

# **Show Your Soft Side\_HB 912\_Trap-Neuter-Return Poli**

Uploaded by: Caroline Griffin

Position: FAV

## House Bill 912

**TO:** Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee

**DATE:** February 23, 2026

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

**RE:** **HB 912 – Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats – Requirements and Restrictions (Ash’s Law)**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Korman and Vice-Chair Guyton, my name is Caroline A. Griffin; I am a lawyer and reside in Baltimore. I am the Chair of the **Maryland Spay Neuter Advisory Board**. 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 HB 912, also known as Ash’s Law.

HB 912 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 also 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.

Respectfully submitted,

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

**aca\_maryland\_state\_legislature\_letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: Coryn Julien

Position: FAV

February 25, 2026

Maryland State Legislature  
House Environment & Transportation Committee  
c/o Chair Korman  
*via online portal*

Re: Proponent testimony to HB 912

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Honorable Members of the House Environment & Transportation Committee,

On behalf of Alley Cat Allies and our supporters in Maryland, I submit this written testimony as a proponent of House Bill 912 (“HB 912”), a bill currently under your consideration. Alley Cat Allies urges the Committee to support this bill. If enacted, HB 912 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.

HB 912, 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 HB 912 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, HB 912 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 HB 912, 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



**HB0912\_MDVMA\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Danielle Bauer

Position: FAV



## Maryland Veterinary Medical Association (MDVMA)

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

### **HB0912 - Local Government - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats - Requirements and Restrictions (Ash's Law)**

**Committee: Environment and Transportation**

**February 23, 2026**

**MDVMA Position: SUPPORT**

On behalf of the Maryland Veterinary Medical Association and its members, we urge a favorable vote on HB0912 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 HB0912.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

MARYLAND VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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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.

# **Testimony HB 912 Ash's Law.pdf**

Uploaded by: Frances Stewart

Position: FAV

HB0912 - SUPPORT  
Frances Stewart, MD  
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Bethesda, MD 20814  
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301-718-0446

HB0912, Local Government – Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats – Requirements and Restrictions (Ash’s Law)

Meeting of the Environment and Transportation Committee

February 25, 2026

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee, I urge a favorable report on HB0912, 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 HB0912, Ash’s Law. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Favorable - HB 912 - Del. Guyton.pdf**

Uploaded by: Michele Guyton

Position: FAV

MICHELE GUYTON  
Legislative District 42B  
Baltimore County

—  
Vice Chair  
Environment and Transportation  
Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 251  
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Michele.Guyton@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 25, 2026

**Favorable – HB 912**

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

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of HB 912, which standardizes Trap-Neuter-Return policies so community cat caregivers cannot be charged with animal abandonment. If left unchecked, feral cat colonies can be a hazard to wildlife, pets and human health. There are many organizations that have taken on this challenge to control and vaccinate cat colonies by trapping, neutering (vaccinating), and returning them to their colonies. This is certainly a more humane method of animal control than requiring round ups and euthanasia of healthy cats. It has also been shown to be much more effective. However, in much of Maryland, these practices are prohibited.

Out of Maryland’s 24 jurisdictions, seven jurisdictions have laws, with varying and inconsistent terminology, that protect community cat caregivers who are usually working with non-profit organizations to Trap, Neuter, and Return these animals. Eight jurisdictions have active TNR programs working within them but have no protection for these caregivers. Some counties have laws that differ from their local municipalities. For example, Montgomery County and Rockville have different standards and laws on the books for TNR. Rockville protects the practice and Montgomery County does not.

It is time to allow this compassionate and data driven solution to thrive though out our state with consistent regulations that are not punitive toward those who have our communities and animals’ best interests at heart.

I request a favorable report on HB912.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Delegate Michele Guyton".

Delegate Michele Guyton

# **HB 912 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katie Haines

Position: FWA



2/23/2026

Dear Honorable Chairman Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, 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 HB 912. This bill will allow citizens and organizations to continue to care for and practice TNR for community cats and prevent any local jurisdictions from prohibiting or restricting TNR efforts of these organizations and residents.

In 2025 alone, the Maryland SPCA took in 1,071 kittens and 1,352 adult cats. We regularly take in what we can “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 that support cat colonies do not simply feed stray cats; they’re looking after the health of the population by TNR’ing the cats in the colony. By spaying and neutering these community cats, they keep thousands of cats and kittens from entering the shelter system. The number one way to reduce pet homelessness is through spay and neuter. This bill will allow that to continue and set the stance across Maryland that we support TNR and that animal welfare includes care for community cats.

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

February 25, 2026

To: House Environment and Transportation 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) - HB 912 - Favorable with Amendment

Chair Korman, Vice- Chair Guyton, members of the Environment and Transportation 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) - HB 912 – Favorable with 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).

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 would like to thank Delegate Guyton for sponsoring HB 912 and ask the committee to vote favorable with amendment on this bill.

# **Nicole Velez Testimony 1.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nicole Velez

Position: FWA

**Testimony in Support of HB 912 — Ash’s Law**  
House Environment & Transportation Committee  
Nicole Velez | Capitol Heights, Prince George’s County  
**Position: Favorable with Amendments**

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Good afternoon. My name is Nicole Velez and I’m a resident of Capitol Heights in Prince George’s County, MD. I want to begin by acknowledging the efforts PG County has made to address the free-roaming cat population via their Community Cat Program and TNVR guidelines. While I am here in support of HB 912, I ask that the members of the committee consider that caregiver protections must be part of this bill, because even where TNVR policies already exist, as they do in PG County, caregivers remain vulnerable without clear enforcement standards and caregiver protections to back them up. The written testimony I’ve submitted, outlines eight specific recommendations for this committee’s consideration.

I’ve been a community cat caregiver in my neighborhood since November 2022, when I moved into an area with a free-roaming cat population. When a neighbor first raised concerns, I contacted Animal Services, requesting they remove the cats and was informed the County had implemented TNVR and was referred to a local TNVR group.

Since then, I have cared for my vaccinated, ear tipped colony and remained in full compliance with the County’s published colony care guidance: feeding during specific time windows, not leaving food out overnight, and maintaining a clean, sanitary care area. Where possible, I have made additional good-faith adjustments in response to ongoing complaints from one neighbor, going beyond what is required.

Despite this, for over three years I have been subjected to repeated, complaint-driven enforcement activity initiated by that same neighbor. Each time, save the most recent, PG County Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement agency and Animal Control Services staff found my actions to be compliant. Nevertheless, earlier this year a DPIE inspector threatened my landlord with a citation. When I contacted him and asked how I had violated the County’s Animal Control Ordinance which specifically addresses ear-tipped free-roaming cats, the inspector, by his own admission, had never heard of the County’s TNVR guidelines and asked me to email them to him. When I followed up asking what he and his supervisor had concluded, his response was simply that “the County would be well within the right to cite the owner if the feeding of the cats continues to be a nuisance for the community.” No supporting code section was provided. No objective standard. No documented evidence of a violation.

The complaint that prompted this threat was characterized as a “health issue” with no findings and no evaluation by Animal Services or any public health authority. A generalized complaint narrative was treated as sufficient grounds for an enforcement threat. When I sought clarification from my County, I was ignored. So, I filed a MPIA request with DPIE to obtain the records behind these enforcement threats. The official response received stated that no responsive documents were found and no open code enforcement violations existed for my property. Three years of inspections and a formal written threat of citation with no official record to show for it. I had no paper trail to challenge, and no formal process to request one. That is a gap this bill must also address.

My situation is not unique to PG County. It is a preview of what compliant caregivers across Maryland will continue to face without clear statewide protections. HB 912 establishes an important and necessary foundation and I fully support it. But a law is only as strong as the

people and processes implementing it. Without amendments addressing staff training, objective enforcement standards, documentation requirements, health complaint routing, good-faith caregiver protections, and inter-agency coordination, compliant caregivers will remain vulnerable to exactly what I have experienced, regardless of what their local ordinance says.

I urge this committee to pass Ash's Law and to strengthen it so that it delivers real, durable protection for community cats and the caregivers who show up every day to care for them.

Thank you.

# **Nicole Velez Testimony 2 Policy Amendments.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nicole Velez

Position: FWA

**TNVR Community Cat Caregiver Protections:  
Policy Gaps in HB0912 (Ash's Law) and Recommended Amendments**  
Prepared by Nicole Velez | Capitol Heights, Prince George's County, Maryland  
February 2026

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## **Introduction**

HB 912 (Ash's Law) represents an important and historic step toward protecting Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) practices and community cat caregivers in Maryland. This document is submitted in support of the bill with proposed amendments, based on first-hand experience as a TNVR caregiver in Prince George's County who has faced years of complaint-driven enforcement despite full compliance with the County's own Community Cat TNVR guidelines.

While Ash's Law establishes critical, the bill does not fully address the on-the-ground enforcement gaps that allow complaint-driven harassment of compliant caregivers to continue unchecked. The following policy gaps and recommended amendments are offered to strengthen the bill.

### **Gap 1: No Staff Training Requirement**

Ash's Law does not require code enforcement officers or animal control staff to receive training on TNR policy. In my own case, a DPIE inspector threatened to cite my property owner while admitting he had never heard of Prince George's County's TNVR guidelines and asked me to email him the ordinance. A law is only as strong as the people implementing it.

- **Recommended Amendment:** Require counties and municipalities that establish TNR policies to provide documented training for all code enforcement and animal control staff on TNR guidelines, caregiver definitions, and enforcement standards.

### **Gap 2: No Objective Standard for Complaint-Driven Enforcement**

The bill does not establish any threshold or evidentiary standard that must be met before enforcement action is taken against a caregiver. Currently, a single repeat complainant can trigger repeated inspections with no objective standard, no documented violation, and no defined burden of proof.

- **Recommended Amendment:** Require that any enforcement action related to community cat caretaking be supported by documented, objective evidence of a specific code violation, not complaint volume alone. Require the citing authority to identify the specific code section alleged to be violated and provide corrective actions limited to what is feasible and within human control.

### **Gap 3: No Documentation or Transparency Requirements**

In response to a Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA) request I filed with DPIE, the County's official response stated that no responsive documents were found and no open code enforcement violations existed for my property, despite years of inspections and a formal written threat of citation. Enforcement was happening with no official paper trail, making it impossible to formally challenge.

- **Recommended Amendment:** Require agencies to create and maintain written records of all TNVR-related complaints, inspections, findings, and enforcement actions, and make those records accessible to the caregiver and/ or property owner upon request.

### **Gap 4: No Caregiver Appeal or Recourse Process**

The bill does not establish any formal process for caregivers to challenge enforcement threats or actions. In my experience, the only recourse available was to escalate directly to an elected Councilmember, an extraordinary measure that no ordinary caregiver should be required to take just to protect their right to engage in lawful, compliant caretaking.

- **Recommended Amendment:** Establish a formal, accessible process by which caregivers can request review of enforcement actions, challenge citations, and receive written responses from the relevant agency within a defined timeframe.

### **Gap 5: No Protection Against Complaint-Based Harassment**

The bill does not address what happens when complaint activity constitutes a pattern of targeted harassment. In my situation, the same neighbor has filed repeated complaints over three years despite the County repeatedly finding me in compliance. The pattern has escalated to include objects being thrown toward the cats and verbal harassment of contractors at my home. Repeated complaints from a single party with no documented violation should not indefinitely expose a compliant caregiver to enforcement risk.

- **Recommended Amendment:** Establish a provision that where a caregiver has been repeatedly found in compliance following complaints from the same party, agencies may decline to initiate new enforcement action absent new documented evidence of a violation.

### **Gap 6: No Inter-Agency Coordination Requirement**

My situation involved a fundamental breakdown between DPIE (code enforcement) and Animal Services, the two agencies with overlapping jurisdiction over community cats. DPIE staff were unaware of Animal Services' TNVR guidelines, and there was no mechanism to route complaints to the appropriate agency. Ash's Law does not require these agencies to coordinate or clarify jurisdiction.

- **Recommended Amendment:** Require counties with TNR programs to designate a lead agency responsible for TNVR-related complaints and establish clear inter-agency referral procedures to ensure complaints are evaluated by staff with appropriate expertise.

### **Gap 7: No Objective Standard for "Health Issue" Complaints**

In my case, a DPIE inspector moved toward enforcement posture based on a neighbor's generalized claim of a "health issue" involving the cats — without any documented findings, test results, or evaluation by Animal Services or a public health authority. A vague, unsubstantiated health claim was treated as sufficient grounds for an enforcement threat. This is a significant gap: there is no requirement that health-related allegations meet any objective standard or be evaluated by the agency with actual expertise in that area before triggering enforcement.

- **Recommended Amendment:** Establish that a generalized claim of "health issue" may not be treated as evidence of a violation. When a complaint alleges a health issue involving community cats, the matter must be routed to Animal Services or the appropriate public health authority for objective evaluation before any enforcement action is taken by a code enforcement agency. Enforcement posture must be based on documented findings by the appropriate authority, not a complainant's narrative.

### **Gap 8: No Protection for Good-Faith Mitigation Efforts**

Ash's Law does not address one of the most serious traps facing compliant caregivers: the risk that voluntarily going beyond what is required, adjusting feeding times, relocating feeding stations, and/or adding deterrents, can later be used against them. Without explicit protections, a caregiver's good-faith efforts to cooperate with agencies or neighbors can be recharacterized as evidence that they had control over the cats, accepted ownership or responsibility, or failed to take reasonable steps in response to complaints. This chills voluntary cooperation and punishes caregivers for doing more than the law requires.

- **Recommended Amendment:** Define good-faith mitigation measures as those that are safe, feasible, lawful, and within the person's reasonable control and clarify that they do not require ongoing expense, specialized equipment, or outcomes no person can guarantee, such as ensuring preexisting free-roaming cats will cease to be present in an area. Clarify that voluntary mitigation by a caregiver does not create ownership,

custody, or legal responsibility for the independent movements or behavior of free-roaming cats. Add a “no penalty for cooperation” provision: if an agency directs a caregiver to remove or modify a mitigation measure, compliance with that directive cannot later be used as evidence that the caregiver failed to take reasonable steps in response to complaints, or exercise control over the movements and behavior of free-roaming cats.

## **Conclusion**

Ash’s Law is a meaningful and necessary foundation. But the protections it establishes will only be as effective as the enforcement environment in which they operate. The amendments proposed above are drawn directly from the lived experience of a compliant TNVR caregiver in Prince George’s County, the same county where Ash lived and died. Strengthening this bill to address enforcement quality, documentation, and caregiver recourse will ensure that Ash’s Law delivers real, durable protection for community cats and the people who care for them.

Submitted respectfully,

**Nicole Velez**

Capitol Heights, Prince George’s County, Maryland

nvelez175@gmail.com

# **HB912 Local government Trap-neuter-return Policies**

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

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**HB0912 Local Government - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats - Requirements and  
Restrictions (Ash's Law)**

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

**February 20, 2026**

**Dear Honorable Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Guyton, and members of the committee:**

Professional Animal Workers of Maryland, the state organization of animal control agencies and humane societies, supports HB0912 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.

The one adjustment to the language we feel is imperative for our support of this bill 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 would like the following addition considered: LINE 19 (4) UNLESS VETERINARY CARE IS REQUIRED **OR THE AREA HAS BEEN DEEMED UNSAFE FOR RETURN.**

This bill 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 HB0912.

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

# **HB912 Humane World for Animals FWA 2.25.26.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

**February 25, 2026**

**Environment and Transportation Committee**

**HB912 - 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 called the Humane Society of the United States, on behalf of our supporters across the state, we respectfully urge a favorable vote on HB912.

The bill provides essential protections 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.

HB 0912 also establishes TNR as the preferred disposition of an impounded community cat, which will provide local governments 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

Humane World for Animals, formerly called the Humane Society of the United States.

For questions, please reach out to Maryland State Director Stacey Volodin at [svolodin@humaneworld.org](mailto:svolodin@humaneworld.org)



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cat should not be considered abandonment even when the person doing so will not be the cat's long-term caretaker.

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." HB 0912 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. HB 0912 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 HB 0912, 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.

We appreciate the ongoing dialogue with the lead advocates regarding the concerns raised by the Professional Animal Workers of Maryland (PAWS), whose testimony highlights situations in which a site may not be safe for returning cats. This concern remains the sole reason that



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Humane World for Animals maintains a favorable-with-amendments position rather than offering exclusive support for the bill.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable vote on HB912.

**Stacey Volodin**

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

**HB0912 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:** February 25, 2026

**TO:** Delegate Marc A. Korman, Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee  
Del. Michele J. Guyton, Vice-Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

**RE:** Oppose MD HB 912 - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats – Requirements and Restrictions

Honorable Delegates Korman and Guyton:

On behalf of the Maryland Division-Izaak Walton League (MD-IWLA), I am asking you to oppose MD HB 912 - 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 HB 912.

Sincerely,

Curt Howard, President

Maryland Division-Izaak Walton League of America

**HB0912-ET\_MACo\_OPP.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko

Position: UNF



## House Bill 912

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

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Environment and Transportation  
Committee

Date: February 25, 2026

From: Karrington Anderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 912 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. HB 912 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. HB 912 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 HB 912 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 HB 912 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.

# **HB 912 UNF Gregg Petersen**

Uploaded by: Gregg Petersen

Position: UNF

February 23, 2026

Testimony to the esteemed members of the Maryland Environment Transportation Committee:

I am a Maryland resident and urge you to vote NO on House Bill 0912, 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 HB 0912.**

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.

**HB0912-OPPOSE.pdf**

Uploaded by: Janine Pollack

Position: UNF

I am a lifetime Maryland resident and urge you to vote NO on House Bill 0912, which would legalize widespread abandonment of domestic cats regardless of their health or temperament, putting both cats and wildlife at grave risk. 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.

HB 0912 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.

HB 0912 also contains no language to curb, control, or prevent the undeniable threat that cats pose to wildlife populations.

This bill would cause animal suffering and endanger public health and safety. Please vote NO on HB 0912.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Janine Pollack

6401 Saddle Drive  
Columbia, MD 21045

**document(11).pdf**

Uploaded by: Jillian Adams

Position: UNF

Hello,

I am writing to you to please beg you to not support TNR legislation HB0912. 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](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 keep 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!

Here is one last argument: TNR advocates claim TNR is the only humane option. However, they ignore the inhumane deaths of the dozens if not hundreds of small animals each of these feral cats will kill each year. Feral cats living outdoors will live drastically shorter and more brutal lives than their indoor brethren. Is this really a humane option?

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, MD resident

# **Testimony.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 House Bill 0912. 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 House Bill 0912. 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

# **HB0912 Kathleen Michels UNF**

Uploaded by: Kathleen Michels

Position: UNF

OPPOSE BILL : HB0912

TITLE: Local Government - Trap Neuter Return Policies for Community Cats: Requirements and Restrictions

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation

Date: Wednesday February 25

Name: Kathleen Michels ,

Address: Silver Spring , MD 20902

[michelskm2016@gmail.com](mailto:michelskm2016@gmail.com)

Please OPPOSE Bill HB0912 which is well-intentioned but counter productive legislation that would harm both cats and wildlife

**I have personal experience with the harmful aspects of all the following in my Neighborhood and my own yard and adjacent Park (Sligo Creek Park).** If passed, House Bill 0912 (HB 0912) would do the following:

- Legalize the abandonment of vulnerable domestic animals (cats) by anyone claiming to be doing trap, neuter, and release (TNR), even if they are just feeding cats, without making any effort to sterilize them (We have personally witnessed this over and over in my neighborhood leading to an over run of our yards and adjacent park with both neutered and un-neutered cats and their offspring. "Caregivers" are considered people who just throw out food but make not other attempt to care for the cats it attracts.)
- Prohibit local governments from requiring basic measures like registration of those claiming to be doing TNR (even if they are not) or establish effective procedures for addressing resident complaints about roaming cats and their welfare, impact on native wildlife,
- 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 spent a day outside
- Endanger cats, wildlife, and the public

While I don't have experience with people inflicting intentional harm on cats in my own neighborhood, it is concerning that HB 0912 also lacks provisions to protect the rights of those private property owners around the state who don't want cats on their properties and perceive cats as a "nuisance." Frustrated property owners may **often harm cats** out of frustration when their complaints fall on deaf ears.

This bill even goes so far as to prohibit localities from requiring colony feeders to register. Registration is a commonsense requirement that can help ensure that abandoned cats are vaccinated, sterilized, and provided with needed care. The Bill It would also restrict local governments from establishing procedures to protect cats who are perceived to be a nuisance.

Of concern to anyone who loves all animals and wildlife, HB 0912 also contains no language to curb, control, or prevent the undeniable threat that cats pose to wildlife populations, animals who are already under great strain because of human activity and environmental destruction and degradation. **Domestic cats are an invasive, non-native predator in North America, and they prey upon, maim, and kill small mammals and birds, regardless of whether they have consistent access to a food source.** Fragile native animals who are hunted by free-roaming cats aren't equipped to deal with such effective predators, and their unnecessary suffering and deaths have a negative impact on area ecosystems.

Maryland's wildlife and homeless and neglected cats need you.. Thank you for your willingness to act and for your compassion for animals. Please oppose Bill HB0912.

Kathleen Michels, PhD

# House Testimony HB912.pdf

Uploaded by: Kathleen Reilly

Position: UNF

Message to Maryland Environment Transportation Committee:

I am a Maryland resident and urge you to vote NO on House Bill 0912, which would legalize widespread abandonment of domestic cats regardless of their health or temperament, putting both cats and wildlife at grave risk. 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.

HB 0912 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.

HB 0912 also contains no language to curb, control, or prevent the undeniable threat that cats pose to wildlife populations.

This bill would cause animal suffering and endanger public health and safety. Please vote NO on HB 0912.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Ms Kate Reilly  
10046 Cotton Mill Ln  
Columbia, MD  
US  
[katerei42@gmail.com](mailto:katerei42@gmail.com)

# **HB0912 Steve Dembek UNF**

Uploaded by: Stephen Dembek

Position: UNF

For the Maryland Environment Transportation Committee:

I am a Maryland resident and urge you to vote NO on House Bill 0912, which would legalize widespread abandonment of domestic cats regardless of their health or temperament, putting both cats and wildlife at grave risk. 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.

HB 0912 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.

HB 0912 also contains no language to curb, control, or prevent the undeniable threat that cats pose to wildlife populations.

This bill would cause animal suffering and endanger public health and safety. Please vote NO on HB 0912.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
MR. Stephen Dembek  
7235 Grinnell Drive  
Derwood, MD  
US  
[stevedembek@gmail.com](mailto:stevedembek@gmail.com)

# **TNR testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: sue muller

Position: UNF

TNR

Hello,

First of all, I am a cat owner and love cats. I am also a biologist. I can't accept the current proposed legislation the way it is written. I am in Howard County and we have 3 large greenways left to preserve biodiversity. The thought of cats being released into the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area, Patapsco State Park or Patuxent State Park is very disturbing to me. The birds and mammals they would kill, I don't even want to think about.

A TNR cat showed up in my neighborhood a few years ago (it had the clipped ear). It was completely tame and I took her in. She was chipped and had been trapped 4 years prior in Baltimore County and then released. She was never trapped again in the 4 years until she found me, no updated vaccines. I only had the cat for 4 weeks when I put her down. She had a stomach tumor that was preventing her from eating and drinking and all of her remaining teeth were rotting. You don't want to know about the medical bills I had. If TNR is so wonderful, why was this perfectly adoptable sweet cat not put up for adoption? Her end might have been different with proper medical care.

Near Rt. 1 and Rt. 175 is a colony of cats. I discovered this colony when I went into the Holiday Inn parking lot to check a cell tower for a nest on top. This is when a cat jumped out of the dumpster and ran across the parking lot into the wooded area. I walked over there and saw all the bowls of food (complete with bot flies all over them) and several cats staring at me. Not all of the cats had clipped ears meaning they weren't trapped and neutered etc. People were just adding cats to the colony. I took photographs if anyone wants to see them. I also noted all the rat poison traps that had been put out. I'm sure rats were feasting on this food as well. The worst part is, 400' from the cat colony was a homeless camp of humans. I really have a problem with people feeding cats but not the people.

These are just a couple stories, I could provide more! I would like to see more emphasis on fostering and adopting cats instead of throwing them out the door to fend for themselves and kill wildlife. Since TNR people have money to spay/neuter cats and release them, why not provide free spaying neutering for the community and maybe people wouldn't abandon their cats. Both of my cats came to me around 1 year of age. They were males and as soon as I brought them in the house, they started spraying. I have no doubt that whoever owned them, dropped them off in my townhouse community thinking someone would feed them so they wouldn't have to pay the vet bill to neuter them. It is expensive! Covering adoption fees is a great idea too!



# **Homeless 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

# **Important Briefing for Community Leaders on TNR.pd**

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

**PETA Letter - Urging You to Vote NO on HB 0912.pdf**

Uploaded by: Teresa Chagrin

Position: UNF



February 19, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman, Chair  
Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates

Dear Mr. Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation 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 House Bill 0912 (HB 0912)**, 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 HB 0912**.

If passed, HB 0912 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

HB 0912 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.

HB 0912 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  
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- 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:

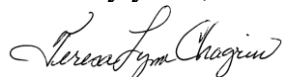
[N]o evidence exists that maintained cat colonies adequately reduce human public health risks or appropriately address their impact on pets or native wildlife. Several reports suggest that support of “managed cat colonies” may increase the public’s likelihood of abandoning unwanted pets in lieu of more 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 HB 0912.**

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”

**MOS HB0912 TNR Draft II February 2026.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kurt Schwarz

Position: INFO



February 25, 2026

**Committee:** Environment and Transportation

**Testimony on:** HB0912- Local Government - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats - Requirements and Restrictions (Ash's Law)

**Position:** Neutral with amendments

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, 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 help. 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 of regarding 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 forest, 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 it that it will virtually eliminate cat predation on birds and other wildlife. Colonies should also be kept out 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.

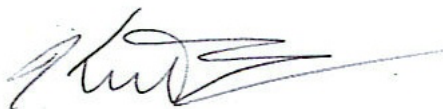
A firm definition of what constitutes a “managed colony” is needed. This should include siting and oversight. In addition, better identification for cats than ear-tipping are needed. Small microchips can be used and scanned for vaccination records, which would help ensure immunity is preserved.

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

<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>