



March 9, 2020

The Honorable Mike Freiberg
Chair, Minnesota House Committee on Government Operations
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Freiberg,

I am writing on behalf of Animal Humane Society (AHS) to express my support for House File 3584, the Minnesota Companion Animal Board, which will be heard in the MN House Government Operations Committee on Tuesday, March 10.

Animal Humane Society has been protecting and caring for companion animals in Minnesota for over 140 years. We are a local 501(c)(3) companion animal welfare organization with locations operating in Golden Valley, Woodbury, St. Paul, and Coon Rapids. Every year we care for more than 23,000 animals in need. Through innovations and investments in medical treatment and behavioral rehabilitation, we are able to help animals who come to us with even the most significant challenges. As a result, we save 94% of the animals who come to us for care.

In addition to providing more advanced medical and behavioral intervention for shelter animals, and hundreds of thousands of spay/neuter surgeries prior to adoption, we are proactively working to combat pet overpopulation and help animals stay in homes and out of shelters. Our 16 veterinarians have provided more than 90,000 low-cost spay and neuter surgeries to pets in the community. We have expanded our efforts to support people and pets in underserved communities. Our affordable wellness services ensure that thousands of pets receive ongoing vaccinations and preventative care. Together our programs support more than 100,000 animals and their families each year.

We are on the front lines and see the need

In our work we see firsthand the need for a Companion Animal Board to specifically oversee the growing needs of companion animals and their caregivers.

Current research shows that more than 65% of Minnesota households include a pet, and 95% of pet owners consider their pet part of their family. As the importance of companion animals in people's lives grows, the more issues will arise, and the need for a Companion Animal Board *with specific expertise in companion animal issues*, including companion animal health and well-being, becomes even more imperative.

The proposed Companion Animal Board is a common-sense approach that will address current and future companion animal issues while also benefitting companion animals, caregivers, and communities throughout Minnesota.

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The Companion Animal Board will be able to:

- provide specific expertise to handle companion animal issues, with an understanding of the role these animals play with human health and companionship;
- provide a centralized and collaborative approach for delivery of animal welfare services and resources in communities throughout Minnesota; and,
- free up the MN Board of Animal Health to focus on its core mission of control and prevention of dangerous animal diseases.

The time to act is now

Companion animals deserve a stronger voice in state government. I urge you to support HF 3584.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'J' followed by a long, horizontal, sweeping line that tapers to the right.

Janelle Dixon
President & CEO, Animal Humane Society