



February 27, 2026

RE: Support of House Bill 128/SB 299

Dear Chair Feldman and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

As the advocacy voice of the responsible pet care community, the [Pet Advocacy Network](#) represents the interests and expertise of retailers, companion animal suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, pet owners, and others involved in the many aspects of pet care across the United States. Our association promotes animal well-being and responsible pet ownership, fosters environmental stewardship, and ensures healthy pets' availability through our local, state, and federal work. In addition, we routinely advocate for legislative and regulatory proposals to protect the health, safety, and availability of companion animals.

On behalf of the responsible pet care community, **we ask that you vote YES on House Bill 128/SB 299, which would allow the use of therapy dogs in public schools.**

Having pets available to children and teens alike in classrooms, with all the associated physical and emotional benefits of animal-assisted interactions, is more important than ever before and the Pet Advocacy Network commends the legislature for proposing this legislation.

The value of classroom pets in realizing positive outcomes on mental health is well-supported with scientific data. In 2019, American Humane, the [Human Animal Bond Research Institute](#) (HABRI), and The Pet Care Trust published the largest-ever study¹ on pets in the classroom. It assessed the social, behavioral, and academic effects of the presence of resident animals ranging from guinea pigs to small reptiles in almost 600 third and fourth-grade classrooms in the United States.

Programs like this don't just benefit the students. They support teachers by giving them new tools to create calm, connected classrooms. This program helps educators bring real-life learning into the classroom. Students learn responsibility, empathy, and science in a hands-on way. And for some students, the classroom pet is the first animal they've ever really spent time with.

¹ <https://www.americanhumane.org/press-release/publication-of-largest-ever-study-on-pets-in-the-classroom-indicates-positive-impact-on-academic-and-social-behavior/>



According to [Pet Partners](#), the national leader in demonstrating and promoting the health and wellness benefits of animal-assisted interventions, there are numerous benefits to allowing therapy dogs into classrooms, including:

- Interactions with therapy animals improve social skills among peers, reduce stress and anxiety, and increase endorphins.
- Children experience better focus and confidence while learning with therapy animals present.
- Children who are learning to read are often shy or hesitant about their abilities. When reading to a therapy animal, research shows children feel at ease because animals are just there to listen—not to judge how well they are reading.

Participating teachers in these programs have reported significant increases in social skills, social competence, and academic reading. They also saw decreases in hyperactivity, withdrawal and inattention in students as compared to those in non-pet control classrooms. The parents of the students in pet classrooms reported greater increases in pro-social behaviors at home, as well. These positive outcomes and research findings demonstrate that this supplemental approach to education is worthy of significant additional support, especially now.

We urge you to vote Yes on HB 128/SB 299 and welcome the opportunity to collaborate with you on legislation that promotes and protects responsible pet ownership. All of us in the responsible pet care community are dedicated to removing unnecessary barriers that keep people from enjoying all types of pet companionship.

Thank you for your consideration,

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