

**Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board**  
**Letter to the Senate Committees on Government Operations in support of H.841**

***Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board***

*Erika Holm*, Central Vermont Humane Society – Chair  
*Sally Adams, Esq.*, State’s Attorneys and Sheriffs Association – Vice Chair  
*Isaac Merriam*, Department of Public Safety  
*Thomas Scott*, Department of Fish and Wildlife  
*Trevor Whipple*, Vermont League of Cities and Towns  
*Jennifer Firpo*, Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council  
*Mary McFaun*, Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs  
*Pamela Brown, DVM*, Veterinarian  
*JoAnn Nichols*, Humane Society of Chittenden County  
*Dr. Kaitlynn Levine*, Agency of Agriculture  
*Vacant*, Vermont Police Association

April 14, 2026

2016 Act No. 155, Section 1943 tasked the creation of an Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board (ACIAB) for the purpose of reviewing Vermont’s existing systems for investigating and responding to animal cruelty complaints, and making recommendations to the Legislature regarding a streamlined, collaborative process that provides the best services to Vermont’s animals statewide.

Since 2017, the ACIAB has reported to the Legislature per its statutory mandate. The ACIAB’s past reports can be found [here](#). The ACIAB has consistently recommended a comprehensive plan to bring together the fragmented investigation functions throughout the state, to create consistency, equity, and find efficiencies, starting with creating a State division responsible for this oversight.

Our Board is in support of H.841, and the intent contained in the legislation to improve the support structure of Vermont’s statute toward the end of improving animal welfare in Vermont. As the legislation moves through the democratic process, you are hearing from experts in the variety of fields that encompass animal welfare, and we offer the expertise of our Board members to assist you in improving the legislation. While some language may still need work, we are in support of what this bill is working to achieve: allowing the Welfare Fund to obtain funding through grants and donations; creating a

Rabies Vaccinator program that will allow better access to rabies vaccines while maintaining the necessary high standards for the administration of the vaccine; allowing for prompt sterilization of intact cats wandering at large; and requiring registration with the Division of Animal Welfare by shelters, rescues, and breeders in Vermont, as well as by any organization, individual, or business importing animals into Vermont for the purpose of adoption, sale or other transfer, or breeding.

The pieces of this bill contain vital first steps toward achieving what the ACIAB has been asking the Legislature to put in place for the betterment of Vermont animals. While we would prefer a more comprehensive overhaul of Vermont's approach to cruelty investigations and overall animal welfare, we are committed to working with animal welfare organizations, advocates, state agencies, and legislators to further this work, and keep the needed changes on the radar, moving continually in the right direction.

Respectfully submitted,

Erika Holm

Chair