



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Delegate Dana Jones
Before the Ways and Means Committee**

**In Support of HB681
Income Tax - Credit for Pet-Friendly Rental Dwelling Units
February 16, 2022, pm**

Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Washington, and fellow members of the Ways and Means Committee,

For the record - I am Delegate Dana Jones.

I come before you today to introduce a bill in response to the unprecedented rates of housing insecurity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and ways I hope we can help to keep Maryland families united with their pets.

A large portion of rental properties do not allow their tenants to have pets. The ones that do often have strict breed and weight restrictions, restricting a large percentage of family dogs. In fact, according to a survey of 551 owners and operators in urban and suburban areas, only 8% of rental housing is free of pet restrictions¹. For the 70% of renters who own a pet², many of whom faced housing insecurity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it can be nearly impossible to find adequate accommodations. This forces them to make the heartbreaking decision between facing homelessness or giving up their beloved pets.

This bill was brought to me by the humane society. They and other advocates have been working closely over the past 23 months with housing insecure individuals desperate to find a place to stay. They shared with me their personal accounts and expressed that the lack of pet-friendly housing is a significant driver of housing insecurity and homelessness. Many emergency shelters do not

¹ The 2021 Pet-Inclusive Housing Report [[The Human Animal Bond Research Institute \(HABRI\)](#), 2021]

² “As evictions rise, people may have to give up their pets. Animal shelters are calling for help.” [[Washington Post](#), August 15, 2021]

allow animals, and rather than have to give up their pets, owners often choose to sleep on the street.

HB681 would incentivize more pet-friendly housing by providing an income tax credit to landlords that allow companion animals, with no breed or size restrictions or non-refundable deposit, in their rental properties. This credit would be \$200 per pet-friendly unit, maxing out at \$2,000 per owner. Additionally, in order to limit the fiscal note, this program would have a two-year sunset with the recognition that the housing market may be more stabilized at that point.

Over the past two years, so many Marylanders have lost their jobs, family members, their homes - they shouldn't have to lose their pets too. The stress and mental health crisis that we are currently experiencing should not be exacerbated by taking companion pets from families. I respectfully urge a favorable report on this compassionate bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dana Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Delegate Dana Jones