

The Breeder Registration, Birth Certificate, and Microchip Accountability Act

Short Name “Breeder Accountability Act”

A Proposal for the State of Maryland

By Jim DeFrancesco

Introduction

Maryland’s animal shelters are facing a crisis that combines compassion, economics, and accountability. Each year, more than **fifty-five thousand** dogs and cats enter shelters across the state. Even with the best efforts of shelter staff and rescue organizations, space limitations and limited budgets force many facilities to **euthanize** healthy, adoptable animals simply to make room for incoming strays or surrenders.

At the heart of this tragedy lies an identifiable cause: uncontrolled breeding by unregistered individuals and large-scale puppy mills that operate outside Maryland’s oversight and the federal Animal Welfare Act. These grey-market breeders produce animals for quick profit, often in substandard conditions, and sell them anonymously through online platforms or roadside transactions. Their activities not only overwhelm shelters but also deprive the state of millions in unreported tax revenue.

The **Breeder Registration, Birth Certificate, and Microchip Accountability Act** offers a humane, fiscally sound, and self-funded remedy. It builds a transparent chain of accountability that follows every dog born in Maryland—from breeder to owner to shelter if necessary—while strengthening enforcement, restoring consumer confidence, and stabilizing public spending on animal care.

The Rationale for Breeder Registration

A registration system is the foundation of accountability. Without a registry, Maryland cannot know how many animals are bred, who is producing them, or whether those operations comply with humane-care standards. USDA Federal registration under the Animal Welfare Act currently applies only to breeders with more than four breeding females who sell animals sight-unseen. That narrow threshold leaves hundreds of smaller but high-volume breeders invisible to regulators.

Mandatory state registration would correct that blind spot. Each breeder would file an annual report with the Maryland Department of Agriculture listing the number of breeding

females and litters produced. Registration converts what is now an underground trade into a measurable, monitorable economic sector. It also empowers the state to enforce existing cruelty and tax laws by connecting each commercial litter to a verified source.

The Purpose of a Birth-Certificate System

A breeder registry gains full effectiveness only when each individual puppy is documented. The proposed birth-certificate program serves this role. It functions much like a title of ownership for a vehicle or a deed for real estate: a legal record that authenticates origin, establishes chain of custody, and discourages fraudulent sales.

Each puppy sold in Maryland receives a state-issued certificate that lists the breeder's registration number, parentage information, and a unique identification code. The certificate could not be issued unless the breeder was already registered and in good standing, thereby linking every commercial sale to a verified, lawful source.

The **\$50 certificate fee** provides two rational benefits. First, it ensures that the program pays for itself rather than drawing on taxpayer funds. Second, it internalizes the social cost of overproduction by asking those who profit from breeding to help offset its public consequences—overcrowded shelters and euthanasia expenses.

The Role of Universal Microchipping

A certificate is useful only if the animal it describes can be positively identified. Microchipping provides that certainty. Each certificate would be paired with a pre-assigned, ISO-compliant microchip number. The breeder or a licensed veterinarian would implant the chip before the puppy's transfer to its new owner, and the number would be permanently linked to the certificate in a statewide database.

The rationale is both humane and practical. Microchipped dogs are twenty times more likely to be returned to their owners when lost. When a chipped animal enters a shelter, staff can instantly scan the chip, contact the owner, or trace the dog back to its breeder if abandonment or neglect is suspected. In this way, microchipping transforms every dog into a traceable individual, closing the loophole of anonymous breeding and ownership that fuels neglect and surrender.

At roughly five dollars per chip when purchased in bulk, the cost is minimal compared with the savings it generates in reduced shelter stays, fewer strays, and faster reunifications.

Enforcement and Compliance

The strength of the system lies in the integration of these three elements—registration, certification, and microchipping. They form a closed loop of accountability that operates without constant government inspection. Enforcement occurs automatically because an animal cannot be sold or transferred without its certificate and chip verification.

Unregistered breeders who attempt to sell animals outside the system would face escalating fines and the loss of breeding privileges. More importantly, market forces would work in tandem with regulation: consumers seeking legitimacy and protection would refuse to buy uncertified animals, depriving illegal operations of their customer base.

Fiscal Responsibility and Tax Recovery

The proposal is deliberately self-funded. The certificate fee covers the cost of administration, chip procurement, and enforcement, generating an estimated **\$1.35 million** in net revenue each year. Half of that revenue would flow back to shelters and spay-and-neuter programs; the rest would maintain the registry and oversight functions.

Beyond program revenue, registration would expose the hidden economy of unreported breeder income. Maryland is believed to have roughly one thousand unregistered breeders, each producing an average of twenty-five puppies annually at approximately one thousand dollars per sale. That translates to **\$25 million in untaxed revenue**. When subjected to the state's five-percent income tax and six-percent sales tax, the loss to Maryland exceeds **\$2.7 million per year**—more than **\$13 million over five years**. Formalizing this sector brings those dollars back into public circulation for schools, infrastructure, and community programs.

Impact on Shelter Intake and Taxpayer Savings

The most immediate social dividend of regulation is the reduction of animals entering shelters. National shelter data show that when intake falls by twenty-five to thirty percent, euthanasia for space effectively disappears because adoptions, transfers, and returns to owner equal or exceed new arrivals.

For Maryland's shelters, a twenty-five-percent reduction would mean thirteen to fourteen thousand fewer animals per year. With an average cost of roughly five hundred dollars per animal for housing, feeding, and care, the potential savings approach **\$7 million annually**,

of which about **\$4.5 million** directly benefits taxpayers who currently fund local shelter budgets.

When combined with recovered tax revenue and program self-funding, the total fiscal improvement exceeds **\$8 million each year**, demonstrating that compassion can align perfectly with financial prudence.

Consumer Confidence and Public Participation

Perhaps the most transformative feature of this plan is the cultural shift it encourages. Over time, Maryland consumers will come to view the birth certificate as an expected part of any legitimate pet purchase. The document will signal that the breeder meets state and federal welfare standards and that the puppy is properly microchipped and verifiable in the state registry.

By requesting to see the certificate, buyers become active participants in enforcement. A seller who cannot produce one effectively self-identifies as unregistered or illegal. This simple act of consumer diligence turns the marketplace itself into an enforcement mechanism. Ethical breeders gain credibility and market share, while irresponsible operators lose public trust and profitability.

The result is a transparent, self-policing system that functions through cooperation between government oversight and public choice rather than through costly raids or litigation.

Implementation and Long-Term Outlook

The plan can be implemented gradually over a five-year horizon. In the first year, legislation would be enacted and the registration portal developed. The second year would focus on enrolling breeders and issuing the first certificates. By the third year, universal microchipping would be fully in effect, accompanied by a statewide education campaign: *“No Certificate, No Sale—Protect Your Pet and Your State.”*

By the fifth year, shelter intake should decline by at least twenty-five percent, euthanasia for space would end, and the program’s financial benefits would be well established. Maryland would then possess a sustainable system that continually funds prevention rather than crisis response.

Conclusion

The **Breeder Registration, Birth Certificate, and Microchip Accountability Act** unites humane values with fiscal responsibility. It transforms an unregulated grey market into a transparent, tax-compliant industry; it gives consumers confidence that their pets come from ethical sources; and it saves lives by cutting off the stream of unwanted animals that fill shelters.

Every breeder would be registered. Every puppy would be documented. Every dog would be microchipped and traceable for life.

Through this act, Maryland can lead the nation in proving that compassion and accountability are not opposing ideals but complementary pillars of good governance. In doing so, the state would end the needless euthanasia of healthy animals, save millions in public funds, and establish a humane legacy worthy of its citizens.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jim DeFrancesco
443-812-0920

Common Questions and Answers.

1. “Is this creating more government bureaucracy?”

No, the program relies on **simple online breeder registration, digital birth certificates, and existing microchip technology**. It’s designed to be **largely automated and self-funded through a small certificate fee**, so it doesn’t require significant taxpayer funding.

The goal is transparency, not bureaucracy.

2. “Will this hurt responsible small breeders?”

No. In fact, responsible breeders are the biggest beneficiaries. This system **distinguishes legitimate breeders from anonymous operators**. If you are breeding responsibly, registration and documentation simply validate your practices and **build trust with buyers**.

It levels the playing field.

3. “How will this actually stop puppy mills?”

It addresses the **anonymity problem**. Right now many breeders sell puppies **without any traceability**, solely for quick profit. By requiring a **registered breeder and birth certificate linked to a microchip**, every puppy sold legitimately becomes traceable to a compliant breeding source. That makes it much harder for irresponsible breeders to operate anonymously without oversight.

4. “How will the state enforce this?”

Enforcement becomes much easier because **the documentation follows the dog**. If a dog enters a shelter or is surrendered, the **microchip links directly back to the breeder record and birth certificate**. That gives regulators the ability to identify patterns of irresponsible breeding and take action.

5. “Why is this necessary if the USDA already regulates breeders?”

USDA oversight only covers **a portion of breeders**. Because of exemptions in the Animal Welfare Act, many breeders **are not required to register federally**, especially those selling directly to consumers online with less than five mother dogs. That leaves a large gap that states need to address.

6. “Will this increase the price of puppies?”

The cost impact is minimal. The program is funded by **a small birth certificate fee** similar to vehicle registration. That fee supports enforcement and shelter programs while adding **transparency and consumer protection**.

For buyers, it actually increases confidence in the puppy’s origin.

7. “How does this help shelters?”

Shelters deal with the downstream consequences of **overbreeding without accountability**. When every puppy is traceable to its breeder, it becomes easier to identify **where overproduction is happening** and address it.

Over time, that helps reduce the flow of animals entering shelters.

8. “Is this model used anywhere else?”

Many countries and some jurisdictions already use **animal traceability systems tied to microchips and breeder records**. Those systems have shown that **transparency dramatically improves accountability in breeding practices**.

This bill adapts that concept to Maryland in a practical way.

9. “What happens if someone sells puppies without registration?”

The system makes that much harder. Buyers will expect a **state-issued birth certificate**, and shelters or veterinarians scanning a microchip will quickly identify animals that **lack proper documentation**.

That visibility discourages off-the-books breeding.

10. “Why should Maryland lead on this?”

Maryland is already **very close to becoming a No-Kill state**. This bill helps close the final gap by addressing one of the root causes of shelter overcrowding: **untraceable breeding**. It’s a humane and fiscally responsible step forward.

11 “Is this government overreach into private breeding?”

The bill doesn’t restrict responsible breeding. It simply requires **basic transparency and traceability when puppies are sold commercially** — similar to registration systems used for vehicles or livestock.

12 “Why not just enforce existing laws?”

Existing laws are difficult to enforce because **breeders often remain anonymous**.

This bill creates the **traceability needed for enforcement to actually work**.

13 “What evidence shows this will reduce euthanasia?”

The link between **unregulated breeding and shelter overcrowding** is well documented. This bill tackles that downstream problem by making the **breeding pipeline visible and accountable**.
