



March 5, 2024  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
HB1179: Housing and Community Development - Pets in Housing Developments  
FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and our Maryland supporters, we write in strong support of House Bill 1179, which would improve access to affordable rental housing for Maryland's low-income pet owners.

There is not enough affordable housing in this state. Housing policies are highly influential, dictating where people can live and what resources are available to them—while these may be “human issues,” they also affect the outcome for animals and can create inequities not only in human resource needs, but pet wellness needs too. We’ve found that in regions where poverty is concentrated, there are often pet resource deserts – so things like groomers, pet supply shops and veterinarians are scarce or nonexistent. Disparities in services and resources that people rely on are often a result of a larger systemic issue of housing insecurity.

Nearly 33% of Maryland's households rent their homes<sup>1</sup> and nearly three-fourths of renters have pets. There's a clear need for more affordable housing without arbitrary restrictions on breed and weight or exorbitant pet fees, which disproportionately impact low-income and marginalized communities. In fact, a recent study examining pet fees found that these costs are not equitable among renters, and that nonrefundable pet fees (either as up-front or as “rents”, or both) were more likely found in lower-income neighborhoods, compared to higher-income neighborhoods. Additionally, in researching pet policies in affordable and market rate housing, we've found that generally pet policies are inconsistent and difficult to ascertain.

Despite the great strides Maryland has made to protect the bonds of people and their pets, as well as increase and strengthen investments in the affordable housing supply, there continues to be a significant shortage of available units for low-income families and even fewer available for tenants with pets without costly fees or restrictive policies.

People living in or seeking affordable rental housing should not be forced to experience the pain of relinquishing a beloved pet due to a lack of access to affordable pet-inclusive housing. HB1179 will help address availability and supply issues and help to create equity for pet ownership and keep families together and we urge a favorable report with the sponsor amendments.

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<sup>1</sup> According to demographic data gathered from the latest U.S. Census Bureau release, the 2021 American Community Survey ([https://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/MD-Demographics.html#:~:text=How%20many%20homeowners%20and%20renters%20are%20there%20in%20Maryland%3F&text=There%20are%202%2C516%2C341%20housing%20units,have%20renters%20living%20in%20them](https://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/MD-Demographics.html#:~:text=How%20many%20homeowners%20and%20renters%20are%20there%20in%20Maryland%3F&text=There%20are%202%2C516%2C341%20housing%20units,have%20renters%20living%20in%20them).)).