.org) or [christa.mcgee@mdrealtor.org](mailto:christa.mcgee@mdrealtor.org)**

**MMHA - 2025 - SB896 - INF.pdf**

Uploaded by: Matthew Pipkin

Position: INFO



## Senate Bill 896

**Committee: Judicial Proceedings**

**Bill: Senate Bill 896 – Real Property - Residential Rental Property - Pet Policy Disclosure (Pet Policy Transparency Act)**

**Date: 2/25/25**

**Position: Informational**

---

The Maryland Multi-Housing Association (MMHA) is a professional trade association established in 1996, whose members house more than 538,000 residents of the State of Maryland. MMHA’s membership consists of owners and managers of more than 210,000 rental housing homes in over 958 apartment communities and more than 250 associate member companies who supply goods and services to the multi-housing industry.

Senate Bill 896 (“SB 896”) requires the landlord of a residential rental property to provide the property's pet policy on the property's website, in digital advertisements, in information provided for residential rental search engines, and in applications for a rental unit on the property.

MMHA would like to thank the sponsors and advocates for engaging with our Association members during the interim to work on this legislation. For informational purposes, if this legislation is enacted as written, MMHA would like to request liberality in the implementation of this bill as housing providers become aware and work to comply. It is important that this legislation be interpreted to apply to digital listings and advertisements that are within the control of housing providers. Additionally, it is the view of MMHA that the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development’s Office of Tenant and Landlord Affairs should promote and campaign this legislation to the multi-housing industry and work collaboratively with housing providers to achieve proper compliance with the law.

Please contact Matthew Pipkin, Jr. at (443) 995-4342 or [mpipkin@mmhaonline.org](mailto:mpipkin@mmhaonline.org) with any questions.