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LD 595

The Animal Welfare Program has failed to uphold the mandate given under LD 1898 by not contracting out administration of the Help Fix Me spay/neuter program. Rather they have proposed changes to the overall structure and design of the program that will make it harder to access.

I have worked with many low-income and disabled people who benefit from the companionship of their pets. The HFM program has enabled them to demonstrate responsible companion care by having their pet spayed/neutered. Low-income and disabled folks already have many barriers to overcome. AWP's proposed changes will only increase to those barriers.

I have also been personally involved in animal rescue for the past 40 years. I have come across many dogs and cats who are abandoned in my woods nearby and I know that there are many more of them who die of the elements, wildlife, and disease. Most had never been spayed/neutered. Oftentimes, people adopt an animal into their lives only to get rid of the animal or the animal's offspring because it is easier than paying a vet to have them spayed or neutered due to high cost. When I operated a rescue in northern Aroostook County, our limited funds often dictated the necessity of euthanizing otherwise healthy animals because we didn't have enough room/resources. This occurs on an even larger-scaled basis in the more established humane society shelters across the state. The HFM program does offer the opportunity to reduce these occurrences by decreasing the number of unwanted animals.

I strongly encourage the Committee to thoroughly review the proposed changes made by the AWP and to keep in mind the great benefit the HFM program is to people and animals alike.