



February 11, 2026

Dear Members of the Assembly and Senate:

On behalf of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and its 230,000 New York supporters, we write to urge the inclusion of \$5 million in the SFY 2026-2027 Budget, as championed by Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal and Senator Monica Martinez, to establish a co-housing grants program for organizations providing, or seeking to establish, emergency housing services for unsheltered community members with pets.

Cohousing ensures that pets and people can stay together despite having emergency housing needs. This form of sheltering is a tenet of “low-barrier” facilities that do not require people experiencing homelessness to separate from loved ones in order to access emergency housing. Evidence shows that animal companionship is fortifying and contributes to the emotional wellbeing of people experiencing homelessness. Two demographic groups are significantly impacted by the lack of pet-friendly emergency housing: those experiencing chronic homelessness and those experiencing domestic violence. In both cases, the ability to keep a beloved pet when moving to a safe, stable setting, may be a life-or-death choice. And, far too often, an individual facing this choice must choose between a pet and the ability to access safe and stable housing. This can be an untenable choice for many because a pet may represent support, security, and companionship, especially during times of stress.

Unfortunately, much of the emergency housing created in prior decades was not designed to accommodate pets. The body of research has grown exponentially in recent years to demonstrate that by allowing pets, shelters remove a significant barrier to ensuring safe and stable housing for both the chronically homeless and victims of domestic violence. This research provides evidence that cohousing opportunities can save lives. Unfortunately, many homeless service providers must encourage and/or require people experiencing homelessness with pets to separate from or surrender their pets to access shelter, but people rarely agree to do so. Instead, they purposely seek out pet friendly services or forgo housing entirely in order to retain their pets.

Retrofitting existing homeless and domestic violence shelters to accommodate pets is a cost-effective and lifesaving solution that allows pets and their people to stay together. There are already a number of successful models around the nation in which shelters have used low-cost fixtures to ensure that pets can continue to provide support and companionship for those experiencing trauma.



As the Legislature continues to confront New York's serious, longstanding housing access issues, we respectfully urge you to include \$5 million in the SFY 2026-2027 Budget for a cohousing pilot program that will provide grants to address this critical need. The ASPCA works diligently to promote policies that create more pet-friendly housing opportunities, especially for lower income households. This budget proposal is entirely consistent with these efforts by providing a framework for allocating funding to homeless shelters to accommodate and support their client's pets. Individuals experiencing homelessness should not be separated from their companions, source of security and support, and their best friends. Housing professionals have acknowledged for some time that allowing pets is a significant way to contribute to the overall well-being for their clients and failing to do so can result in significant barriers to successful outcomes for both the client and the pet.

We respectfully ask for your support in providing \$5,000,000 in the One House Budget for the Pet-Friendly Co-housing Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Ketzer".

Bill Ketzer
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Lea Riggs".

Susan Lea Riggs
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