



February 15, 2022

Representative Mike Nelson
Members of the House State Government Finance and Elections Committee
State Office Building / 100 Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Re: Animal Humane Society support for HF 208, the Companion Animal Board bill

Chair Nelson and House State Government Finance and Elections Committee members,

I am writing on behalf of Animal Humane Society, the largest companion animal welfare organization in Minnesota, to express our strong support for House File 208.

Animal Humane Society has been protecting and caring for companion animals in Minnesota for over 140 years. We are a local 501(c)(3) companion animal welfare organization with locations operating in Golden Valley, Woodbury, St. Paul, and Coon Rapids. Every year we take in and care for more than 23,000 animals in need. Through innovations and investments in medical treatment and behavioral rehabilitation, we are able to help animals who come to us with even the most significant challenges. As a result, we save 94% of the animals who come to us for care.

We are proactively working to combat pet overpopulation and help animals stay in homes and out of shelters. Our 16 veterinarians have provided more than 90,000 low-cost spay and neuter surgeries to pets in the community. We have expanded our efforts to support people and pets in underserved communities. Our affordable wellness services ensure that thousands of pets receive ongoing vaccinations and preventative care. In a typical year, our programs support more than 100,000 animals and their families across Minnesota.

We are on the front lines and see firsthand the love Minnesotans have for their pets and the importance of the human-animal bond to the welfare of both people and animals in Minnesota. Today, more than 70% of Minnesota households include a pet, and 95% of Minnesotans consider their pet a family member.

We also see the urgent need for a Companion Animal Board to specifically oversee the growing needs of companion animals, their caregivers, and their communities. Minnesota's Board of Animal Health works effectively to protect animals in our state from dangerous diseases, and that work should remain its focus. But the issues facing companion animals and their caregivers and communities today go well beyond disease prevention. From access to food and affordable care to addressing feral cat colonies, animal control issues, disaster and emergency relief, breeder regulations, and animal shelter management, the issues facing Minnesota require *specific expertise in companion animal issues*.

The proposed Companion Animal Board will address current and future companion animal issues while also benefiting companion animals, caregivers, and communities throughout Minnesota.

I urge you to support House File 208. Thank you.

Janelle Dixon
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