



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

Environment Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200  
Hartford, CT 06106  
Phone: 860-240-0440  
envtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Re:

**SUPPORT SB 997, AN ACT CONCERNING DOG LICENSING FEES**

and

**OPPOSE SB 999, AN ACT CONCERNING THE FEE FOR ADOPTING A DOG, CAT OR OTHER DOMESTIC ANIMAL FROM A MUNICIPAL POUND AND REQUIRING THE LICENSING OF CUSH CATS AND OTHER DOMESTIC ANIMALS**

Dear Co-Chair Cohen, Co-Chair Demicco, Vice Chair Kushner, Vice Chair Gresko, Ranking Member Miner, Ranking Member Harding, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

On behalf of the Connecticut-based supporters of The Humane Society of the United States, the largest animal protection organization in the country, please accept this public hearing testimony in **SUPPORT** of SB 997 (increases funding for APCP) and in **OPPOSITION** to SB 999 (cat licensing).

Support SB 997:

The Department of Agriculture's Animal Population Control Program (APCP) is a model program that is striking at the root of the pet overpopulation problem, and increasing funding for this program will reduce financial burdens on municipalities and animal control agencies. Conversely, any diversion of funds from the APCP is ill-advised and shortsighted, and will not only quickly reverse animal welfare progress made in Connecticut, but will, in the near-immediate future, result in an increased financial burden on municipalities and animal control agencies.

Two populations of animals (unowned cats and pets in low-income communities) have been shown to have the lowest rates of sterilization due to limited access to low-cost and free spay/neuter services, and lead to more unwanted dogs and cats, creating a burden on municipalities and many Connecticut-based nonprofit animal welfare entities. The APCP has wisely focused on these two populations with its "Low-Income Program" and its "Feral Cat Grant Program". By focusing on these two segments of the animal population, Connecticut is making a positive difference in pet overpopulation and future resource expenditures. By not properly funding the program for unowned cats, all strides made to address this population will quickly be lost as unsterilized cats are allowed to reproduce. The Feral Cat Grant Program is a hugely successful, cost-saving, proactive solution that helps relieve the already stretched animal care infrastructure: community cat caregivers provide a public service at oftentimes great personal expense, reducing cat overpopulation through TNR (trap, neuter, return) programs, a science-based approach that has been proven effective.

States all over the country recognize that public policies that promote spay/neuter are a proactive, equitable way to stem the root cause of pet overpopulation and create cost-savings in the long run. As

with thirty-five other states, Connecticut allows pet owners and advocates to directly fund a program that is utilized by state residents: the APCP is funded by dog licensing fees (~68%), adoption fees (~27%), and animal welfare license plate sales (~5%). Yet these funds earmarked for the APCP have been regularly raided. Over \$1 million has been swept from the account in recent years, and the Governor's 2017 mitigation budget just swept \$150K.

Per CGS 22-380g, (b) and (c), only up to 10% of APCP income shall be used for the Feral Cat Grant Program and only up to 20% of APCP income shall be used for the Low-Income Program. Instead of diverting APCP income to regional shelters, the statutory limitations on these programs should be raised to 30% for each of these programs, since it is these programs which are most efficiently addressing pet overpopulation by directly targeting populations with the lowest rates of sterilizations. It should be noted that the Feral Cat Grant Program has a 99% voucher compliance rate.

Increasing funding for these two critical programs will result in lower costs down the road for community cat caregivers, municipalities, and the state.

Oppose SB 999:

**Cat licensing laws are ineffective, more expensive to taxpayers, and likely will result in more community cats being killed.**

Public compliance with cat licensing would likely be very low, so the program's administrative cost would likely offset or exceed any revenue. Low compliance also means that more cats would be brought to municipal shelters, and most (over 70% nationally) end up killed there. Only 2% of owned cats (nationally) in shelters are reunited with their owners. Cost of care for these cats, which all have a minimum holding period, as well as the costs to kill cats deemed unadoptable for whatever reason, would be the burden of taxpayers. This is especially significant when considering community cats. Community cats are often not socialized and therefore difficult to adopt. Near all community cats end up euthanized when brought to shelters. Community cat caregivers may be fined by animal control officers or bullied into stopping care. Community cat caregivers do a great public service, largely at private expense, and should be applauded--not handed another financial burden.

I strongly urge this committee to oppose this bill and work to find humane and effective proposals to address cats in our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,



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