



Support S.B. 820/H.B. 767: Help Maryland Save Lives and Save Money

Of the nearly 100,000 animals Maryland animal shelters house, and care for each year, 45,000 homeless cats and dogs are euthanized. This needless and tragic reality costs Maryland taxpayers an estimated \$8-9 million dollars each year. Expanding access to spay/neuter services is proven to reduce shelter intake and euthanasia rates. Strong statewide spay/neuter programs save lives, are fiscally responsible and provide significant public health and safety benefits.

Spay/Neuter saves lives. Thirty-four states have established funding programs to support spay/neuter services in the state, and the most comprehensive programs have substantially reduced the homeless pet population. States like New Hampshire, New Jersey and Maine have implemented aggressive programs and seen dramatic reductions in the numbers of cats and dogs entering shelters and euthanized. After implementing their programs, New Jersey witnessed a 61% decrease and New Hampshire had over a 75% decrease in euthanasia rates.

Spay/Neuter saves money. County and city animal control agencies spend millions of dollars each year housing, caring for, and working hard to find placement for animals – to a tune of \$175-200 per animal. For the 45,000 animals euthanized in Maryland each year, that adds up to \$8-9 million. Marylanders want to see their taxpayer dollars used for programs that work. Investing in spay/neuter services will reduce the amount of money spent on the needless and tragic death of 45,000 pets, resulting in significant cost savings down the road. For example, for every \$1 invested in spay/neuter programs in New Hampshire, the state saved \$3.15 in reduced impoundment costs.

Spay/Neuter promotes public health and safety. Increased access to spay/neuter will reduce human-animal conflicts including dog bites. Unsterilized dogs are more likely to bite and more likely to roam, leading groups like the Centers for Disease Control, American Veterinary Medical Association, U.S. Postal Service and the Insurance Information Institute to recommend spaying and neutering dogs to reduce dog bites. Additionally, a statewide spay/neuter program will have the added benefit of helping to reduce the spread of rabies by reducing strays and roaming pets that are more likely to contract and spread disease. It also provides an opportunity to vaccinate more animals against rabies, since vaccinations will be provided when the animal is spayed/neutered, unless the animal has already been vaccinated.

What the bill does:

In 2011, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation establishing a task force to research these issues and propose a statewide program for Maryland. After a comprehensive review of other statewide programs, existing spay/neuter services in Maryland, and current data for Maryland animal shelters, the task force has made the following recommendations, which are incorporated into S.B. 820/H.B. 767.

- Establish a fund to support spay/neuter services for low-income residents, housed under the Department of Agriculture and overseen by an independent volunteer board.
- Generate funding from a manufacturer surcharge on already existing pet food registration fees
- Distribute funds through competitive grants to spay/neuter providers, and vouchers for residents who participate in public assistance programs

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