

**SB0750\_MDVMA\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ashley Nichols, DVM

Position: FAV



## Maryland Veterinary Medical Association (MDVMA)

Established in 1886, MDVMA is a volunteer, non-profit organization comprised primarily of licensed Maryland Veterinarians.

### **SB0750 - Local Government - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats - Requirements and Restrictions (Ash's Law)**

**Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment**

**March 6, 2026**

#### **MDVMA Position: SUPPORT**

On behalf of the Maryland Veterinary Medical Association and its members, we urge a favorable vote on SB0750 Trap-Neuter-Return policies for community cats.

The following is important to consider when discussing this bill. Community cats are feral, semi-feral, and stray cats. These cats often live in independent, self-sustaining, outdoor colonies which do not belong to anyone. Colonies may have individuals or groups that monitor and feed them. Feral cats are unsocialized wild raised cats that are fearful of humans due to being unsocialized. Semi-feral cats are still fearful but may tolerate recognized caregivers. Both feral and semi-feral cats are unadoptable and can not be rehabilitated due to their lack of trust in humans. The solution to the community cat population is the establishment and protection of Trap - Neuter- Return.

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programs are the effective and humane practice of managing community cat populations. Through TNR cats are humanely trapped, given quality veterinary care, and returned to their colony OR adopting cats that are adoptable. The alternative management option is to trap and euthanize. Research has shown that robust TNR is more effective in stabilizing community cat populations, over trap and euthanize. While lethal management provides a short-term reduction in population, it leaves food and shelter behind which attracts new populations of unaltered cats to the area. Conversely, TNR provides sustained reduction in colony size by 66-80% over several years. Another benefit is the cost for management through TNR, is less as the work is done through volunteers. TNR is a better solution for the cats and the community. A supplemental list of the studies discussed have been provided.

HB0912 is vital for the protection of TNR programs as Maryland state law does not differentiate between the caretakers and the criminal act of abandoning a pet. Currently the abandonment of a domestic animal is misdemeanor. Due to the lack of differentiation, the care of these colonies is limited out of fear of persecution. Additionally, local ordinances restrict the feeding of colonies on specific properties, and subject community cats to impoundment, which ultimately leads to euthanasia. For these reasons, Maryland Veterinary Medical Association and its members, we urge a favorable vote on SB0750.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley I. Nichols, DVM  
Legislative Committee Member & Director At Large  
Maryland Veterinary Medical Association

MARYLAND VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

1. Spehar, D. D., & Wolf, P. J. (2020). The Impact of Targeted Trap–Neuter–Return Efforts in the San Francisco Bay Area. *Animals*, 10(11), 2089. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani10112089>
2. Levy, Julie K., David W. Gale, and Leslie A. Gale. “Evaluation of the Effect of a Long–Term Trap–Neuter–Return and Adoption Program on a Free– Roaming Cat Population.” *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 222, no. 1 (2003): 42–46.
3. Hughes, Kathy L., Margaret R. Slater, and Linda Haller. “The Effects of Implementing a Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Program in a Florida County Animal Control Service.” *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5 (2002): 285–289.
4. Spehar DD, Wolf PJ. Integrated return–to–field and targeted trap–neuter–vaccinate–return programs result in reductions of feline intake and euthanasia at six municipal animal shelters. *Front Vet Sci* 2019; 6: 77. DOI: 10.3389/fvets.2019.00077.
5. Lohr CA, Cox LJ, Lepczyk CA. Costs and benefits of trap–neuter–release and euthanasia for removal of urban cats in Oahu, Hawaii. *Conserv Biol.* 2013 Feb;27(1):64–73. doi: 10.1111/j.1523–1739.2012.01935.x. Epub 2012 Sep 25. PMID: 23009077.
6. Wolf PJ, Rand J, Swarbrick H, Spehar DD, Norris J. Reply to Crawford et al.: Why Trap–Neuter–Return (TNR) Is an Ethical Solution for Stray Cat Management. *Animals (Basel)*. 2019 Sep 16;9(9):689. doi: 10.3390/ani9090689. PMID: 31527537; PMCID: PMC6769729.

**aca\_maryland\_senate\_legislature\_letter\_SB750\_3\_6\_2**

Uploaded by: Coryn Julien

Position: FAV

March 6, 2026

Maryland State Legislature  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
c/o Chair Feldman  
*via online portal*

Re: Proponent testimony to SB 750

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

On behalf of Alley Cat Allies and our supporters in Maryland, I submit this written testimony as a proponent of Senate Bill 750 (“SB 750”), a bill currently under your consideration. Alley Cat Allies urges the Committee to support this bill. If enacted, SB 750 will establish the first-ever comprehensive law to provide statewide protections for Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). In protecting and advancing TNR, Maryland will not only save the lives of countless cats, but also support and inspire the people and organizations dedicated to caring for these cats and improving their communities.

Alley Cat Allies was founded in 1990 and is the leader of the global movement to protect and improve the lives of cats and kittens. As the leading advocacy organization for cats, we work with lawmakers, shelters, and the public toward humane, nonlethal, and effective laws and policies that serve the best interests of cats and the communities in which they live. Alley Cat Allies is based in Bethesda, Maryland, and is grateful for the privilege of working with Vice Chair Guyton in support of this historic bill.

SB 750, also known as “Ash’s Law,” makes TNR the law of the land and creates uniformity across the state, ensuring not only that TNR is permitted and community cats are protected from being killed in shelters, but also that those who care for community cats are treated consistently. Maryland residents and organizations who spend their own time and money to conduct TNR will gain critical protections, including clarification that returning a cat to her outdoor home through a TNR program is not criminal abandonment. It is, in fact, a reunion.

Trap-Neuter-Return (“TNR”) is the only humane and effective approach to community cats; unowned cats who live outdoors, also known as stray or feral cats. TNR is proven to stabilize community cat populations by stopping the cycle of reproduction; improve cats’ health through vaccinations; and benefit animal control agencies and shelters by reducing cat intake and calls of concern. Community cats, who are generally not socialized to people and therefore unadoptable, can return to their outdoor homes to thrive rather than be impounded in local shelters only to be killed.

During TNR, cats are humanely trapped, taken to a veterinarian to be spayed or neutered, vaccinated and eartipped (the universal sign that a cat has been part of a TNR program). After recovery, the cats are returned to their original outdoor homes.

Today, TNR is being practiced by government entities, individuals, grassroots groups, veterinarians, and shelters across Maryland and the country. Many communities have adopted ordinances or policies supporting TNR, and thousands more worldwide are conducting grassroots, volunteer-led programs. However, consistency is essential to ensure no advocate in Maryland faces roadblocks, citations, or other penalties for taking compassionate, beneficial action for community cats.

Alley Cat Allies gave SB 750 the name “Ash’s Law” in honor of Ash, a beloved community cat who once lived in Riverdale, Maryland. In 2016, Ash was taken from her outdoor home with her six young kittens by animal control and impounded in an animal shelter. Ash spent her final day confined in a cage. When Ash’s caregiver came to bring her home less than 24 hours after she had been impounded, Ash and her kittens had already been killed.

Piluco, a member of Ash’s colony, avoided the same fate out of sheer luck. Instead, he was neutered and returned to his outdoor home. But Piluco’s TNR was carried out separately from, and despite, lethal policies that took the lives of so many community cats like Ash. And he is still here today.

Ash and Piluco’s story exposes the consequences of inconsistency in humane policies for cats in Maryland communities—a discrepancy Ash’s Law would end.

Maryland has the opportunity to make history for cats and the people who care for them and stand at the forefront of our nation’s humane movement. Tragically, every year cats like Ash are needlessly killed in Maryland governmental shelters, and at great cost to taxpayers. By ratifying TNR, SB 750 will stop the killing, support Maryland residents who care for and about community cats, and bring Maryland communities together in humane, effective action for cats and kittens.

I encourage the members of the Committee to support SB 750, Ash’s Law. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Coryn Julien  
*Program Communications Officer*

Alley Cat Allies

[alleycat.org](http://alleycat.org)

e: [outreach@alleycat.org](mailto:outreach@alleycat.org)

## ASH



## PILUCO



**testimony SB0750, Ash's Law.pdf**

Uploaded by: Frances Stewart

Position: FAV

SB0750- SUPPORT  
Frances Stewart, MD  
4407 Maple Ave.  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
[frances.stewart6@gmail.com](mailto:frances.stewart6@gmail.com)  
301-718-0446

SB0750 - Local Government – Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats –  
Requirements and Restrictions (Ash’s Law)

Meeting of Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee

March 10, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, I urge a favorable report on SB0750, Ash’s Law.

Many Maryland neighborhoods have beloved community cats. These cats often live difficult lives, but some are fortunate enough to have one or more dedicated community caregivers who care for them using a Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) approach. That humane approach has been shown to improve the health and well-being of community cats while avoiding the problems associated with overpopulation.

[Ash’s Law](#) seeks to help community cats avoid the fate suffered by Ash, a beloved community cat, and her kittens in Riverdale, Maryland. She was impounded in an animal shelter with her kittens. Sadly, they were all killed in less than 24 hours.

Community caregivers are volunteers who spend many hours caring for the cats they love. Often, they are also paying all the expenses. Maryland localities should not create any barriers to their compassionate work.

For all these reasons, I strongly urge a favorable report on SB0750, Ash’s Law. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**3-6-26 AWC Support letter SB 750.pdf**

Uploaded by: Linda Mazer

Position: FAV



March 6, 2026

Honorable Chair and Members

Education, Energy and Environment Committee

RE: SB 750

The Anne Arundel County Animal Welfare Council **supports SB 750**, Ash's Law, which allows TNR (Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate for Rabies, Release) of feral community cats.

In 2018, Anne Arundel County passed a community cat ordinance allowing TNR. It has been very effective in decreasing the number of feral cats that were being euthanized in AA County prior to the community cat ordinance becoming law. Anne Arundel County Department of Animal Services (DAS - formerly known as AA County Animal Care & Control) euthanized approximately 750-1000 feral cats each year during the time frame of 2011-2014. In 2015, DAS started participating in the State Spay Neuter Grant Fund which resulted in lowering the number of feral cats euthanized to approximately 600 cats per year during 2015 and 2016. In 2017, a pilot program for community cat TNR was tested in AA County which produced further lowering of the number of feral cats euthanized that year to around 500 cats.

In 2018, Anne Arundel County Council passed the community cat TNR ordinance. Dedicated community non-profit organizations such as SAVECats, along with other coalition partners, strongly supported this TNR effort. This resulted in lowering the number of feral cats euthanized to about 100 by the year 2020. With continued strong support from non-profit organizations during the past 5 years, 2021 - 2025, Anne Arundel County DAS euthanized less than 50 feral cats each year. Through an effective community cat TNR program, AA County DAS has been able to lower the number of feral cats euthanized from a high of around 1,000 cats per year in 2011 to below 50 feral cats per year in 2025. Currently, only the ferals who are determined to be unhealthy are now euthanized to relieve their suffering.

The community cat TNR program has also helped to lower the overall intake of all cats (domestic and feral combined) coming into the shelter. In 2012, approximately 3,800 cats were brought into the AA County shelter. This past year, in 2025, approximately 2,000 cats were brought into the shelter. This reduction in intake saves lives and it saves taxpayer dollars as well.

A community cat TNR program is an effective and humane way to lower euthanasia of feral cats, lower overall cat intake in all Maryland shelters, promote healthier communities, and save taxpayer dollars. We respectfully ask for a favorable report on SB 750.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Mazer, Chair, AA County Animal Welfare Council

Tanya Keitz, Vice Chair

Sandra Andrulis DVM, Secretary

Jaci Kyle, Membership Chair

Kiani Brooks

Kristi Ellefson

Marion Hosmer

Kip Imperato, DVM

Alison Paige Sachs

Ralph Youngs

Lauren Umlandt

**SB750 Written Testimony.docx-merged.pdf**

Uploaded by: Senator Karen Lewis Young

Position: FAV

KAREN LEWIS YOUNG  
Legislative District 3  
Frederick County

Budget and Taxation Committee



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 302  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3575  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3575  
Karen.Young@senate.state.md.us

District Office  
253 East Church Street  
Frederick, MD 21701  
301-662-8520

The Honorable Senator Feldman, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Kagan, Vice Chair  
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
Annapolis, MD

March 10th, 2026

**SB750: Local Government - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats -  
Requirements and Restrictions (Ash's Law)**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and esteemed members of this committee,

SB750 protects those engaged in Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) efforts, such as caring for a community cat, from being charged with animal abandonment. These efforts are a key part of our community safety and animal control that cannot be accomplished if organizations and individuals are not legally protected.

Trap-Neuter-Return is the process of humanely trapping a cat, neutering, addressing medical needs including vaccinations, eartipping (the universal sign that a cat has been helped through a TNR program), and returning the cat to the place where it was captured. Trap-Neuter-Return is a humane and ethical form of animal control, especially compared to the common practice of euthanizing healthy cats in shelters. TNR is found to be immensely effective in decreasing the population and fertility rate of community cats. Unfortunately, not all parts of the State protect this practice.

Local ordinances on Trap-Neuter-Return in Maryland's counties differ widely. Currently, eight counties with active TNR programs offer no protection against prosecution for animal abandonment. In contrast, seven counties ensure individuals and organizations that practice TNR are covered under law. This bill would create consistent and standardized regulations across the state.

TNR provides Maryland with a humane and effective solution to decreasing community and feral cat populations in our State. Senate Bill 750 further protects the community members who provide this service from unnecessary penalties. For these reasons, I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Lewis Young".

Senator Karen Lewis Young



Richard Lewis, founder of the Lycoming Animal Protection Society, a no-kill cat shelter, and father of Senator Karen Lewis Young

# General TNR Success Research

## The Impact of Targeted Trap–Neuter–Return Efforts in the San Francisco Bay Area

Year: 2020

Location: San Francisco Bay Area

Author(s): Daniel D Spehar, Peter J Wolf

### Summary:

In 2004, approximately 175 community cats were living along a trail in Foster City, California. The city, the Homeless Cat Network, and the community joined forces to humanely stabilize this colony of cats, and Project Bay Cat was formed. The Homeless Cat Network’s volunteers undertook an intensive TNR effort, with two private veterinary hospitals providing spaying or neutering and vaccinations for the cats. As of 2020, “an initial population of 175 cats declined by 99.4% over the 16-year program period. Of the 258 total cats enrolled between 2004 and 2020, only one remained at the end of the program period.”

Findings: When communities come together to support TNR, cats are protected and colonies are effectively stabilized and reduced.

Topics: Community Cats, TNR

Citation: Daniel D. Spehar and Peter J. Wolf. “The Impact of Targeted Trap-Neuter-Return Efforts in the San Francisco Bay Area” *Animals* 2020, 10(11), 2089 (2020).

## Four Years of Promising Trap–Neuter–Return (TNR) in Córdoba, Spain: A Scalable Model for Urban Feline Management

Year: 2025

Location: Córdoba, Spain

Author(s): Octavio P. Luzardo, Mercedes Vara-Rascón, Agnès Dufau, Emma Infante, María del Mar Travieso-Aja

### Summary:

Starting in 2020, the City of Córdoba, Spain, implemented a TNR program and created a database with information on 225 cat colonies. Over the course of the time period evaluated, from 2020 to 2024, the City achieved a 95% “sterilization rate” of the “free-roaming cat population,” and the authors observed a reduction of 2.7% in the overall population size of community cats in Córdoba across all colonies.

In addition to the presentation of descriptive statistics, the authors perform a population viability analysis (PVA) to estimate the size of population changes over time. Based on the PVA analysis, the authors conclude that the City was able to achieve “the prevention of an estimated 70% population growth without intervention” and the authors

estimate a “potential 55% population reduction by 2028, contingent on sustained efforts.”

Findings: Committed, sustained, city-supported TNR programs can achieve incredible spay and neuter rates that could have an impact on community cat populations in just a few years.

Citation: Luzardo et al. “Four Years of Promising Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) in Córdoba, Spain: A Scalable Model for Urban Feline Management” *Animals (Basel)* 2025 Feb 8;15(4): 482

## Trap-Neuter-Return at Atlantic City Boardwalk Reduces Colony Size Over Time

Year: 2018

Location: Atlantic City, New Jersey

Author(s): Alley Cat Allies

Summary:

In 2000, Alley Cat Allies launched the Boardwalk Cats Project, a TNR program for the community cats living around the boardwalk in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Alley Cat Allies teamed up with Atlantic City’s Health Department, the Humane Society of Atlantic City, and local advocates to begin the model TNR program that stabilized these colonies. Many of the cats trapped were young kittens or cats socialized enough to be put up for adoption. The rest were returned to the boardwalk, after being spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and eartipped. When the program started, there were approximately 275 cats living around the boardwalk. As a result of TNR, no kittens have been born at the boardwalk in over a decade, and the population size has significantly decreased through natural attrition and adoption. As of 2018, census reports that the number of cats has decreased to 87.

The Boardwalk Cats Project receives outspoken support from Atlantic City’s local government, as well as many local businesses along the boardwalk. The public has responded positively to the program, which attracts tourists year-round.

Findings: When people learn how positive TNR is for cats and communities, the programs receive widespread support.

## Trap-Neuter-Return Case Study: 55% Reduction in Outdoor Colony Cats Since 2007

Year: 2013

Location: Chicago, Illinois

Author(s): Cats in My Yard Blog

Summary:

In 2007, Chicago group, Cats In My Yard, began carefully tracking its TNR efforts, and the number of cats living in 19 colonies. Between 2007 and 2013, 153 cats

in all the colonies went through TNR. By 2013, 70 cats remained. In these seven years, the community cat population in this neighborhood decreased by 55%.

Findings: From small groups of volunteers to citywide TNR programs, TNR is the only effective method for stabilizing and reducing community cat colonies.

Citation: "Trap-Neuter-Return Case Study: 55% Reduction in Outdoor Colony Cats Since 2007." Cats in My Yard. 8 Jan. 2014. Web. 9 Jan. 2014.

## Cook County Managed Care of Feral Cats Ordinance Sponsors Update

Year: 2013

Location: Chicago, Illinois

Author(s): David Defuniak, Rochelle Michalek

Summary:

A countywide TNR program in Cook County, Illinois reduced the size of community cat colonies in 23 zip codes by 41% in just five years. In 2007, Cook County passed legislation that created a formal structure for a countywide TNR program, with a coalition of private nonprofit organizations assuming the responsibility for managing community cat colonies. From 2008 to 2012, more than 17,538 community cats in Cook County were spayed or neutered, vaccinated, eartipped, and returned to their outdoor homes through this program. The coalition compared the number of cats in those zip codes before they started TNR, and the number five years after.

In November 2007, there were 1,329 cats. At the end of 2012, there were only 788. The nonprofit coalition estimates that the program has prevented the births of tens of thousands of kittens.

Findings: Even in large-scale TNR programs that span multiple zip codes, neighborhoods, and colonies, TNR reduces colony size across the board.

Citation: Schlueter, J. E-mail message to writer. 16 Jan. 2014.

Funiak, D. and R. Michalek. "Cook County Managed Care of Feral Cats Ordinance Sponsors Update." □ Presentation. Tree House Humane Society and PAWS Chicago. 2013.

## Management of feral domestic cats in the urban environment of Rome (Italy)

Year: 2006

Location: Rome, Italy

Author(s): Eugenia Natoli, Laura Maragliano, Giuseppe Cariola, Anna Faini, Roberto Bonanni, Simona Cafazzo, Claudio Fantini

Summary:

Examining a well-established TNR program in Italy over 10 years showed that a

long-term program significantly reduces community cat colony size. Colony size consistently decreased over the time period, ranging from a 16% decline in colonies spayed or neutered three years into the program, to a 32% decrease in colonies spayed or neutered six years in. As the program became more visible, the number of registered colonies increased from 76 to 965. Furthermore, community education, the authors write, is crucial to preventing intact pet cats from joining the community cat population.

Findings: Community education is crucial to developing long-term TNR programs and caring for colonies.

Citation: Natoli, Eugenia, et. al. "Management of Feral Domestic Cats in the Urban Environment of Rome (Italy)." *Preventative Veterinary Medicine* 77 (2006): 180-185.

## Analyzing approaches to feral cat management—One size does not fit all

Year: 2004

Location: North Carolina

Author(s): Michael K Stoskopf, Felicia Nutter

Summary:

In this study, researchers observed spayed or neutered community cat colonies and intact colonies in North Carolina. They found that TNR stabilizes colonies and causes population decline over time. All six spayed or neutered colonies decreased in population during the first two years of study, with an average decrease of 36%, and continued to decline. During the same two years, the three intact colonies significantly increased in size, with an average increase of 47%.

Findings: Community cat colonies who go through TNR decrease in size, while colonies that are not spayed or neutered increase.

Citation: Stoskopf, M. and F. Nutter. "Analyzing approaches to feral cat management – one size does not fit all." *Journal of American Veterinary Medical Association* 225, no. 9 (2004): 1361-1364

## Washington, D.C. Cat Colony Stabilized and Eventually Reduced to Zero

Year: 2007

Location: Washington, DC

Author(s): Alley Cat Allies

Summary:

A TNR program in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington, D.C. reduced a colony of 54 community cats to zero cats. This colony resulted in the founding of Alley Cat Allies in 1990, just a few months after the co-founders began helping the caregivers carry out a formal program to help the 54 cats. Caregivers and

volunteers placed socialized kittens in homes, and implemented TNR for the rest of the colony. In addition to stabilizing the population, TNR also reduced mating-related behaviors, such as fighting and roaming, making the cats less noticeable. Furthermore, the health of the cats also improved. By November 1997, seven years after the TNR program started, only six cats remained in the alley. The last cat from the colony died in 2007 at age 17.

Findings: TNR allows cats to live out happy, healthy lives in their outdoor home, eventually reducing colonies size.

## **TNR and Legislative Change Research**

### **Playing the Cards You're Dealt: Implementing Feline Lifesaving Programs and Practices Despite Restrictive Ordinance Provisions.**

Year: 2024

Location: St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana

Author(s): Kailey A Mauro and Peter J Wolf

#### **Summary:**

The impact of Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana's shelter's Live Release Rate (LRR) over eight years was analyzed and compared with the barriers imposed by local ordinances before they were amended. St. Tammany Parish's LRR increased from 26.4 to 95.4%, and euthanasia decreased from 71.1 to 3%.

While an amendment to the Parish's ordinances removed obstacles to maintain the colonies, it was not found to be as critical to the success of the program as community engagement and education.

Findings: Collaboration between caregivers and local agencies and elected officials is critical for successful community cat colony management and to turn around the local shelter's live release rates (LRR).

Citation: Mauro KA, Wolf PJ. Playing the Cards You're Dealt: Implementing Feline Lifesaving Programs and Practices Despite Restrictive Ordinance Provisions. JSMCAH. 2024;3(1)

# **TNR in Animal Shelters and Animal Control Research**

## **Guidance for management of free-roaming community cats: a bioeconomic analysis.**

Year: 2021

Location: Computer Model

Author(s): Valerie A Benka, John D Boone, Philip S Miller, Joyce R Briggs, Aaron M Anderson, Christopher Sloomaker, Margaret Slater, Julie K Levy, Felicia B Nutter, Stephen Zawistowski

### Summary:

Municipalities around the United States (and the world!) share the same concern: will implementing TNR mean higher costs? This study compares the estimated dollar-to-dollar breakdown of mainstream animal control approaches to community cats in realistic scenarios, utilizing data from over 2,000 shelters.

This study validates Alley Cat Allies' stance that TNR is not only the most humane approach, but also the most effective, in cost and beyond. Local governments and shelters should see TNR as a smart investment of taxpayer or donor dollars.

When compared side by side with other approaches that have proven ineffective over time, TNR stands out as the only approach that holistically addresses the needs of the community while prioritizing the compassionate treatment of community cats, setting up local agencies and caregivers for success.

Findings: TNR can be twice as cheap as removing cats from their outdoor homes and fosters community participation that drives costs down. It saves shelter space and resources for better purposes than housing unadoptable community cats or "euthanasia."

Citation: Benka VA, Boone JD, Miller PS, et al. Guidance for management of free-roaming community cats: a bioeconomic analysis. *J Feline Med Surg.* 2022;24(10):975-985. Doi:10.1177/1098612X211055685

## **Integrated Return-To-Field and Targeted Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return Programs Result in Reductions of Feline Intake and Euthanasia at Six Municipal Animal Shelters**

Year: 2019

Location: Albuquerque, New Mexico; San Antonio, Texas; Baltimore, Maryland; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Tucson, Arizona; Columbus, Georgia.

Author(s): Daniel D Spehar, Peter J Wolf

### Summary:

Community cat caregivers, when collaborating with their local shelters, prove to help two-fold: stabilizing and eventually reducing the number of community cats in a colony and lowering the intake and euthanasia rates in animal shelters. In this study, the

TNR programs of six US cities were studied over three years, and their intake, euthanasia, and return-to-field rates of cats, among other data, were studied.

In two of the cities, to effect the most change, the focus was on TNR for cats in “areas from which the highest frequency or most serious resident complaints were generated.” Other cities utilized varied community service-centered approaches where there was the most need or concern.

In total, a median decline of 32% of cat intake and 83% in cat euthanasia over three years was observed, with one city tracking a whopping 91% decline in cat euthanasia.

Findings: Collaboration between caregivers, TNR groups, and municipal shelters resulted in better outcomes for all cats, lowering shelters’ euthanasia rates and intake numbers so their resources were focused on better serving the community.

Citation: Spehar DD, Wolf PJ. Integrated return-to-field and targeted trap-neuter-vaccinate-return programs result in reductions of feline intake and euthanasia at six municipal animal shelters. *Front Vet Sci* 2019; 6: 77. DOI: 10.3389/fvets.2019.00077.

## A Long-Term Lens: Cumulative Impacts of Free-Roaming Cat Management Strategy and Intensity on Preventable Cat Mortalities

Year: 2019

Location: Computer Model

Author(s): John D Boone, Philip S Miller, Joyce R Briggs, Valerie A W Benka, Dennis F Lawler, Margaret Slater, Julie K Levy, Stephen Zawistowski

Summary:

Utilizing technologies modeling the flow and behavior of community cat colonies in real time, the rate at which TNR is implemented, and the outcomes—specifically, preventable deaths—is compared with outdated methods of animal control or doing nothing at all.

A focused approach to TNR proved 31 times more efficient in preventing the death of community cats than inaction in a projected 10-year span.

Low-rate TNR (where 25% of the cats are sterilized in a six-month period) showed better results than high-intensity killing efforts (where 50% of the cats are removed from the colony and killed in the same timeframe); evidencing TNR as not only a more compassionate approach, but also a more efficient use of manpower and resources.

Findings: When looking at long-term success in stabilizing community cat colonies, especially regarding deaths that could be prevented, TNR stands out as the best approach.

Citation: Boone JD, Miller PS, Briggs JR, et al. A Long-Term Lens: Cumulative Impacts of Free-Roaming Cat Management Strategy and Intensity on Preventable Cat

Mortalities. Front Vet Sci. 2019;6:238. Published 2019 Jul 26.  
Doi:10.3389/fvets.2019.00238

## Implementing Nonlethal Solutions for Free-Roaming Cat Management in a County in the Southeastern United States

Year: 2019

Location: Hillsborough County, FL

Author(s): Francis Hamilton

### Summary:

Three nonlethal approaches to community cats, “low-income spay/neuter vouchers; small- and large-scale trap, neuter, vaccinate, and return (TNVR); and return to field (RTF),” were successfully implemented in the public shelter of Hillsborough County, Florida. This paper states that the nonlethal solutions “assisted in achieving a 51% decrease in intake since 2007 and increased the live-release rate to 81.8% of cats taken in at the Pet Resources Center in 2017.”

Findings: Nonlethal approaches to community cat population management, including TNVR and a focus on spay and neuter, are effective in reducing both shelter intake and in-shelter killing of cats.

Citation: Francis Hamilton. “Implementing Nonlethal Solutions for Free-Roaming Cat Management in a County in the Southeastern United States” *Frontiers in Veterinary Science* 6 (2019): 259.

## Association between a shelter-neuter-return program and cat health at a large municipal animal shelter

Year: 2016

Location: San José, California

Author(s): Charlotte H Edinboro, Heather N Watson, Anne Fairbrother

### Summary:

Initiation of a Shelter-Neuter-Return (SNR) program decreased the number of cats admitted to the shelter, as well as the number that were killed. Resources to care for cats with Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) increased, and due to positive changes in the URI treatment protocol, fewer cats were euthanized for URI, and more cats were treated at lower cost with a shorter shelter stay.

OBJECTIVE To determine effects of a shelter-neuter-return (SNR) program on cat admissions and health at a large municipal animal shelter in Northern California.

ANIMALS 117,383 cats for which data were recorded in the San Jose Animal Care Center database between January 1, 2006, and December 31, 2013.

Findings: SNR programs help shelters save more cats.

Citation: Edinboro, Charlotte H, Watson, Heather N and Anne Fairbrother. "Association between a shelter-neuter-return program and cat health at a large municipal animal shelter" Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, 238, no. 3 (2016): 298-308.

## The effects of implementing a feral cat spay/neuter program in a Florida county animal control service

Year: 2002

Location: Orange County, Florida

Author(s): Kathy L Hughes, Margaret R Slater, Linda Haller

### Summary:

The authors analyzed data from a community cat spay and neuter program in which volunteers cared for colonies in Orange County, Florida. They also studied the population of the county in the six years before the program began, to compare it with the first six years of the program. They found that the number of calls to animal control about cats, and the number of cats killed by animal control decreased in the six years after these programs were initiated, even while the human population grew significantly. In addition, they reported that the morale of those involved improved, and the residents who participated in the program felt empowered to help community cats in their neighborhoods.

Findings: TNR reduces the number of calls to animal control, cats killed by animal control, and improves morale.

Citation: Hughes, Kathy L., Margaret R. Slater, and Linda Haller. "The Effects of Implementing a Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Program in a Florida County Animal Control Service." Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science 5 (2002): 285-289.

## **TNR and Community Cat Health Research**

### Behavioral Differences between Urban Feeding Groups of Neutered and Sexually Intact Free-Roaming Cats Following a Trap-Neuter-Return Procedure

Year: 2011

Location: Israel

Author(s): Hilit Finkler, Idit Gunther, Joseph Terkel

### Summary:

Researchers compared data from four community cat colonies: two that were cared for through Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), and two that were not. They found a reduction in yowling and fighting, behaviors that are associated particularly with mating,

in the colonies that had been spayed or neutered. Outdoor cats and communities are better able to coexist when these behaviors aren't present.

Findings: TNR virtually eliminates undesirable mating behaviors.

Citation: Finkler, Hilit, Idit Gunther, and Joseph Terkel. "Behavioral differences between urban feeding groups of neutered and sexually intact free-roaming cats following a trap-neuter-return procedure." *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 238, no. 9 (2011):1141-1149.

## The Impact of Anthropogenic Factors on the Behavior, Reproduction, Management and Welfare of Urban, Free-Roaming Cat Populations

Year: 2015

Location: Tel Aviv, Israel

Author(s): Hilit Finkler, Erez Hatna, Joseph Terkel

Summary:

The research in this article indicates that TNR and colony care improve cats' lives by reducing their stress levels. While looking at the correlation between the level of care provided by cat caregivers and the economic status of the area in which the cats lived, the authors observed that neutered male cats were less aggressive than intact males. By testing the levels of stress hormone in their hair, they confirmed the neutered cats' lower stress levels. They also found that spayed female cats living in well-maintained colonies experienced less stress than those living in colonies that received less care.

Findings: Being spayed, neutered, and living in well-maintained colonies lessens cats' stress.

Citation: Finkler, Hilit, Erez Hatna, and Joseph Terkel. "The impact of anthropogenic factors on the behavior, reproduction, management and welfare of urban, free-roaming cat populations." *Anthrozoös* 24, no. 1(2011):31-49.

## Effect of neutering on two groups of feral cats

Year: 1984

Location: Regent's Park, London, UK

Author(s): P F Neville, J Remfry

Summary:

Researchers studied two colonies in Regent's Park, London, to determine whether spaying or neutering had any negative effects on the social structure of the colony, or on individual cats. No negative health effects were observed, and the social bond between members of the colony strengthened after the cats were spayed or

neutered. Cats spent more time in groups, showed fewer aggressive behaviors toward one another, and fought less. During the course of the study, no new litters were born.

Findings: TNR has positive effects on the social structure of cat colonies.

Citation: Neville, P.F. and J. Remfry. "Effect of Neutering on Two Groups of Feral Cats." *The Veterinary Record* 114 (1984): 447-450.

## Body Condition of Feral Cats and the Effect of Neutering

Year: 2002

Location: Alachua County, FL

Author(s): Karen C. Scott, Julie K. Levy, Susan M. Newell, Shawn P. Gorman.

Summary:

This study examined the effects of spaying or neutering on community cat health by measuring the body conditions of cats upon trapping, and again one year later. The cats who were trapped initially were lean but not emaciated. 14 cats were retrapped one year after spaying or neutering, and they showed significant increases in weight and improvements in body condition. In addition, caregivers reported that the cats had a decreased tendency to roam after being spayed or neutered.

Findings: TNR improves weight and body condition of cats.

Citation: Scott, Karen C., Julie K. Levy, and Shawn P. Gorman. "Body Condition of Feral Cats and the Effect of Neutering." *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 5, no. 3 (2002): 203-213.

## **Campus Cat Program Research**

### Implementation of a feral cat management program on a university campus

Year: 2002

Location: College Station, Texas

Author(s): Kathy L Hughes, Margaret R Slater

Summary:

In the first year of a TNR program on the campus of Texas A&M University, 123 cats were trapped. In the second year, that number decreased to 35. In addition to that, only three kittens were found in the second year, and researchers determined that these were either lost or abandoned, as no litters or nursing mothers were seen that year. In just two years, 32 cats and kittens were adopted. Furthermore, there was a decrease in the number of calls about cats on college property.

Findings: TNR has proven to stabilize large colonies of community cats quickly.

Citation: Hughes, Kathy L. and Margaret R. Slater. "Implementation of a Feral Cat Management Program on a University Campus." Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science 5, no. 1 (2002): 15-28.

## Evaluation of the effect of a long-term trap-neuter-return and adoption program on a free-roaming cat population

Year: 2003

Location: University, Florida

Author(s): Julie K Levy, David W Gale, Leslie A Gale

### Summary:

This study tracked a TNR program on the University of Central Florida campus over the course of 11 years to determine how effective TNR was at stabilizing their community cat population. After just four years, no new kittens were born, and at the end of the study, the overall population of cats had decreased by 66%. Over 80% of the cats had been residents for more than six years, showing that TNR keeps colonies stable and healthy year after year.

Findings: On university campuses, TNR has proven to stabilize community cat populations in the short and long term.

Citation: Levy, Julie K., David W. Gale, and Leslie A. Gale. "Evaluation of the Effect of a Long-Term Trap-Neuter-Return and Adoption Program on a Free-Roaming Cat Population." Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association 222, no. 1 (2003): 42-46.

## Managing feral cats on a university's campuses: how many are there and is sterilization having an effect?

Year: 2011

Location: University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Author(s): Amanda L Jones, Colleen T Downs

### Summary:

The study provides a snapshot of community cat colonies at eight sites across five campuses of a South African university. These colonies had different levels of sterilization and colony management. The researchers provide projections as to what would happen to the population over the course of five years, depending on the percentage of the cats who were spayed or neutered. If none were spayed or neutered, the population would double. If 100% were spayed or neutered, the population would be cut in half. The population would stabilize with 55% spayed or neutered. As this research demonstrates, it is not necessary to have 75% or more cats spayed or neutered to have an effect on a population of community cats.

Findings: Even if you can't spay or neuter every community cat right away, you can still make a difference.

Citation: Jones, A. and C. Downs. "Managing feral cats on a university's campuses: How many are there and is sterilization having an effect?" *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 14 no. 4 (2011): 304-320.

## **TNR and the Vacuum Effect Research**

### Simulating free-roaming cat population management options in open demographic environments.

Year: 2014

Location: Computer Model

Author(s): Philip S Miller, John D Boone, Joyce R Briggs, Dennis F Lawler, Julie K Levy, Felicia B Nutter, Margaret Slater, Stephen Zawistowsky

Summary:

One of the most thorough and realistic models of the impact of TNR as a means of approaching community cat colonies to date.

This study considers the realities of how colonies shift in urban and rural landscapes and is the first to include the reality of pet abandonment.

A systemic and aggressive approach to TNR (~40% of the colony per six-month period), complemented with emergent technology such as temporary contraception, proves to be the most humane and effective method to stabilize community cat colonies.

Findings: Short- and long-term impact on colony reduction is achieved by TNRing 40% of the colony's unaltered cats within a six-month period.

Citation: Miller PS, Boone JD, Briggs JR, et al. Simulating free-roaming cat population management options in open demographic environments. *PLoS One*. 2014;9(11):e113553. Published 2014 Nov 26. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0113553

### Advocates Report Success with Trap, Neuter, Return Approach to Stray Cats

Year: 2009

Location: Newburyport, Massachusetts

Author(s): Associated Press

Summary:

More than 300 community cats lived along the Merrimack River in Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1990. Thirty cats were killed by a private trapping company commissioned by the city, but within two years, 30 new cats joined the colony. This is a natural phenomenon known as the "vacuum effect." □ When cats are removed from an

area, other cats move in to take advantage of the newly available resources. In 1992, the Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society started a TNR program that stabilized the colony and resulted in a population decline. Zorro, the last remaining cat from the colony, passed away in 2009 at age 16. Natural attrition is the normal evolution of TNR.

Findings: TNR is the only effective method for stabilizing and reducing community cat colonies, even for large, long-standing colonies.

Citation: "Advocates report success with trap, neuter, return approach to stray cats." LA Times N.p. 29 Sept. 2009. Web. 9 Jan. 2014.

# **Show Your Soft Side\_SB 750\_Trap-Neuter-Return Poli**

Uploaded by: Caroline Griffin

Position: FWA

## Senate Bill 750

**TO:** Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**DATE:** March 6, 2026

**FROM:** Caroline A. Griffin, Esquire *cag*

**RE:** **SB 750 – Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats – Requirements and Restrictions (Ash’s Law)**

**POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT**

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Committee, my name is Caroline A. Griffin and I reside in Baltimore. I am the co-founder of the non-profit **Show Your Soft Side (SYSS)**, a national anti-cruelty campaign that works with professional athletes and celebrities nationwide to demonstrate that compassion to animals is a strength. SYSS supports SB 750 with the amendment proposed by PAWS (Professional Animal Workers of Maryland) that provides clarifying language to ensure the safety of cats, and would oppose any amendment that removes the prohibition against registries.

SB 750 is a life-saving measure that would reduce intake and euthanasia at Maryland animal shelters, ultimately reducing expenses on taxpayers. Baltimore has had regulations governing trap-neuter-return (TNR) since 2009, which provide that TNR is the preferred method of managing community cat populations. BARCS Animal Shelter, Maryland’s largest shelter, has a robust community cat program, which works with community cat caregivers to safely reduce the community cat population and protect public health through TNR. Since the inception of the program in 2014, feline euthanasia has decreased by 75% and cat intake has decreased by nearly 50%.

Despite these successes, much work remains to be done, as there are an estimated 85,000 free-roaming cats in Baltimore, according to BARCS. SYSS hosts TNR clinics and has a Street Kitty Medical Fund (SKMF) program, which provides urgent medical care to Baltimore’s sick and injured community cats. Every unaltered cat treated through the SKMF program is also sterilized and returned to its colony. SYSS has seen an increase in friendly cats through this program, animals who were likely abandoned by their owners. SYSS works with rescue partners to rehome these socialized cats who are ill-suited to return to the colonies where they were found.

Collectively, these initiatives will reduce the number of free-roaming cats over time, prevent cats from entering shelters, prevent unnecessary euthanasia, protect cats from illness and disease, and support citizens who care for these animals.

I urge the Committee to issue a favorable report. Thank you.

Caroline A. Griffin  
[cag@carolineagriffin.com](mailto:cag@carolineagriffin.com)

# **SB0750 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katie Haines

Position: FWA



3/5/2026

Dear Honorable Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee,

My name is Katie Haines, and I am the Assistant Director of Community Care and Advocacy at the Maryland SPCA. I am here to urge a speedy and favorable report on SB 0750 with one amendment to LINE 19 (4) UNLESS VETERINARY CARE IS REQUIRED **OR DEEMED INADVISABLE BECAUSE CONDITIONS IN THE ORIGINAL LOCATION POSE A DIRECT THREAT TO CATS' LIVES.**

In 2025 alone, the Maryland SPCA took in 1,071 kittens and 1,352 adult cats. We regularly take in what we call "mega transports" of kittens from other counties to provide some relief to those shelters that experience an even greater volume of kitten and cat intake. Community cat caretakers have a big impact on shelters; By TNR'ing community cats, they keep thousands of cats and kittens from entering overburdened animal shelters. From the standpoint of Maryland animal shelters already operating at or beyond capacity, suggestion from out of state entities that feral or community cats should be removed from their outdoor environments and housed indoors - within our shelters - is both impractical and inhumane. Animal shelters across Maryland are struggling with limited space, staffing shortages, and high intake numbers. Introducing large numbers of healthy community cats into already full facilities would inevitably lead to overcrowding, increased stress and illness among shelter animals, and higher euthanasia rates -precisely the outcomes we strive to prevent.

Shelter Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) programs reduce intake pressure on shelters by humanely managing outdoor cat populations where they live, rather than funneling them into systems that are not built to support them long-term. Moreover, TNR has been used for decades with consistently positive outcomes, including reduced population size, fewer nuisance behaviors, and improved overall community coexistence. While it is true that life outdoors has risks, the alternatives proposed in our house hearing of removing cats from their environment unless idealized conditions can be met is simply not attainable in real-world sheltering and are also inhumane for feral cats. Communities that use TNR responsibly see declining feral cat numbers without overwhelming shelters or subjecting healthy cats to unnecessary confinement or euthanasia.

Sincerely,

**Katie Haines**

Assistant Director of Community Care & Advocacy

Maryland SPCA





# **Local Government - Trap- Neuter- Return Policies f**

Uploaded by: Lisa Radov

Position: FWA



# MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

PO Box 10411  
BALTIMORE, MD 21209

March 10, 2026

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Lisa Radov, President and Chair, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.

Re: Local Government – Trap - Neuter- Return Policies for Community Cats – Requirements and Restrictions (Ash's Law) – SB 750 – Favorable with the Professional Animal Workers of Maryland (PAWS) Amendment

Chair Feldman, Vice- Chair Kagan, members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chair of Maryland Votes for Animals. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across Maryland, I respectfully request that the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee vote favorably for Local Government – Trap - Neuter- Return Policies for Community Cats – Requirements and Restrictions (Ash's Law) – SB 750 – Favorable with the Professional Animal Workers of Maryland (PAWS) Amendment.

This bill ensures statewide consistency by preempting local ordinances that prohibit or restrict Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), while still allowing reasonable regulations that protect public health and safety.

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) is a humane, effective, and evidence-based method for stabilizing and reducing community cat populations. In a TNR program, community cats are humanely trapped using box or drop traps, transported to a veterinarian to be spayed or neutered and vaccinated, ear-tipped (the universal sign that a cat has been sterilized and vaccinated), and then returned to their outdoor home. TNR works because it addresses the root cause of overpopulation: uncontrolled breeding. Once sterilized, cats can no longer reproduce, and colony sizes naturally decline over time.

## **Why TNR Matters:**

### **Population Stabilization and Long-Term Reduction**

TNR immediately halts reproduction within a colony and gradually reduces its size, breaking the endless cycle of breeding that overwhelms shelters and communities.

### **Healthier Cats and Safer Communities**

Sterilized cats are healthier, with lower risks of certain cancers and infections. They fight less, roam less, and are vaccinated against rabies and other diseases—improving public health and safety.

### **Fewer Nuisance Complaints**

Neutered and spayed cats are quieter, spray less, and engage in fewer territorial disputes, reducing neighborhood disturbances.

### **Reduced Shelter Intake and Euthanasia**

By preventing the birth of unwanted litters, TNR reduces the number of cats entering shelters—saving taxpayer dollars and reducing euthanasia.

### **Prevention of the “Vacuum Effect”**

Attempts to remove or exterminate community cats are ineffective. When cats are removed, new unsterilized cats move in to access available resources, restarting the cycle. TNR prevents this by maintaining a stable, managed colony that deters new arrivals.

### **Natural Rodent Control**

Managed cat colonies provide ongoing rodent control, benefiting neighborhoods and businesses.

In order to protect the safety of the TNR cats, we are requesting the following amendment to the bill regarding the return of the TNR cats: LINE 19 (4) UNLESS VETERINARY CARE IS REQUIRED OR THE AREA HAS BEEN DEEMED UNSAFE FOR RETURN. Adding this language would address concerns about situations where returning cats to the areas they came from would be detrimental to their health and safety where the location itself would be dangerous to return cats due to hazards or if there have been threats of harm to the animals from property owners in the area. While these situations are not the norm, they happen enough that this has been brought up as a concern for animal control officers and shelters. Without this caveat this bill could cause unintended consequences of a shelter being in violation of their responsibility to protect the health and safety of cat(s).

Trap-Neuter-Return is widely recognized as the most humane and effective approach to managing free-roaming cat populations. By focusing on prevention rather than removal, TNR protects public health, reduces costs, improves animal welfare, and creates lasting community stability. **This bill supports a practical, compassionate solution—one that benefits communities, shelters, taxpayers, and the cats themselves.**

In closing, I want to thank Senator Lewis Young for sponsoring SB 750 and for working on clarifying language that protects community cats. I respectfully ask the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 750 with the PAWS amendment.

# **SB0750 Local government Trap-neuter-return Policie**

Uploaded by: Patty Crankshaw-Quimby

Position: FWA



Maryland's Association of Animal Care and Control Agencies and Humane Societies  
PO Box 1143  
Easton, Maryland 21601

---

**SB0750 Local Government - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats - Requirements and Restrictions (Ash's Law)**

**Maryland House of Delegates Environment and Transportation Committee**

**March 6, 2026**

**Dear Honorable Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the committee:**

Professional Animal Workers of Maryland, the state organization of animal control agencies and humane societies, supports SB0750 with one amendment and encourages a favorable and speedy report with the inclusion of this change.

Many shelters and animal control authorities across the state have been moving in the direction of Trap Neuter Return, whether having formal programs themselves or working behind the scenes with other organizations because there is not an authorized pathway for feral/community cat population management. Why? Because it works. We have learned that trapping and euthanizing otherwise healthy cats is inhumane, fiscally irresponsible and does not solve the problem. Cats will return to the area and continue to reproduce. Overwhelmingly, *healthy feline euthanasia* within Maryland animal shelters is comprised of feral/community cats from authorities that do not currently have a program nor work with other nonprofit organizations. One of the main reasons some agencies are not participating in these programs is the law does not explicitly give them permission to do so.

We request the addition of language we feel is imperative for our support of this bill which addresses the safety of the animals in question. There are those times where returning cats to the areas they came from would be detrimental to their health and safety. Whether it is that the location itself is dangerous or there have been threats of harm to the animals from property owners in the area. These situations are not the norm, but they do happen enough that this is a concern for officers and shelters alike. Without this caveat this bill could cause unintended consequences of a shelter being in violation to protect the health and safety of a cat(s). We ask the following addition to be considered: LINE 19 (4) UNLESS VETERINARY CARE IS REQUIRED **OR DEEMED INADVISABLE BECAUSE CONDITIONS IN THE ORIGINAL LOCATION POSE A DIRECT THREAT TO CATS' LIVES.**

Professional Animal Workers of Maryland adamantly oppose the language being requested by Maryland Association of Counties requiring a registry for citizens performing TNR in our communities. Unfortunately, we were not included in these discussions with MACO, who represents the counties and agencies requesting this addition. There is a great deal of ambiguity in the amendment without the Who, what, and why being defined.

Overwhelmingly our organization membership opposes the addition of a registry-as we understand it- due to our concerns of unintended consequences that will wholly usurp the intent of the bill; encouraging the community, agencies, and organizations to embrace and support TNR, remove the roadblocks to these programs and hold our citizens harmless for supporting these animals. By creating a registry as we are understanding their request, there will be citizens who will decide they are not going through this process, turning their backs on the problem. This is not conjecture, this is fact. Thus, leaving more cats unattended to, unaltered and unvaccinated, allowing the problems which we have worked on for years to curtail to rebound.

Additionally, there are some points to be addressed when we are discussing a registry:

- 1- How is the registry enforced?

- 2- Who will they register with? MDA? Local Animal Control? County or town offices?
- 3- What sort of registration are we speaking of?
  - a. An annual registration?
  - b. A one-time registration?
  - c. Will there be a fee?
- 4- What information are they asked to capture? Is this a list which each organization who facilitates TNR simply tracks or is this a registration form each person who works with TNR cats must complete?
- 5- Does the caregiver have an obligation to notify any other organization that they work with that they are registered before they can receive food, TNR services, other medical attention?
- 6- Are organizations (many of which are fully private and not under any government contract or agreement) now required to ensure these caregivers are registered?
- 7- Who will pay for the expense of registry creation, maintenance, and management?

Professional Animal Workers of Maryland WANTS this bill; however, we will be unable to support if a registry is included as it will create unintended consequences and undue burden on the caregivers and the organizations providing TNR services in Maryland.

This bill as written with the single inclusion of protection for the animals will codify the treatment of feral/community cats within Maryland not only permitting but requiring authorities across the state to continue their progress in the humane treatment of feral/community cats and a more humane Maryland overall. With this we ask for a favorable report with amendments on SB0750.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

***Patty Crankshaw-Quimby, CAWA***

Executive Director/Chief Animal Control Officer: Talbot Humane/ Talbot County Animal Control

President: Professional Animal Workers of Maryland

**SB 750 - MoCo - MCOAS\_Morningstar\_FWA (GA 26).pdf**

Uploaded by: Sara Morningstar

Position: FWA



# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

---

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

---

**SB 750**

**DATE: March 10, 2026**

**SPONSOR: Senators Lewis Young, Kramer, and West**

**ASSIGNED TO: Education, Energy, and the Environment**

**CONTACT PERSON: Sara Morningstar (Sara.Morningstar@montgomerycountymd.gov)**

**POSITION: Support With Amendments (Montgomery County Office of Animal Services)**

---

### **Local Government – Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats – Requirements and Restrictions (Ash’s Law)**

The Montgomery County Office of Animal Services supports Senate Bill 750 with the adoption of several critical amendments which we believe will improve the bill’s objectives to humanely manage Maryland’s community cat population.

Montgomery County is a pioneer of humane, progressive animal management that Ash’s Law seeks to champion. With a live release rate for cats that consistently exceeds 95%, one of the highest in the State, the County’s record proves that non-lethal strategies work. This has been achieved not through a single, rigid policy, but through a sophisticated, multi-faceted approach that includes robust partnerships with nonprofit Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) organizations and the County’s own carefully managed Return to Field (RTF) program.

It is from this position of shared goals and proven success that Montgomery County Office of Animal Services submits this statement. Senate Bill 750 has the potential to be a landmark piece of legislation. However, in its current form, the bill’s rigid, one-size-fits-all mandate would dismantle the very programs that make our County a model for the State. It replaces professional discretion with a blunt instrument, creates serious legal liabilities for the citizens it aims to help, and ignores the complex realities that our officers face every day.

With the following suggested amendments, Montgomery County Office of Animal Services respectfully believes that Ash’s Law could not only be the first law of its kind in the nation but also the most effective and legally sound:

**1. Preserve the Professional Discretion that Saves Lives.**

- **The Problem:** The bill’s mandate to return every healthy ear-tipped cat to its original location is dangerously oversimplified. Taking away agency discretion will

place animal safety at risk, as it is not reasonable to assume all animals or the environment they come from is an appropriate placement. Our RTF program empowers our trained staff to assess each cat and its unique circumstances to determine the best, most humane outcome. This may be a return to its original colony, but it could also be placement in a new home, or relocation as a “working cat” in a barn environment through our successful barn cat program. This discretion is critical. Should we return a cat to a dilapidated property that is about to be demolished? To a hoarding situation where the caregiver is overwhelmed? To a territory where it is being attacked by other animals? The current bill would force our officers to do just that, turning a humane intention into a death sentence.

- **Amendment:** Amend the preemption clause to create a “gold standard” provision, allowing local jurisdictions with established, high-performing animal management programs to maintain the operational flexibility and professional discretion needed to ensure the best outcome for each individual animal.

## 2. Protect Caregivers from Unintended Criminal Liability.

- **The Problem:** As written, the bill creates a legal trap for the compassionate citizens it aims to protect. While it rightly exempts caregivers from the abandonment statute, it fails to address the far more serious conflict with Maryland’s primary animal cruelty and neglect law (Criminal Law § 10-604). That statute requires anyone with “charge or custody” of an animal to provide “necessary veterinary care” and shelter. Consider the elderly resident on a fixed income who feeds a community cat daily. If that cat develops a tooth abscess or a respiratory infection, has that resident now assumed “custody” and become criminally liable for failing to provide veterinary care they cannot afford? This legal ambiguity could have a chilling effect, forcing well-meaning residents to stop providing care for fear of prosecution.
- **Amendment:** Amend the bill to provide an explicit and targeted exemption for community cat caregivers from the “adequate care” provisions of the statute for abuse of neglect of an animal (Criminal Law § 10-604) when they are acting in accordance with an authorized TNR program. We believe that this is the single most critical amendment needed to give caregivers the legal certainty they deserve.

## 3. Create a Clear, Workable Definition of a “Community Cat.”

- **The Problem:** The bill fails to draw a clear line between a truly unowned community cat and a lost or roaming owned pet. Imagine an Animal Services Officer finding a friendly, ear-tipped cat. Is it a community cat that must be returned to the street under the bill’s mandate? Or is it a beloved family pet that was adopted after being ear-tipped, and whose frantic family is searching for it? The bill provides no mechanism for the officer to make this distinction, creating operational chaos and risking tragic outcomes where lost pets are not reunited with their families.
- **Amendment:** Amend the bill to create a clear, rebuttable legal presumption that a cat found outdoors without a collar, microchip, or other form of identification is a community cat. This provides a clear, objective standard for officers in the field while still allowing for an owned pet to be identified and returned home.

Montgomery County is proof that the vision behind Ash's Law is achievable. The County has done it, and the County's Office of Animal Services urges the Committee to consider adopting the suggested amendments that could transform the bill from a well-intentioned effort into a powerful, effective, and legally sound law that will serve as a model for the nation. The Montgomery County Office of Animal Services is developing specific amendment language that will be submitted to the Committee shortly.

# **SB750 Humane World FWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Stacey Volodin

Position: FWA



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

**March 10, 2026**

**SB 0750, Local Government - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats -  
Requirements and Restrictions (Ash's Law)**

**FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT**

On behalf of Humane World for Animals, formerly the Humane Society of the United States, and our supporters across Maryland, we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB750, Local Government - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats - Requirements and Restrictions (Ash's Law). We do request one amendment be made and appreciate the sponsor and Alley Cat Allies continued discussions to ensure safe return of our community cats.

SB750 provides essential protection for both community cats and the residents who work tirelessly to humanely manage their populations. By clarifying that trap-neuter-return (TNR) activities do not constitute "abandonment," the bill removes a significant barrier to effective, science-based population control. States including South Dakota, Texas, and Rhode Island have enacted similar clarifications in recent years.

SB750 also establishes TNR as the preferred disposition of an impounded community cat, which will provide local governments with confidence in implementing such programs. Maryland already supports TNR statewide as the Maryland Department of Agriculture Spay and Neuter Grants Program funds local organizations to provide free or low-cost spay/neuter services, targeting free-roaming cats and TNR programs as well as low-income residents.

Across Maryland, communities seeking to reduce the number of unowned cats entering municipal and private shelters rely on TNR. This approach not only improves outcomes for the cats themselves but also prevents countless litters from being born outdoors. TNR reduces nuisance behaviors associated with mating, which are often the source of resident complaints. Vaccinating free roaming cats against rabies and other common feline diseases helps prevent outbreaks and reduces risks to public health. Research consistently shows that TNR stabilizes, reduces, and can ultimately eliminate free roaming cat populations, making it an indispensable tool for animal welfare professionals.

Because of the high number of free roaming cats, municipal shelters and animal control agencies depend on residents' participation in trapping efforts. Volunteers or residents often capture cats, transport them for veterinary care, and return them to their outdoor homes. In many cases, the person who traps and transports a cat is not the same person who provides ongoing care. Experienced TNR volunteers frequently assist caregivers who feed cats but cannot manage transportation or veterinary appointments. For this reason, the act of returning a cat should not be considered abandonment even when the person doing so will not be the cat's long-term caretaker.



1255 23<sup>rd</sup> St. NW, Suite 450

Washington, DC 20037

202-452-1100

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

However, uncertainty about whether TNR might technically violate state abandonment laws has led some local governments to hesitate in adopting policies that support these programs. This ambiguity limits their ability to address cat populations and community concerns effectively. The American Bar Association, in a 2017 resolution supporting TNR, emphasized that abandonment laws should not be interpreted in ways that prevent the return of cats. The ABA specifically recommended that “for clarity, the abandonment law should expressly exempt TNR ‘return’ of ear tipped community cats.” SB 0750 provides the clarity local officials need to confidently implement humane, evidence-based strategies.

The American Bar Association, the National Animal Care and Control Association, the Feline Veterinary Medical Association are just some of the professional organizations supporting TNR and encouraging the adoption of policies that make it the preferred management strategy for free-roaming community cats. SB 0750 provides guidelines for counties and municipalities for authorizing TNR and providing opportunities for cats cared for in a community are able to be returned to that community if they should be impounded at shelter. These simple requirements can prevent the unnecessary euthanasia of many community cats who are often not well-suited to traditional adoption into homes. In turn, this can reduce stress on shelter staff, who make career choices based on a desire to help animals not harm them, thus reducing staff turnover and providing more stability in local governments’ ability to provide sustainable animal welfare services.

Effective public policy encourages best practices rather than creating obstacles for residents who want to help. High sterilization rates are essential to meaningfully reduce cat overpopulation. Maryland needs as many residents as possible engaged in TNR efforts, and removing legal uncertainty is critical to achieving that goal. The state already supports TNR through the state spay and neuter grant program, thus making it the preferred tactic for managing community cats statewide is a natural progression. With the passage of SB 0750, Maryland can be a leader in animal welfare, making community members feel empowered, not threatened with prosecution, when taking responsible, compassionate action to reduce cat overpopulation and protect public health.

Humane World for Animals does request the acceptance of an amendment requested by the Professional Animal Workers of Maryland (PAWS) – the trade organization of county animal controls and shelters representing entities in ninety-six percent of Maryland counties. Please refer to PAWS written and oral testimony.

Humane World also requests that the committee strongly oppose any amendment that removes the prohibition on a county requiring or making optional a registry for community cat caregivers, TNR entities, or similar. We have seen efforts in Maryland as recently as August of 2025 to require a registry in a county that was not moved after outcry from the caregiver community. Please see the attached for discussion of why registries serve as a disincentive and lessen the impactful work being done by caregivers.



1255 23<sup>rd</sup> St. NW, Suite 450

Washington, DC 20037

202-452-1100

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

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to vote in favor of SB750 with amendment to reflect that there are occasions when returning a community cat to a location that may be deemed unsafe or not in the best interest of the cat, as reflected in PAWS testimony.

**Stacey Volodin**

Maryland State Director  
Humane World for Animals  
[svolodin@humaneworld.org](mailto:svolodin@humaneworld.org)

**SB0750 TNR MD-IWLA comment letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cherie Aker

Position: UNF



Maryland Division  
The Izaak Walton League of America  
707 Conservation Lane  
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878-2983

**DATE:** March 10, 2026

**TO:** Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice-Chair, Education Energy, and the Environment

**RE:** Oppose MD SB 750 - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats – Requirements and Restrictions

Honorable Senators Feldman and Kagan:

On behalf of the Maryland Division-Izaak Walton League (MD-IWLA), I am asking you to oppose MD SB 750 - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats – Requirements and Restrictions. This bill would create a category statewide called ‘community cats’ which would allow unhoused cats to be Trapped, Neutered and then Returned throughout the state. The State would basically be supporting an invasive species to destroy our native wildlife.

Feral cats are an invasive species, brought to North America by the European colonists. The USDA in recognition of these issues developed a Wildlife Damage Management Technical Series publication on feral cats in 2021 (<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/free-ranging-and-feral-cats.pdf>). “Many studies have shown that cats are a major, if not the greatest, source of mortality to native birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians (Lepczyk et al. 2003; Beckerman et al. 2007; Van Heezik 2010; Lloyd et al. 2013; Loss et al. 2013 and 2015; Woinarski et al. 2017 and 2018; Li et al. 2021). While loss of habitat is the primary cause of species extinctions, cats have contributed to the extinction of at least 63 species in the wild around the world (Doherty et al. 2016). In addition to direct predation, feral cats impact species survival through nest failure, injury, and behavioral changes, such as reduced feeding opportunities due to harassment (Beckerman et al. 2007; Bonnington et al. 2013).”

The Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programs have been shown time and again not to reduce the number of feral cats, as stated by numerous sources including the Animal Humane Society. “To decrease a cat population using TNR, you must sterilize and return at least 70% of the cats – and even then, small populations are rarely eradicated altogether.” (<https://www.animalhumanesociety.org/resource/real-impacts-trap-neuter-return>). The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) admits that TNR doesn’t work. “On the contrary, it actually encourages more people to abandon their cats because they think the animals will be cared for. The food set out for “managed” colonies also attracts more cats (as well as wildlife, including rabies-vector species).” (<https://www.peta.org/features/does-tnr-really-save-cats/>).

These cats then continue to prey upon small birds, mammals, and other native wildlife. The cats frequently lead short, brutal lives. They should be inside loving homes, not left outside to fend for themselves.

Chartered in 1945, the MD-IWLA ([www.marylandiwla.org](http://www.marylandiwla.org)) includes over 4,300 avid anglers, hunters, and outdoor sports enthusiasts across Maryland who are committed to the wise stewardship of our soil, air, woods, waters, and wildlife. Please support continued wise stewardship and vote NO on SB 750.

Sincerely,

Curt Howard, President  
Maryland Division-Izaak Walton League of America

**SB0750-EEE\_MACo\_OPP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko

Position: UNF



## Senate Bill 750

### *Local Government - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats - Requirements and Restrictions (Ash's Law)*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Committee

Date: March 10, 2026

From: Karrington Anderson and Dominic Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 750 as drafted. While counties recognize and often support humane management strategies for community cat populations, this bill represents a preemption of local authority and would disrupt well-established local programs that are tailored to community needs.

Under the bill, a local law establishing a Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) policy may not require any registration or certification process for a community cat caregiver. SB 750 also expressly supersedes and preempts any local law, ordinance, policy, or regulation that restricts or prohibits TNR practices.

Counties across Maryland have developed working TNR programs in collaboration with local shelters, animal control agencies, and nonprofit partners. These programs reflect local conditions, public health considerations, and community expectations. From an administrative perspective, having a registry allows local governments to track program effectiveness, allocate limited resources more efficiently, and demonstrate compliance with public health obligations. When designed as a low-barrier, nonpunitive process, registration can support coordination without undermining the goals of TNR. SB 750 would prohibit such registration requirements, removing a key accountability and public health tool that counties may rely on.

Local governments are best positioned to balance animal welfare, public health, nuisance complaints, and environmental impacts in their communities. MACo appreciates the intent to promote humane community cat management and is actively working with bill sponsors and advocates to address county concerns. Counties are aligned with recognizing TNR as an effective strategy in many contexts. However, any statewide framework should preserve reasonable local authority to design, administer, and oversee programs that meet community-specific needs.

If the Committee is persuaded that the mandates in SB 750 are necessary, MACo would offer that the following amendment language could lessen these county concerns:

On page 3, in line 8, strike "NOT", and in line 28, strike "OR RESTRICTS".

MACo respectfully urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report on SB 750 as drafted and looks forward to continued collaboration to craft a more balanced approach.

# **PETA on TNR.pdf**

Uploaded by: Gail Mackiernan

Position: UNF

## PETA STATEMENT ON TNR

<https://www.peta.org/features/does-tnr-really-save-cats/>

The average life expectancy of an outdoor cat is just 1 to 5 years, compared to 12 to 20 years for a cat kept indoors. So when people turn cats loose, they aren't doing them any favors. Some worry that animals sent to shelters may be euthanized, but the very definition of *euthanasia* is "good death." [On the streets](#), cats' deaths are inevitably *bad*, filled with pain and suffering. They die slowly of untreated illness, injury, infection, dehydration, or exposure. They get hit by cars, attacked by predators (including cruel humans), poisoned, or shot or meet other terrible fates.

Moreover, not all TNR'd cats are feral—many are quite tame. Not only are such cats adoptable, they may also be someone's lost companion. Refraining from taking these animals to shelters means that they lose their best chance of being reclaimed by their guardians—who may be frantically searching for them—or finding another safe, loving indoor home. In addition to the risks associated with turning cats loose to fend for themselves, there also the [dangers that the cats themselves pose to native wildlife](#), whose welfare must be taken into account by anyone who professes to be an "animal lover." Cats are the leading cause of human-related bird deaths, [killing as many as 3.7 billion birds in the U.S. every year](#). Even "ferals" (who are genetically identical to "house cats") are domesticated animals—they're native to nowhere and therefore invasive everywhere. In fact, cats are considered [the most deadly invasive species in the world](#), responsible or partly responsible for the extinction of more than 60 species.

Moreover, not all TNR'd cats are feral—many are quite tame. Not only are such cats adoptable, they may also be someone's lost companion. Refraining from taking these animals to shelters means that they lose their best chance of being reclaimed by their guardians—who may be frantically searching for them—or finding another safe, loving indoor home. In addition to the risks associated with turning cats loose to fend for themselves, there also the [dangers that the cats themselves pose to native wildlife](#), whose welfare must be taken into account by anyone who professes to be an "animal lover." Cats are the leading cause of human-related bird deaths, [killing as many as 3.7 billion birds in the U.S. every year](#). Even "ferals" (who are genetically identical to "house cats") are domesticated animals—they're native to nowhere and therefore invasive everywhere. In fact, cats are considered [the most deadly invasive species in the world](#), responsible or partly responsible for the extinction of more than 60 species.

The bottom line is that TNR makes *humans*—not cats and certainly not wildlife—feel better. Veterinarian and syndicated animal-advice columnist Dr. Michael W. Fox doesn't mince words when he says that it's "unconscionable" to abandon cats who are considered "unadoptable" and calls TNR a "blight" on the animal-sheltering community. "It is time to reevaluate the 'no-kill' policies that incentivize these terrible outcomes for cats and wildlife, and it is time to work for responsible solutions," he says.

Instead of abandoning cats, we must address feline homelessness at its roots by requiring that all cats be [spayed or neutered](#), vaccinated, licensed, microchipped, and [kept indoors](#). If your local shelter is considering adopting a policy of refusing to admit cats or abandoning them outdoors in order to avoid including them on their annual intake and outcome statistics, remind shelter officials that their top priority should be animal welfare and safety—not deceptive, feel-good statistics.

**Gregg Petersen SB0750Testimony 3 6 26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Gregg Petersen

Position: UNF

March 6, 2026

Testimony to the esteemed members of the Maryland Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I am a Maryland resident and urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 0750, which would legalize widespread abandonment of domestic cats regardless of their health or temperament, putting both cats and wildlife at grave risk while increasing their threat to public health. **This legislation is BAD for outdoor cats, BAD for small animals and our ecosystems, and BAD for public health.** Since all counties in Maryland except Howard County have TNR policies, this appears to be an end run by well-intended but imbalanced outdoor cat advocates to override a prudent decision made 2 years ago by Howard County not to adopt TNR as it was written. Legislation abounds to place limits on human trespass and leash laws for dogs for instance, but outdoor cat advocates expect “their cats” to have no such limits...to be given a free pass from any constraints despite the consequences of letting outdoor cats roam.

This bill proposes not only to leave domestic cats outdoors to fend for themselves under the guise of trap, neuter, and release (TNR), but seeks to limit local government’s ability to oversee such operations and effectively address resident complaints. The **trap, neuter, and vaccinate** aspects of TNR are **good** for outdoor cats and public health. The problem comes when the animals are **released** back outside. We should no more release neutered, vaccinated feral cats outside than we release our big cats from the local zoo. The only difference here being that because big cats threaten humans, they are contained and the small cats do not threaten us, so they are given a free pass. We contain our non-native big cats humanely and should do the same thing with small cats. More later in my testimony about how that is already being done by people that REALLY care about outdoor cats.

There is a lot to like about cats! They are cute, cuddly adorable **domestic** pets. I love indoor cats, but outdoor cats, cats released outside, are a non-native, invasive, highly efficient predator that kills native small animals with impunity. Some statistics place the annual death toll of ground birds due to outdoor cat predation in North America at somewhere between **2.5 to 3 billion** birds a year! Outdoor cats not only kill for food; they also do it for sport--it is part of their nature. In addition, the lives of the outdoor cats are not great either. Outdoor cats live a brutal, unhealthy shorter existence.

In Howard County, we don’t just talk about protecting outdoor cats, we have acted. Last year, our Howard County bird club began donating \$5000 annually to the Howard County animal shelter to facilitate **indoor** cat adoptions and offers monetary assistance to Howard County residents to build catios (attached or unattached containment enclosures) for outdoor cats to **protect** the cats that may not be adoptable in an enclosure and while keeping them from ruthlessly killing our small, native animals. We have directly contacted leading local outdoor cat advocates in Howard County and publicized our catio offer through the leading local cat organization: Laurel Cats.

HB 0912 also lacks any provisions to protect the rights of private property owners, many of whom don't want cats trespassing. Frustrated property owners commonly take matters into their own hands when they cannot get help, often poisoning, shooting, or otherwise harming and cruelly killing cats.

This bill endangers public health and safety. Every cat released incrementally increases public health risk from *Toxoplasmosis gondi* from feces in sand for instance, perhaps play areas for our children and permanent exposure for them, their parents and caretakers. For the cats, they are subject to cat AIDS they cannot overcome and many other maladies. Ultimately, outdoor cat caretakers can't always keep up with vaccinations in their very loosely managed "cat communities." Irresponsible people drop their unwanted cats off in these communities. In August '24 in Baltimore, in an "unmanaged" cat community, one such unvaccinated cat exposed up to [309 people to rabies](#). The CDC report link is provided.

If you love cats and want to help outdoor cats, please DO NOT legislate their release after trapping, neutering and vaccination---pass a bill to require or fund catios or cat fences for released outdoor cats and require that in those confines that those that claim to care for outdoor cats REALLY take care of them beyond putting out a bowl of food that the cats will have to fight other cats and animals to consume when they do not catch live prey.

Please let's show some RESPONSIBLE balance here: protect the cats, protect small animals, protect public health, and respect the interests of ALL property owners in the state of Maryland.

**Please vote NO on SB 0750.**

Respectfully submitted,

Gregg Petersen

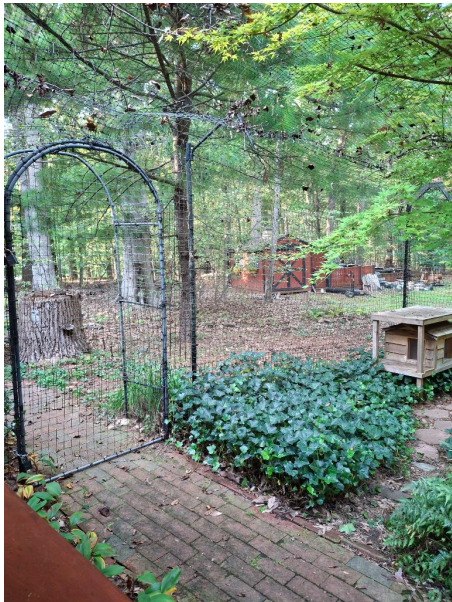
Former President, Howard County Bird Club



Example catio with contented feral cats



Catio enclosure attached to a residence



Example outdoor fenced enclosure



A picture to show the heavy screening in one catio to ensure safety from wild animals-it's a harsh world for outdoor cats, so protecting them after neutering and vaccination in a shelter is how we should care for them.

**TNR Letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jillian Adams

Position: UNF

Hello,

I am writing to you to please beg you to not support Ash's Law SB 0750 for Trap Neuter Return (TNR). TNR has yet to be proven effective in reducing feral cat populations in peer reviewed data. However, lobbying organizations continue to selectively ignore the science to make false claims of TNR success. Please take a look at this excellent paper that examines several studies and claims about TNR.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340388874> [How Effective and Humane Is Trap-Neuter-Release TNR for Feral Cats](#)

Several other things I plead with you to please consider:

Feral cats decimate native wildlife. Any cat owner can likely tell you their cat loves to chase laser pointers, toy mice, balls or fake birds on wires; regardless of how hungry they are. Fed or not fed feral cats will behave in the same manner- killing birds, amphibians, rodents and rabbits. Cat colonies house cats in substantially higher concentrations than would be sustainable in the wild, packing an even bigger punch to native species already struggling with habitat loss, pollution, climate change and a myriad of other pressures.

Imagine a baby bird whose mother faces countless challenges desperately trying to find enough food for him, only to starve to death because his mother was killed by a feral cat. Is this truly a humane option?

<https://www.npr.org/2020/04/18/820953617/the-killer-at-home-house-cats-have-more-impact-on-local-wildlife-than-wild-preda>

Feral cat colony promoters rarely, if ever, attempt to contend with cat waste which has been known to spread multiple diseases such as roundworm, hookworm and toxoplasmosis. Feeding an animal is always the most fun part of having a pet, picking up after it is by far the least! TNR advocates very rarely want to be responsible for maintaining litter boxes for the dozens of not hundreds of animals they enjoy feeding.

Per my first link, "In California, it is estimated that 2,309 free-roaming cats contributed about 108 tons of feces into the landscape (Dabritz 2006)." Would you want a cat colony next to your children's playground, next to a senior center, by the place your water comes from or by the farm that grows your lettuce? Would you want a colony next to your house?

I could go on but I know your time is limited!

If you would like more information, please see American Bird Conservancy's website!

<https://abcbirds.org/program/cats-indoors/trap-neuter-release/>

Also this is a great little snippet from Adam Ruins Everything on the impact of outdoor cats:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=GpAFpwDVBJQ>

Or reach out to me! I would love to help answer any questions you might have!

Thank you,

Jill Adams

Howard County Resident

# Testimony SB.pdf

Uploaded by: Karlyn McPartland

Position: UNF

Dear Legislatures,

I am a veterinarian and I have committed my life to advocate for the health of animals. I have a great love for all animals, but I especially find cats to be compelling and beautiful companions.

I urge you to vote down Senate Bill 0750. This would legalize abandonment of cats, jeopardize our communities' health, and threaten our environment. Advocates of Trap-Neuter-Release see it as a way to ultimately control feral cat populations, but it has been scientifically proven not to work. "Cat Wars: The Deadly Consequences of a Cuddly Killer" is a book written by Peter P. Marra and Chris Santella. This book is about the dangers of free-ranging cats to biodiversity and public health and outlines the controversies surrounding their management. In it they outline scientific studies that underscore the failures of TNR, why it doesn't and cannot work, and even suggest better ways forward. I honestly don't think that a vote should be taken on this bill until everyone who has a vote has read this book and fully understands the implications of what they are doing. I know that the feral cat issue is a man-made problem, but we need to come up with a better man-made solution than this!

Cats are "the ultimate generalist predator" according to Sarah Legge of the Charles Darwin University. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists domestic cats as one of the world's worst non-native invasive species. While researching just what a cat may hunt, one can find lists of over 2000 species that have been known to fall prey to them - and perhaps up to 63 of these species are now extinct, due in large part to their predation. According to one estimate, cats kill approximately 1.3 to 4 billion birds annually in the United States. Many of the species are of threatened status - with cat predation pushing them to complete extinction. All cats have the hunting instinct, and even well fed cats will hunt, though perhaps not consume their prey.

Cats themselves face huge threats when free roaming in the environment. They can also be the prey. Other hazards are toxins they can inadvertently ingest, trauma and diseases. Many of the diseases they encounter can be carried home to their human caretakers - such as rabies, toxoplasmosis and a wide range of parasites. I am hoping that everyone voting on this bill remembers the horrible mess when a feral cat from a supposed managed colony in Baltimore County on August 2024 exposed at least 3 individuals in the community to rabies. I am sure that they certainly remember the painful injections of the prevention series they were required to take! If a child had been nipped by that rabid cat and failed to tell their parents - imagine the horror.

Trap/neuter/release (TNR) programs designed to contain feral cat populations have been shown unequivocally not to work, but rather magnify all the concerns already outlined here. Cats in these colonies live short, brutal lives. It is a failed experiment and is not a solution.

As a veterinarian, I wish to advocate for my beloved feline friends and our environment in general by taking the stand that all cats should be contained in an environment that protects them from these hazards and the ecosystem from their predation. It is a fallacy to assume that they are

“part of the circle of life” as they are an efficient apex predator put into an ecosystem that did not coevolve with them. As a veterinarian, I contend that all cats can live happy fulfilled lives indoors. Structures such as “catios” and other enrichments can safely replace the outdoor lifestyle. This would require equity and determined caretakers, but should be the goal rather than simply legislating that it is OK to neuter the poor things, lop off their ears and kick them outside to fend for themselves. It is pie in the sky that they have access to shelter, food, and medical care. I dream of a future where our culture does not accept free range cats, just as we do not accept free range dogs.

Vote no to Senate Bill 0750. Dream with me that we can come up with a better solution that does not codify this abandonment of cats, our environment and health of our community.

Sincerely,

Karlyn S. McPartland, DVM

# **1PETA Letter - Urging You to Vote NO on SB 0750.pd**

Uploaded by: Teresa Chagrin

Position: UNF



March 2, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair  
Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Maryland Senate

Dear Mr. Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and our more than 100,000 members and supporters in Maryland urge you to **vote no on Senate Bill 0750 (SB 0750)**, which would strip free-roaming cats of any manner of protection from suffering, neglect, and cruelty by exempting anyone claiming to be doing trap, neuter, and release (TNR) of the animals—even though they may not be—from the state’s animal protection law, which prohibits animal abandonment. The bill also seeks to limit local government’s ability to oversee such operations, including ensuring that cats are provided with minimal care—including spaying, neutering, and vaccination—and restricts localities’ ability to provide adequate responses to resident complaints about outdoor roaming cats. We hope the information herein will be useful as you weigh the issue, and again, we **urge you to vote no on SB 0750**.

If passed, SB 0750 would also do the following:

- Prohibit local governments from requiring basic sensible measures like registration of those claiming to be doing TNR (even if they are not) or establishing effective procedures for addressing resident complaints about roaming cats and their welfare, impact on native wildlife, and more
- Give negligent animal owners a free pass to abandon social “house cats” by claiming that these owned cats are part of a homeless colony
- Allow and encourage shelters and other groups to abandon social, perfectly adoptable cats—even those who may have been recently abandoned and have **never previously spent a day outside**
- Endanger cats, wildlife, and the public

SB 0750 lacks any provisions to protect the **rights of private property owners**, many of whom don’t want cats trespassing on their land. Frustrated property owners commonly take matters into their own hands when they cannot get help, often poisoning, [shooting](#), or otherwise [harming](#) and cruelly killing cats.

SB 0750 would even **prohibit localities** from requiring colony feeders to register, a commonsense requirement that can help ensure that abandoned cats are vaccinated, sterilized, and provided with other needed care. Several counties throughout the state require registration of cat colonies to help ensure that those who are feeding cats also provide them with minimal care, including spaying and neutering, water, needed medical care, and protection from the elements. These are **reasonable requirements that seek to protect cats**.

PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

Washington, D.C.  
1536 16th St. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-483-PETA

Los Angeles  
2154 W. Sunset Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90026  
323-644-PETA

Norfolk  
501 Front St.  
Norfolk, VA 23510  
757-622-PETA

Berkeley  
2855 Telegraph Ave.  
Ste. 301  
Berkeley, CA 94705  
510-763-7382

Info@peta.org  
PETA.org

Affiliates:

- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

Populations of homeless, roaming cats also pose a risk to public health. **The Maryland Department of Health** concurs with the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** and [reports](#) that “cats are the most frequently identified rabid domestic animal.” The near impossibility of re-trapping cats to provide them with legally required rabies vaccinations is one reason why free-roaming cat populations [have been identified](#) as a significant public-health threat. Rabid abandoned and homeless cats have recently been found in [Allegany](#), [Cecil](#), [Frederick](#), [Garrett](#), [Harford](#), [Somerset](#), [Washington](#), and [Wicomico](#) counties, to name just a few cases.

The **National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians** [notes](#) the following:

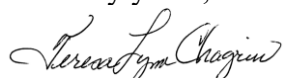
[N]o evidence exists that maintained cat colonies adequately reduce human public health risks or appropriately address their impact on pets or native wildlife. Several reports suggest that support of “managed cat colonies” may increase the public’s likelihood of abandoning unwanted pets in lieu of more responsible options.

Struggling native wildlife also don’t stand a chance against roaming cats. The **U.S. Department of Agriculture** [notes](#) that “[f]ree-ranging cats are associated with a number of sociological and ecological conflicts. They impact people directly through the spread of parasites and diseases, damage to gardens and property, and noise nuisances. Cats also cause conflict through their direct and indirect impacts on native wildlife through predation, competition, spread of disease, and impacts on species survival (e.g., nest failure, injury, behavioral changes).”

PETA is concerned about cats and wildlife alike, and we hope you’ll consider wildlife, too.  
**Please vote no on SB 0750.**

I can be reached at 443-320-1277 or [TeresaC@peta.org](mailto:TeresaC@peta.org). Thank you for all your hard work for the residents of Maryland.

Sincerely yours,



Teresa Chagrin  
Animal Care and Control Issues Manager  
Cruelty Investigations Department

#### **Attachments**

- PETA Flier: “Homeless Cats Are Not Super-Felines”
- PETA, “Important Briefing for Community Leaders on Trap, Neuter, Reabandonment (TNR) Programs”

## **2Homeless Cats Are Not Super-Felines.pdf**

Uploaded by: Teresa Chagrin

Position: UNF

# HOMELESS CATS ARE NOT SUPER-FELINES

Cats who have been abandoned to fend for themselves are biologically identical to the cats who share our homes, and they deserve—and require—the same care.



Trap-neuter-release (TNR) involves sterilizing and then abandoning homeless cats instead of sheltering them. Rather than reducing homeless cat populations, TNR actually causes populations to increase. More people are likely to abandon cats if they think the cats will be “cared for,” and food set out for “managed” colonies makes untrapped cats better able to reproduce. Additionally, it attracts more cats (as well as wildlife, including foxes, raccoons, and rats).

TNR also fails to protect cats from the many dangers they face on the streets, including extreme temperatures, deadly diseases, parasites, speeding cars, and attacks by dogs, wildlife, and cruel people.



PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

# **3Important Briefing for Community Leaders on TNR.p**

Uploaded by: Teresa Chagrin

Position: UNF

# Trap, Neuter, Reabandonment (TNR) Programs

## REAL-WORLD RESULTS OF TNR

Public officials and animal shelters are under pressure to end the euthanasia of homeless animals, but there are pitfalls to using a slingshot approach to ending animal overpopulation. In TNR (trap, neuter, reabandonment) programs, for example, cats are captured, sterilized, and then put back outside, where they are exposed to diseases—including some that can be transmitted to humans, such as rabies—and they fall prey to the elements, traffic, cruel people who consider them a nuisance, and predators.

TNR programs are designed to keep cats out of animal shelters, usually with the goal of increasing “save rates.” However, leaving cats outdoors is not a humane or an effective solution to the overpopulation and homelessness crisis they face, and it often causes even more problems in the community.



## TNR INCREASES CAT POPULATIONS, RESIDENT COMPLAINTS, AND HEALTH HAZARDS

Cat colonies become dumping grounds for unwanted cats because people incorrectly believe that they’ll be cared for. Food set out for colonies attracts felines from surrounding areas, increasing unsterilized cats’ opportunities to mate and reproduce. It also attracts wild species, such as rats, and rabies-vector species, such as raccoons, to the area.

It can take up to 28 days for newly vaccinated cats to develop immunity to the rabies virus, and retrapping them for the necessary booster shots is virtually impossible and seldom attempted. Many people who feed cats—as well as passersby and curious children—have had to undergo rabies treatment after being bitten or scratched. Cats in colonies can also transmit parasites and diseases to humans who come into contact with them or their feces.

Finally, cats in TNR colonies stalk, injure, and kill native birds, reptiles, and other small animals who are part of the ecosystem and already struggling to survive habitat loss and other challenges.

Examples of these problems are below.

**Pembroke, Ontario:** The DailyObserver.ca [reported](#) that a TNR group was shutting down, citing the continued growth of the cat population because of abandonment by residents and difficulties trapping cats for sterilization. The city administrator said, “[N]ow there’s all kinds of cats and kittens down with lots of issues as a result. [The group] had a lot of sick cats, dead cats and feces where you had to wear rubber boots to try and walk around.”

“[N]o evidence exists that maintained cat colonies adequately reduce human public health risks or appropriately address their impact on pets or native wildlife. Several reports suggest that support of ‘managed cat colonies’ may increase the public’s likelihood of abandoning unwanted pets in lieu of more responsible options.”

—National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians

**Pocahontas, Virginia:** BDTOnline.com [reported](#) that a man had sustained injuries when he was attacked by a bear in his backyard. Authorities told him that the animal had likely been attracted to cat food left out on his porch.

**Hillsborough County, Florida:** WFLA.com [reported](#) that a cat who had been abandoned in the county's TNR program had bitten a good Samaritan. The animal tested positive for rabies.



**Borough of Cornwall, Pennsylvania:** LDNews.com [reported](#) that a child had had to undergo treatment for an illness caused by exposure to cats outdoors. The Cornwall Borough Board of Health reportedly agreed that food left out for roaming cats had created a health hazard.

**Port Orange, Florida:** News-JournalOnline.com [reported](#) that the number of cat colonies in the city's TNR program had increased from 12 to 168 in five years. The annual cost of the program had also increased, from \$9,000 in 2012 to \$23,000 in 2016.

**Whitby, Ontario:** DurhamRegion.com [reported](#) that city workers were trapping and removing cats who had previously been trapped, neutered, and reabandoned in a neighborhood because of "several complaints from residents, concerned with cats running at large and destroying their gardens."

**Panama City, Florida:** NewsHerald.com [reported](#) that staff and students at Gulf Coast State College had been told to stop feeding a colony of cats and that plans had been made to remove the animals because food left out for them was attracting coyotes and bears.

**Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania:** CitizensVoice.com [reported](#) that a homeless cat being fed by a resident had attacked an out-of-state woman who was visiting a neighbor. The cat either died or was euthanized before testing positive for rabies.

**Burnsville, Minnesota:** FOX9.com [reported](#) that a resident had contracted tularemia after he was bitten by an infected cat.

**Parry Sound, Ontario:** ParrySound.com [reported](#) that the city was reconsidering its pilot TNR program because "the number of feral cats appears to be increasing—as does the noise, smell and general nuisance."

**Avalon Peninsula, Newfoundland:** SaltWire.com [reported](#) that a TNR program had had to be suspended after an outbreak of feline distemper. A spokesperson for a TNR group said that populations were growing: "You can't get to them fast enough. People are dumping animals back in the colonies as fast as we get them cleaned up."

**Rochester, New York:** 13WHAM.com [reported](#) that the Monroe County Health Department had ordered the removal of wooden houses intended for homeless cats, because they had attracted rats. The Rochester environmental commissioner said, "Rats were actually nesting, roosting and breeding. It's contaminated with rat feces and things that are not good for public health."

**South Huntingdon Township, Pennsylvania:** TribLive.com [reported](#) that an employee had required post-exposure treatment after a rabid homeless cat entered a business and attacked the individual. A colony of homeless cats was reportedly fed near the business.



**"Free-roaming cats account for the most cases of human rabies exposure among domestic animals and account for approximately 1/3 of rabies post-exposure prophylaxis treatments in humans in the United States."**

—R.W. Gerhold and D.A. Jessup, "Zoonotic Diseases Associated With Free-Roaming Cats," *Zoonoses and Public Health*, 2012



**Albuquerque, New Mexico:** LCSun-News.com [reported](#) that an apparently homeless cat had been found dead and had tested positive for plague.

**Stanislaus County, California:** CeresCourier.com [reported](#) that a cat colony caretaker had found it impossible to keep up with the number of dumped and dying animals. “For the past 10 years [Neva] Walker has tended to the cats at the river location but is troubled that the problem is worsening. Many of the cats are dying from distemper or neglect. . . . ‘It’s happening daily,’ said Walker. ‘Last year not a day went by that I didn’t have at least one, possibly two or three cats abandoned.’”

**Front Royal, Virginia:** NVDaily.com [reported](#) that a colony of homeless cats was to be removed, in part because food left out for them was attracting deer, bears, and vultures.

**Chesapeake, Virginia:** 13NewsNow.com [reported](#) that a “rabid black and white short-hair cat with a broken front paw attacked customers in the parking lot of the Family Dollar Store and Easy Go Market.”

**Orange County, California:** OCGrandJury.org [reported](#) that because of feral cats around the county animal shelter and nearby jail, a Sheriff’s Office employee had been infected with flea-transmitted endemic typhus and required hospitalization.

**Phoenix, Arizona:** AZCentral.com [reported](#) that after eight years of allowing a TNR program on campus, Phoenix College had ended it because “[i]nstead of stabilizing the population, it has doubled, creating an unhealthy situation for the cats and the community.”

**Jacksonville, North Carolina:** JDNews.com [reported](#) that a homeless cat had bitten a man who was feeding a “colony of feral cats.” Authorities captured the animal, who was euthanized after exhibiting “neurological symptoms,” and he or she tested positive for rabies.

#### **Honolulu, Hawaii:**

HawaiiNewsNow.com [reported](#) that after 20 years of allowing a TNR program on campus, Chaminade University had ended it because the homeless-cat population “continued to thrive and . . . feeders were just throwing the food around the campus, making a mess.” A spokesperson said, “It just didn’t work, I wish it did work.”

#### **Upper Marlboro, Maryland:**

WUSA9.com [reported](#) that an area where cats were being fed was “beset



“Neutering, vaccinating, and feeding a cat after trapping leads to a longer life for the cat relative to trapping and euthanizing, but the eventual death of that cat will be much more inhumane. . . . No kill does not equal no death. It only postpones death and exchanges euthanasia for what will almost certainly be a much crueler death for the cat by car, disease, predator, or animal cruelty.”

—Joel R. McNeal, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biology  
Kennesaw State University

by a large flock of black vultures that roosts above the feral cat colony” to consume food put out by residents.

**Miami Beach, Florida:** Sun-Sentinel.com [reported](#) that seven people had been infected with hookworm near Miami Beach caused by cats defecating on pathways near the beach. Another eight cases were under investigation, including that of a 3-year-old boy.

\*\*\*\*\*

While TNR may lower shelters’ intake and euthanasia rates temporarily (because cats are turned away rather than being given shelter), it quickly creates even worse—and more complex—problems that plague communities.

The proven, humane, and sustainable way to address the crisis of homeless cats is by requiring that they be spayed or neutered, licensed, microchipped, and kept indoors.



“TNR advocates take advantage of the lack of population biology knowledge in the general public to sell neutering as population control, while their feeding has a much more profound effect on populations. Reduced intake rates at shelters are often promoted as successes, but this simply means there are more cats on the streets rather than coming through shelters and says nothing about population increase or decrease.”

–Joel R. McNeal, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Biology  
Kennesaw State University

“We estimate that free-ranging domestic cats kill 1.3–4.0 billion birds and 6.3–22.3 billion mammals annually. Un-owned cats ... cause the majority of this mortality.”

–Scott R. Loss, Tom Will,  
and Peter P. Marra,  
“The Impact of Free-Ranging  
Domestic Cats on Wildlife  
of the United States,”  
*Nature Communications*,  
12 Dec. 2013

“[C]at predation is one of the reasons why one in three American [bird] species are in decline.”

–George Fenwick, former president of American Bird Conservancy

**MOS SB0750 TNR Draft II February 2026 copy.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kurt Schwarz

Position: INFO



## MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

March 10, 2026

**Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment**

**Testimony on: SB0750- Local Government - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats - Requirements and Restrictions (Ash's Law)**

**Position: Neutral with amendments**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) cannot endorse or condone the policy of TNR. As we have asserted before it is cruel to cats, contributes significantly to the continued decline of our bird populations, and threatens human and wildlife health. Please see our policy statement on free-roaming cats for citations for these points.<sup>1</sup>

As it is currently written, HB0912 would allow unregulated and unaccountable TNR colonies all over Maryland. We also wish to note that we all agree on several issues. We support trapping and neutering, just not the release/return part. So, in the spirit of cooperation and dialogue, we offer up amendments that would ameliorate most of the issues affecting our birds and human and wildlife health.

In Section (II), we request that the word in (B) "Applies" be changed to "Suggests." Howard County has not adopted TNR and we know of one town on the Eastern Shore that has outlawed feeding outdoor cats. No county or municipality should be compelled to adopt a TNR policy it does not want.

We also request that C-1 be deleted. Counties with TNR should have the ability to institute registration and certification for TNR colonies and community cat caregivers. Counties and municipalities have a vested interest in monitoring where colonies are placed, and how they are operated.

C-3 is also problematic. Why is caregiver exempted from having to identify themselves? Anyone could come in off the street and demand a cat. This clause invites fraud, for example cats are often used as "bait" to train illegal fighting dogs.

C-5 should be struck. The stipulation that the preferred disposition of an impounded cat is to be TNR is unconscionable. Under all circumstances, if the welfare of the cat is, indeed, the goal, the preferred disposition should be adoption.

We also request that standards be imposed on colonies that will significantly reduce the toll on birds and other wildlife, while promoting public and wildlife health.

It is undeniable that cat colonies can be reservoir for rabies. While TNR requires rabies vaccination, boosters must be given periodically to maintain immunity. Cats can also catch rabies from wildlife and, in turn, infect wildlife. According to the CDC there have been 109 rabid

cats reported in Maryland since 2019. In August 2024, a rabid cat was identified in a colony in Cecil County, and it was initially thought that 309 persons were exposed to the disease. After extensive and expensive investigation, only 3 persons required very expensive postexposure prophylaxis.<sup>2</sup>

Wildlife rehabilitators, who handle foxes, skunks, and other mammals are required to get rabies inoculations. Community cat caregivers should likewise be required to get inoculated against rabies, for their own protection.

In order to lower the threat of rabies from wildlife, colonies should never be located in parks, forests, meadows, open space, wildlife and natural resources areas, state forests, reserves, anywhere where they can interact with wildlife. This way rabies infection from wild animals or infecting of wildlife by cats can be prevented. It would also limit the spread of Toxoplasmosis. An added benefit of keeping colonies out of such areas is that it will virtually eliminate cat predation on birds and other wildlife. Colonies should also be kept out of residential areas and schools, to prevent exposure of children to rabies and Toxoplasmosis. Likewise, they should be kept out of areas of food production and food handling, such as farms, supermarkets, food processing facilities, etc. Toxoplasmosis is serious threat to unborn babies, and those with compromised immune systems.<sup>3</sup> It can infect any mammal, including domestic livestock. It has also been found in white-tailed deer and has been implicated in steep decline of sea otters in California.<sup>4</sup> Wild cats are also susceptible, but only as hosts. Bobcats were just documented as breeding in Howard County last May, when prints of a mother and cub were found at Triadelphia Reservoir.<sup>5</sup> Bobcats have also been confirmed in six other Maryland Counties.<sup>6</sup> Infected bobcats can spread Toxoplasmosis far afield from colonies, which can then infect deer and other mammals.


A firm definition of what constitutes a “managed colony” is needed. This should include siting and oversight. In addition, better identification for cats than ear-tipping are needed. Small microchips can be used and scanned for vaccination records, which would help ensure immunity is preserved.

Free-roaming cats kill between 1.4 and 3.7 billion birds per year in the United States, according to peer-reviewed science.<sup>7</sup> TNR colonies concentrate numbers of cats, multiplying the predation problem in the vicinity of a colony.

MOS is a Maryland-based volunteer organization, founded in 1945 of 2600 members, organized into 15 chapters throughout the state. MOS is devoted to the study, conservation and enjoyment of birds and their habitat.

In conclusion, we cannot support HB0912 but offer above some amendments that will answer most of our concerns.

Sincerely,



Kurt R. Schwarz

Conservation Chair Emeritus  
Maryland Ornithological Society

---

<sup>1</sup> Maryland Ornithological Society, Policy Statement on Free-Roaming Domestic Cats and the Management of Feral Cats, August 29, 2015, [https://mdbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/MOS\\_Feral\\_Cats\\_2019.pdf](https://mdbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/MOS_Feral_Cats_2019.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ludmer, Sarah, et al, Rabies Outbreak in an Urban, Unmanaged Cat Colony-Maryland, August 2024, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, CDC, August 21, 2025, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/74/wr/mm7431a2.htm>

<sup>3</sup> CDC, About Toxoplasmosis, March 11, 2025, <https://www.cdc.gov/toxoplasmosis/about/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> The Marine Mammal Center, Toxoplasmosis Poses Threat for Sea Otters like Yankee Doodle, September 5, 2017, <https://www.marinemammalcenter.org/news/toxoplasmosis-poses-threat-for-sea-otters-like-yankee-doodle>

<sup>5</sup> Bobcat, iNaturalist, May 7, 2025, <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/279247719>

<sup>6</sup> Bobcat, Maryland Biodiversity Project, accessed February 22, 2026 <https://www.marylandbiodiversity.com/species/853>

<sup>7</sup> Loss, et al, The impact of free-ranging domestic cats on wildlife of the United States, Nature Communications, 29 January 2013 <https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms2380>