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

April 14, 2026

Dear Chair Collamore and Members of the Senate Government Operations Committee:

On behalf of our thousands of supporters in Vermont and as the Northeastern Regional Director for Humane World for Animals (formerly the Humane Society of the United States), I am writing to provide comments on H 841. We appreciate the intent of the legislation and support several provisions.

Authorities given to the Division of Animal Welfare

We strongly support giving the Division of Animal Welfare the same authority to inspect pet dealers, animal shelters, rescue organizations, and kennels as municipal animal control officers. Having statewide oversight creates consistency across entities. Equally important is creating updated rules and regulations around the operation of animal shelters and animal rescues in Vermont, which are currently under no oversight. We encourage the committee to consider giving the Director of Animal Welfare specific rule-making authority around the operation of these organizations. Vermont's animal welfare regulations, which currently only apply to pet dealers and pet shops, are woefully outdated. We stand ready to assist the Division with modernizing these protocols to ensure both animal welfare and public safety are addressed.

We are comfortable with the requirement that entities that import domestic pets into Vermont be registered with the agency as long as the language is updated to specify that only Vermont-based animal shelters, rescue organizations, dog breeders, and others register.

Funding for the Division of Animal Welfare

We support the creation of a check-off program to help fund the Division and the ability for the Division to accept donations.

Rabies Vaccinator Program: Support Intent, but Recommend Addressing Full Scope of Crisis

H 841 will establish a program to train humane officers, as defined by 13 V.S.A. § 351, to be certified rabies vaccinators.

We support the intent of expanding access to rabies vaccinations in Vermont. This provision is one small step in the right direction. However, the rabies portion of H 841 does not fully address the lack of access to rabies vaccines and the significant overall lack of access to veterinary care in this state. Reflecting a broader national trend, Vermont is experiencing a crisis in access to care, driven in large part by a shortage of veterinary professionals and the under-utilization of credentialed veterinary technicians. This in turn limits the availability and affordability of essential preventative services, such as rabies and other life-saving vaccinations. This state-wide crisis is particularly acute in rural and underserved areas. We welcome the opportunity to work with the committee to explore more complete and comprehensive solutions to these challenges.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Bourbeau".

Joanne Bourbeau
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