

March 25, 2025

RE: Testimony in Opposition to LD 1057 – Resolve, to Aid Municipalities, Animal Control Officers and Other Parties in Complying with Electronic Dog Licensing Requirements

Senator Talbot-Ross, Representative Pluecker, and other Honorable Members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee:

My name is Katie Lisnik and I am the elected Chair of the Animal Welfare Advisory Council, which was established in 2001 per MRS Title 7, Chapter 717. ANIMAL WELFARE ACT, §3906-C. This year, a new, centralized dog licensing database was implemented, which was many years in the making. AWAC has been kept updated on the database project and was pleased to offer guidance to the Animal Welfare Program to make the database an important tool for our state, and one that meets the statutory requirement set forth in Section 3925 of Title 7.

§3925. Dog licensing database

The department shall develop and implement a dog licensing database in coordination with any electronic dog licensing project implemented pursuant to section 3923-G. The database must track all dog licensing throughout the State and allow municipalities and animal control officers to reunite lost dogs with owners and track dogs that have been determined by a court of competent jurisdiction to be dangerous dogs and nuisance dogs pursuant to chapter 727. The department shall provide all municipalities and dog licensing agents with access to the database at no cost.

Section 3925 Dog Licensing Database is not optional and requires all dog licensing and dangerous dogs to be tracked in a statewide database. This is the database that launched for the 2025 licensing season. The Animal Welfare Program worked with numerous stakeholders and municipal associations to ensure that the roll out was done at a reasonable time. Additionally, AWP is working with the Maine Town and City Clerk's Association to put together a 'Train the Trainers' program to assist anyone new to the system or struggling.

Once fully implemented, it will be an incredible tool for Animal Control Officers. They have access to look up licenses throughout the state; they can also search microchips whether or not the dog is licensed in Maine because the system is tied to the largest microchip registry in the country. This will also allow stray cats to be searched by microchip. ACOs can look up an address and see if it has licensed dogs/vaccinated dogs before they approach an owner about a complaint. They can note any issues and see if a dog adjudicated as Nuisance or Dangerous lives there.

The database will allow for stray animals to be reunited with their families more quickly, possibly even skipping having to go to an animal shelter altogether. This benefits the animal shelter, but also the AWP, as they are required to pay \$4 per day for stray holding fees.

More than 105,000 licenses have already been issued through the program, and the vast majority of municipalities are actively participating. There is, of course, a learning curve as municipal staff get used to the new system.

As a Council, we feel that current efforts to work with municipalities to get them fully trained on the new database are sufficient. This database will be well worth short-term challenges. We fear that this Resolve seeks to delay the database implementation by a year, effectively postponing robust use to 2027. That is far too long to be dragging a process out given the benefits to animals, ACOs and the Department, as well as the technical support available from the Department to all potential users.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide this information.

Sincerely,

The Maine Animal Welfare Advisory Council