



February 27, 2025

RE: Testimony in Opposition to LD 498 – Resolve, To Improve Standards for Animal Rescue Entities

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee:

My name is Katie Hansberry, and I am the Board President 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 opposition to LD 498 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.

Animal rescue groups are vital in the world of animal welfare and are collectively responsible for saving numerous animals every year. While there are standards—both from an organizational and an animal care standpoint—that all rescue organizations should meet, there is no one-size-fits-all way to run a rescue group. Accordingly, it would be problematic and likely result in unintended consequences to set specific staff-to-animal ratios or a specific limit on rehoming.

Maine law already has strong statutes and rules in place. These include Rule Chapters for the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry governing animal welfare (Chapter 701) and governing the sale of dogs and cats and importation of dogs and cats for resale or adoption (Chapter 216). They cover animal health requirements, housing standards, disease control, record keeping, and more for not just animal shelters and rescues, but also kennels, breeding kennels, and pet shops. Notably, Chapter 701 was amended in 2022 to add rules addressing an entity's capacity to care for animals, which apply to all which provide temporary care for animals. Maine also has an updated dangerous dog statute, which is an appropriate vehicle for addressing a dog posing a public safety issue.

Due to the unique nature of individual rescues and animals, which makes across the board requirements for things such as staff-to-animal ratios and number of times for rehoming unviable, there are additional resources available to address these concerns. The Rescue Group Best Practices Guide is a manual designed to provide structure and guidance to all types of rescue groups. It describes best practices for these organizations and, perhaps more importantly, suggests ways to implement them to help rescues operate at their maximum potential. Also, the Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters was updated in December 2022 and provides a set of common standards for the care and welfare of companion animals in shelters based on scientific evidence and expert consensus. Both include guidance on determining capacity to care and setting rehoming policies.

Maine Humane's recent implementation of a new strategic plan and the hiring of staff has increased our capacity to provide support to animal welfare organizations across the state. We stand ready to assist any organization seeking assistance with their policies and procedures.

Thank you for your consideration and opportunity to submit testimony

Sincerely,

Katie Hansberry

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