**PAWSitive Pantry**

*Serving families and their pets
in Massachusetts and Vermont*

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www.pawsitivepantry.org

Dear Members of the House Committee of on Judiciary,

In support of H. 578, for PAWSitive Pantry I would like to stress issues faced by Vermont animal shelters. The high cost of care incurred after animals are seized and their length of stay are great concerns for these organizations in the state. Past cases have nearly or actually bankrupted humane societies in Vermont. (Franklin County Humane Society was forced to close temporarily following a costly, lengthy case.) The vast costs and burden on staff, already stretched thin,to care for additional animals and disrupt daily operations for protracted periods. Animals have languished in limbo for months before cases were adjudicated. Animals confined longer than two weeks begin to decompensate physically and behaviorally which becomes inhumane. Just as important, animals not released for adoption occupy space that could be used for adoptable animals, putting added stress on shelters and the communities they serve.

It is essential that Vermont law provide a mechanism to address cases quickly so that relinquished animals can be properly cared for (fully vetted, spayed/neutered if needed, and adopted). Once animals are seized, Vermont needs an automatic trigger for processes that meet these needs. But prosecutors new to animal cruelty cases must start at the beginning, which is time-consuming and inefficient.

Perhaps one solution is to designate a prosecutor for animal cruelty cases who would become expert at adjudicating cases, just as high-volume veterinarians are with spay/neuter. Streamlining the process would save money and lives.

Thank you,

Stacy LeBaron
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*The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.* – Mohandas Gandhi