



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading Industry

*Office of Marketing
Animal Industries and Consumer Services*

Larry Hogan, Governor

Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor

Joseph Bartenfelder, Secretary

Julianne A. Oberg, Deputy Secretary

*State Board of
Veterinary Medical Examiners*

The Wayne A. Cawley, Jr. Building

50 Harry S. Truman Parkway

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

www.mda.maryland.gov

410.841.5862 Baltimore/Washington

410.841.5780 Fax

800.492.5590 Toll Free

Maryland State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners Legislative Comment

Committee: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Bill: SB 700 Task Force to Study the Feasibility of Establishing a Shelter Animal Refuge

Date: February 20, 2018

Re: **Letter of Information**

SB 700 would create a Task Force to Study the Feasibility of Establishing a Shelter Animal Refuge. We offer three points of information for the Committee's consideration.

First, before establishing a task force, the Committee may be interested in hearing from a Maryland organization that built an animal shelter in a rural area where the need was great and funds were scarce. HART for Animals, a nonprofit animal rescue organization in Garrett County, launched a 10-year capital campaign to build a 12,000 square foot facility on 6.5 acres of land donated by the county. HART raised \$3.6 million (which included \$1.7 million from USDA Rural Development) and opened the HART Animal Center in 2014. The Center was built in two phases. Phase One housed revenue-producing activities (i.e., a veterinary clinic, a boarding kennel, grooming services, etc.). Phase Two housed the adoption and shelter wing, which can house up to 60 dogs and 50 cats at one time. The Center was designed so that the revenue-producing services in Phase One would produce sufficient revenue to fund the adoption and shelter wing that was built in Phase Two. The Center now has 17 full-time employees, 18 part-time employees, 250 volunteers and an annual operating budget of \$1.6 million. A more detailed summary of the HART story is attached.

SB 700 requires the task force to compile statistics for the number of dogs and cats euthanized and adopted in shelters and rescue organizations. The State Spay and Neuter Grant Program, which the General Assembly created in 2011, has been surveying animal control shelters across the state every year since 2013 to determine how many dogs and cats they take in, the number adopted and euthanized. The most recent report is attached. (Previous reports are posted on the department's website.) Most, if not all, private animal rescue organization re-home the animals they take in and only euthanize for health or behavior issues – not space. When they run out of space, they shut down intake. The overflow goes to the county shelters that must take in all the animals they receive and whose statistics are compiled by the Spay and Neuter Program. It should also be noted that rescue organizations run from the very small to the very large, but there is no umbrella organization to which they all belong and report. There would likely be little impact to the statistics by tracking them all down and asking them to report. We believe it can be safely assumed that rescue organization have a very high adoption rate because they rarely, if ever, euthanize for space.

Finally, the actual building of an animal shelter is as much a construction project as an animal welfare project. There are architectural firms that specialize in building animal shelters. The requirements of a shelter and what to include in it is a matter of scope and size. The task force, if it is created, would be well served by including members with real estate and construction backgrounds, aided by members with experience supervising the operations of animal shelters.