



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

1255 23rd Street, NW
Suite 450
Washington, DC 20037
P 202-452-1100
F 202-778-6132
humanesociety.org

January 29, 2020

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Maryland Senate
11 Bladen St Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for SB 128 Pets for Vets Act of 2020

Susan Atherton
Co-Chair

Thomas J. Sabatino
Co-Chair

Kitty Block
*President and CEO and
Chief International Officer*

G. Thomas Waite III
*Treasurer
Chief Financial Officer and
Acting Chief Operating Officer*

Katherine L. Karl
*General Counsel and
Chief Legal Officer*

Michaelen Barsness
*Controller and
Deputy Treasurer*

Johanie V. Parra
Secretary

DIRECTORS

Jeffrey J. Arciniaco
Susan Atherton
Eric L. Bernthal, Esq.
Georgina Bloomberg
J. Elizabeth Bradham
Jerry Cesak
Neil B. Fang, Esq., CPA
Caren M. Fleit
Spencer B. Haber
Cathy Kangas
Paula A. Kislak, D.V.M.
Charles A. Laue
Kathleen M. Linehan, Esq.
Mary I. Max
C. Thomas McMillen
Judy Ney
Sharon Lee Patrick
Marsha R. Perelman
Jonathan M. Ratner
Thomas J. Sabatino, Jr.
Walter J. Stewart, Esq.
Jason Weiss
David O. Wiebers, M.D.

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee,

The Humane Society of the United States, representing our members and supporters in Maryland, supports SB 128 introduced by Senator Simonaire to waive adoption fees for veterans at county and municipal animal shelters.

Studies have shown that many veterans struggle after leaving the military—as many as 20 percent suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and feelings of isolation, anger or aimlessness are not uncommon. Many veterans consider obtaining a service animal to assist with their physical and mental ailments. Unfortunately, the average wait time for a service animal is eighteen months, and it can be quite a lengthy process.

Even without being trained service animals, there is huge value in the human-animal bond. Pet ownership has long been known to have a beneficial effect on people suffering from depression and other mental health issues, loneliness and even high blood pressure. While a companion animal cannot replace a service animal for specific medical needs, the healing power a pet can provide is immense.

Programs that support veterans in obtaining companion animals are based on the growing body of popular and scientific literature that generally confirms the link between animals' social support and improved human health and happiness. For all of us, veterans and non-veterans alike, the presence of animals in our lives brings myriad psychological, social and medical benefits. And petkeeping is all about loyalty and devotion, something that every veteran understands.

We support SB 128 and respectfully request a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Emily Hovermale
Maryland and Delaware State Director