

Hillary Roberts  
Augusta  
LD 824

March 25, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support of LD 824 – An Act Regarding Pet Fees in Rental Housing  
Senator Curry, Representative Gere, and members of the Housing and Economic  
Development Committee:

My name is Hillary Roberts, and I am the Executive Director of the Kennebec Valley Humane Society, as well as the Board Treasurer of Maine Humane, which was previously known as the Maine Federation of Humane Societies. Maine Humane is a cohesive statewide network of humane organizations working to support animal welfare groups. Our mission is to provide resources and opportunities, dedicated to promoting and advancing the humane care of all animals throughout the state of Maine.

I am offering testimony in support of LD 824 on behalf of Maine Humane whose board includes representatives from the Animal Refuge League of Greater Portland in Westbrook, Animal Welfare Society in Kennebunk, Bangor Humane Society in Bangor, Catahoula Rescue of New England, Greater Androscoggin Humane Society in Lewiston, Humane World for Animals (formerly called the Humane Society of the United States), Maine State Society for the Protection of Animals in Windham, Meow Lounge in Westbrook, Midcoast Humane in Brunswick and Lincoln, Pope Memorial Humane Society in Thomaston, and Spirits Place in St. Albans, and animal control.

Our entire community is diminished whenever someone is forced to relinquish a beloved pet over a housing issue. The escalating costs of pet fees and pet rent are becoming a significant burden for pet owners, often creating barriers to securing rental housing. Maine shelters' animal intake data show that housing-related issues are one of the most cited reasons why pets are surrendered to animal shelters.

Animal shelters are acutely aware of the challenges of overly restrictive pet policies in rental housing. We're experiencing higher intakes and increased length of stay, predominantly for medium and large-sized dogs. A no-win scenario, as restrictive pet policies not only cause unnecessary surrenders but also severely limit the potential adopter pool for those same dogs.

Maine is experiencing a housing crisis and affordability is a pressing concern. These additional financial demands exacerbate an already widespread problem, particularly for lower-income families. Pet fees in the form of nonrefundable up-front fees or monthly pet rent can be costly and burdensome and are rarely traceable to pet-related property upkeep. For many individuals, especially those with fixed incomes or financial constraints, these costs are prohibitive and can force them to make heart-wrenching decisions between their pets and their homes.

This proposed legislation highlights the need for a combination of policy measures to facilitate the acceptance of pets in rental properties while striking a balance between renters who need an affordable way to house their family pets and landlords who want to protect their investment.

We need measures in place to cap excessive pet fees and pet rent, ensuring that they remain fair and reasonable. This would not only alleviate financial pressure on pet owners but also promote a more inclusive rental market. Accordingly, we ask that you support LD 824 to help keep pets with their families.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to submit testimony

Sincerely,

Hillary Roberts  
Treasurer, Maine Humane