



Formerly called the Humane  
Society of the United States and  
Humane Society International

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**Testimony in Support of LD 824  
An Act Regarding Pet Fees in Rental Housing  
Committee on Housing and Economic Development  
March 25, 2025**

Senator Curry, Representative Gere and members of the Committee on Housing and Economic Development:

My name is Katie Hansberry and I am the Maine state director for Humane World for Animals, formerly called the Humane Society of the United States. On behalf of our Maine supporters, I ask the committee to support LD 824, which will help make pet-inclusive housing more accessible while still allowing property owners to safeguard their properties.

Maine is currently facing a housing affordability crisis, where the rising financial pressures make it harder for many to secure and maintain stable housing. This challenge is even greater for renters with pets, a growing demographic as most renters today have pets. Despite the demand for pet-friendly rental housing, 72% of renters report difficulty finding pet-friendly housing, and 59% say the cost is simply too high.<sup>i</sup>

Pet fees are one of the many challenges that pet-owning tenants face.<sup>ii</sup> These costs are increasingly common and come in a variety of forms often adding significant upfront and ongoing expenses, particularly for those with lower incomes.

In Maine, on average tenants pay over \$1,000 in pet fees<sup>iii</sup> in their first lease year alone, creating another financial barrier at a time when many households are already spending more than 30% of their income on housing.<sup>iv</sup> One specific example of a large Maine property management company's pet policy is that it allows two pets but requires a nonrefundable \$250 deposit per pet and a monthly \$75 fee per pet. So, if you have two pets that's an additional \$500 up front and \$1800 a year.

While it's understandable that property owners want to protect their investments, the data suggests that security deposits are generally sufficient for covering pet-related damages. One report found that fewer than 10% of pets cause any damage, and when they do, the average repair cost is just \$210—an amount that is typically covered by a standard security deposit.<sup>v</sup> Yet renters continue to face high nonrefundable pet fees, pushing affordable, pet-friendly housing further out of reach.

Allowing pets in rental housing benefits both tenants and property owners. Renters in pet-friendly housing tend to stay 21% longer than those in non-pet-friendly units, helping to reduce



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turnover costs. Vacancy rates are lower, making units easier to fill.<sup>vi</sup> And when pet-friendly housing is more accessible, fewer pets end up in shelters, strengthening our communities and allowing shelters to focus their time and resources where they are most needed.

I have some personal experience with this matter as I have been both a renter with multiple pets and previously had a property I rented out for a few years where I allowed tenants to have pets. LD 824 takes a balanced approach by capping pet fees and ensuring that any upfront deposits are refundable. This is a commonsense solution that ensures fairness while reducing barriers to housing.

I want to thank Senator Bailey for her leadership on this issue, and I urge the committee to vote ought to pass on LD 824. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie Hansberry".

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<sup>i</sup> Michelson Found Animals and HABRI. 2021 Pet-Inclusive Housing Report.  
<https://www.petsandhousing.org/2021-pet-inclusive-housing-report/>

<sup>ii</sup> According to HWFA survey data from animal shelters across the country.

<sup>iii</sup> According to Smart Apartment Data (provided by Michelson Found Animals)

<sup>iv</sup> According to MaineHousing, the rental cost burden is an ongoing concern (see pg. 15), with the cost of renting in Maine having become a much bigger financial strain for middle-income renters over the past five years. Maine's Housing Outlook Report, January 2025. <https://www.mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/policy-research/research-reports/outlook-reports/2025-housing-outlook-report.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> Michelson Found Animals and HABRI. 2021 Pet-Inclusive Housing Report.  
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