



The Advocacy Voice of New York's Animal Shelters

BUDGET TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT \$10M FOR THE COMPANION ANIMAL CAPITAL FUND

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the Companion Animal Capital Fund. To date, 51 shelters have received funding to make needed capital improvements at their shelters. From western NY to the Hamptons, we've seen the benefit of this funding whether it's opening new shelters or making significant improvements to existing ones. The funding has been a sign of approval across New York that these projects deserved philanthropic support as well. Other shelters have replaced kennels, redone air handling, built new medical facilities and much, much more. Since its inception, the State has invested \$28M in the state's network of animal shelters.

The Fund was established by the Legislature in the 2017 budget. After Governor Hochul included the Fund in last year's Executive Budget, you and your colleagues added another \$3M to bring the total to \$8M. The RFP for these funds were just released. This year, the Governor once again included the Fund in the Executive Budget at \$5M. We urge the Legislature to match their previous legacy allocation of \$5M to bring the Fund to \$10M.

The Federation's 2023 Shelter Capital Needs Survey shows there is still a critical need for this vital resource statewide, with respondents indicating capital needs of at least \$62M.

With the passage of the Companion Animal Care Standards Act for Shelters and Rescues last year, the need for this funding becomes even more acute. The Standards Act will, for the first time, regulate rescues as well as shelters that do not have municipal contracts, providing specific facility, administrative and transport standards that must be adhered to once the bill takes effect in December 2025. As promised during last year's session, the Federation's Education Fund raised \$146,000 in grants to fund no-cost consulting services to shelters and rescues across the state to help them meet the standards. We are presently working with 16 organizations and are hopeful we will receive additional grant funding to keep this important work going.

Bringing the Fund to \$10M will enable more shelters and rescues to apply for the funding in the 2024 RFP round.

Over the years, budget language has been amended to correct the inequity animal shelters without municipal contracts faced — they were not able to receive any meaningful funding. However, it has become clear over

time that small municipalities and shelters alike have a reticence to apply for the grant given the matching fund requirements.

The language in the Governor's budget decreases the match across the board to 10% except for those shelters in population areas with a population of two million or more. That match still stands at 25%. We would like to see that match decrease to 10% as well to keep the fund equitable to all.

The other language change we are pursuing is an expansion of eligibility. Right now, only municipal and nonprofit shelters can apply, but with the enactment of the Standards Act, all organizations that presently register with the Department of Agriculture and Markets should be eligible to apply. Eligibility language should be changed to: ***Municipal shelters established pursuant to section 114 of the agriculture and markets law and any entity registered by the department of agriculture and markets pursuant to the provisions of section 408 of the agriculture and markets law.***

The Companion Animal Care Standards Act for Shelters and Rescues will greatly expand the number of entities overseen by the Department of Agriculture and Markets. We are grateful that Governor Hochul recognized both the need for this legislation as well as the additional funding the Department needs to implement the Standards Act. We wholeheartedly support the inclusion of \$2.144M presently in the budget proposal to allow the Department to hire the staff and get the equipment needed to implement and provide the oversight called for in the Standards Act.

The Fund's RFP and the Standards Act were both written to the Association of Shelter Veterinarians' 2010 Standards of Care—both are guided by the same principles and provide a solid framework to shelters and rescues to follow. The Fund and the Act also make New York State a leader in animal welfare across the country.

When we proposed the creation of the Companion Animal Capital Fund in FY 2018, our hope was that it would be a recurring source of capital funds so that animal shelters across New York would continue to make difference in the lives of the animals in their charge by enhancing their facilities' physical plants. With the changes we've proposed, the state's rescues, smaller municipalities and smaller shelters will also be able to make needed capital changes.

From new air handlers to cat condos and dog kennels to improved plumbing and sturdy roofs, this funding has and will continue to enhance the quality of life of the thousands of homeless companion animals who pass through the doors of New York's shelters and rescues.

Thank you.