



September 15, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing on behalf of Community Emergency Service (CES) to express support for House File 208 and Senate File 73, establishing a Minnesota Companion Animal Board to allow the State of Minnesota to more effectively plan for and respond to companion animal issues, including the efforts of those who care for these animals.

Community Emergency Service was founded in 1971 and meets hunger where it is a critical need, to the homebound through Home Delivery and to seniors through the largest Meals on Wheels (MOW) program in the state. Many clients who are homebound and spend much of their time in virtual isolation have a beloved pet that help relieve loneliness and provide valuable companionship. In 2016, the Ani-Meals program began when MOW realized that some clients were giving up a share of their delivered food to feed their companions. This meant seniors were going hungry, as well as animals, and were not receiving proper nutrition. In addition to food, pets may also receive health services, such as vaccines, exams, and spaying/neutering, through our program.

In our work, we are on the frontlines and see firsthand the growing needs throughout Minnesota. The Companion Animal Board is needed to provide oversight, communication, and outreach on issues related to companion animals. The Companion Animal Board can work collaboratively with public, private and nonprofit sectors to promote resources and lead statewide discussions to define community problems and needs, such as pet food distribution, statewide affordable spay-neuter services, access to affordable veterinary care, and more.

The importance of companion animals in the lives of Minnesotans is significant and growing. Current research shows that more than 70% of Minnesota households include a pet. As the industry and importance of companion animals in people's lives grows, so too do the issues and problems involving these animals. A Companion Animal Board with specific expertise in companion animal issues, including companion animal health and welfare, becomes even more imperative.

I urge you to support House File 208 and Senate File 73.

Thank you,

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