

February 27, 2023

LD595  
HelpFixMe

To: Committee Members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Department

My name is Beverley Soutter and I am the Secretary for Cat Coalition of Western Maine, an organization that provides TNR for the State of Maine and low cost Spay Neuter Clinics in the town of Bridgton, Maine. I am the Vet Tech that works alongside the veterinarian that performs the spay/neuters at our clinics. I have also prepared most of the HelpFixMe vouchers after the surgery and sent them to the State of Maine for payment for the last two years. My experience has been that the paperwork contains all the information that was mentioned in this bill that is wanted by the HelpFixMe program as long as it is filled out properly.

I believe it is not necessary to change anything about the original program except for the length of time it takes to pay the veterinarians. It has sometimes taken months for the Vets to receive compensation for their work. Everything has worked very smoothly on our end for the time I have been involved with HelpFixMe and it is my opinion that the problems stem from whoever is in charge of administering the program. We are very aware of the cat problem because of our trapping efforts all over Maine for many years and that is why I believe the program would be best served if a Rescue or Shelter somewhere in this state would take over the administration of this program. We need a group that will recognize the importance of these vouchers for the clinics in all parts of our state as the cat population is a problem state-wide and not just certain regions (i.e., Northern Maine). We are in dire need of these vouchers in Western Maine just as much as any other area. With the HelpFixMe vouchers we have been able to help many people who would otherwise not get their cats neutered because of lack of money or accessibility to a clinic that offers this program. And we have many, many people asking if we still have them.

As the Vet Tech who works along-side the vet during the surgeries, I know how tiring these days are for the Vet who also works a full-time job, but is gracious enough to help us with the overpopulation cat problem, most often in their spare time and taking time away from their family. I would not think it fair to put more burden on the Veterinarian if they have to be responsible for all the paperwork when it is easy enough for someone else at the clinic to get it done. Our organization runs very smoothly at our clinics and it is because we (4 or more volunteers) each have a part in running the clinic and all the Vet is responsible for is performing the surgery, administering the anesthetic drug and monitoring the cats if needed. I believe we are getting more cats neutered than Vet Hospitals do because we do not have the overhead costs that they do and we only do spay/neuter and not all the other services or surgeries that are offered at the Veterinary Hospitals.

I sincerely hope that the HelpFixMe program continues, but that the administration of this program is run far better than in the past.

Thank you for allowing me to come before you with my opinions and for your time.

Best regards,  
Beverley Soutter  
Secretary  
Cat Coalition of Western Maine