



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**  
Ashwin Vasan, MD, PhD  
*Commissioner*

**Testimony**

of

**Corinne Schiff**  
**Deputy Commissioner of Environmental Health**  
**New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**

before the

**New York City Council**  
**Committee on Health**

on

**The State of Animal Rescue in New York City**

September 13, 2024  
New York, NY

Good morning, Chair Schulman and members of the Health Committee. My name is Corinne Schiff, and I am the Deputy Commissioner for Environmental Health at the New York City Health Department. On behalf of Commissioner Vasan, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

The Health Department is charged with overseeing a range of animal-related activities. We permit and inspect facilities such as animal shelters, grooming facilities, pet shops, boarding establishments, and animal exhibitions. We conduct training on small animal handling; issue state-mandated dog licenses; investigate animal nuisance complaints, animal bites, and dangerous dog incidents; fund low-cost spay/neuter services; monitor wildlife and domestic animals for rabies; and undertake rabies prevention activities.

The Health Department is also responsible for managing and caring for the City's population of owner-surrendered, abandoned, homeless, and lost animals. The Department carries out these responsibilities by contracting with ACC to provide services Ms. Weinstock described in her testimony. We were excited to celebrate the opening of the beautiful Paul A. Vallone Queens Animal Care Center with you, Chair, along with ACC, the Vallone family, Health Commissioner, Veterans' Services Commissioner, the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare, and so many other ACC supporters. Opening the first full-service animal shelter in Queens was a major milestone in the City's efforts to upgrade our animal shelter facilities, and it was especially meaningful to be there with the Vallone family, longtime champions of ACC, to honor Paul Vallone. By the end of 2026, the City expects to have a full service shelter operating in every borough.

ACC is a national leader in animal welfare, and I want to thank Ms. Weinstock and ACC's staff for their hard work for New York City. This is a mission-driven organization with staff deeply devoted to the welfare of animals and to helping people find and keep their pets.

I will turn now to Introduction 1018, the legislation under consideration today. The Department appreciates the intent of the bill as we understand it, which is to align Local Law with the new state law banning the sale of dogs, cats, and rabbits from pet shops. The Council had already prohibited pet shops from selling rabbits, as well as guinea pigs, and banned the sale of dogs and cats supplied by certain dealers. Many of the changes proposed in the bill will help the Department enforce this new state prohibition when it goes into effect later this year, and we support those changes. We would like to work with the Council to assess whether some of the bill's provisions, such as those addressing the source of dogs and cats available for sale, are still necessary.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. We are happy to take your questions.



Steve Gruber – Director of Communications  
Mayor’s Alliance for NYC’s Animals

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**Hearing before the New York City Council’s Committee on Health  
Friday, September 13, 2024**

*T2024-2365*

*Oversight - The State of Animal Rescue in New York City*

*T2024-2364*

*A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to the regulation of pet dealers and prohibiting the sale of dogs and cats in retail pet stores, and to repeal section 17-1706 of such code, relating to the exemptions for shelter and rescue partners*

My name is Steve Gruber. I'm the Director of Communications for the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals. I'd like to thank City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams and Health Committee Chair Lynn Schulman for the opportunity to speak today about the state of animal rescue in New York City.

This week we received a call from a concerned pet owner in the Bronx. He reached out to the Mayor's Alliance on behalf of some of his neighbors – seniors on fixed incomes – seeking free or at least affordable spay/neuter services. Their landlord has been pressuring them to get their cats altered because other tenants are complaining about the yowling and urine odor coming from the intact cats' apartments. Frustrated by their inability to find affordable spay/neuter services, one neighbor released her cat outdoors. Another neighbor relinquished her cat to a shelter. Now, Yardia and Crystal, the two remaining pet owners with intact cats, are desperately trying to find an affordable spay/neuter provider so they can keep their cats. We're working with the ASPCA to try to secure appointments for them.

To me, the plight of these pet owners pretty much sums up the current state of animal rescue in New York City.

Today we're facing a crisis. Far too many pets are being abandoned or surrendered to our overburdened shelters and rescue groups. Why? Because too many New York City pet owners' do **not** have access to affordable vet care, including free or affordable spay/neuter services. They can't afford to care for their pets, in some cases struggling even to feed their pets. And those same pressures that drive people to give up their pets also discourage potential pet owners from adopting. So our shelters continue to overflow.

An unsolvable problem, right? I don't think so.

In 2003, New York City was facing another crisis. At that time, three out of four animals that entered our city's shelters didn't get out alive. But we didn't just throw up our hands and say wow, this problem is just impossible to solve. No. In response to that crisis, the rescue community came together, many becoming part of a city-wide collaboration spearheaded by the newly created Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals. Eventually more than 150 shelters and rescue groups, including ACC and the ASPCA, banded together under the Alliance banner and created new strategies to increase adoptions, expand spay/neuter options, and drive down euthanasia rates at ACC. That unprecedented effort paid off, resulting in year-after-year increases in live release rates that reached more than 90 percent by 2016 – a seemingly impossible goal that became a reality.

Today we face a different challenge that threatens to derail our hard-won successes in life-saving. Affordable spay/neuter and routine vet care are out of reach for too many pet owners and rescue organizations. Resources are limited. To continue to rely solely upon the ASPCA, ACC, and other dedicated animal welfare organizations to shoulder the burden is not sustainable. They alone cannot satisfy the needs of our

community. So today we're asking the city, beginning with our City Council, to step up and provide funding to supplement the efforts of the private sector... to create and expand existing high volume spay/neuter resources and low-cost community veterinary facilities to meet the needs of the public and the rescue community. We implore our city's leaders to commit to sharing the cost of providing these much-needed services if we are to solve this solvable problem.

On a separate and final note, I want to express support by the Mayor's Alliance for the new bill sponsored by Councilmembers Brannan and Schulman that would implement in local law the state's prohibition of the sale of cats and dogs in retail pet shops, and require that any person who sells animals to the public in their ordinary course of business, other than an animal shelter or animal rescue organization, receive a permit from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Thank you.



## City Council Health Committee Hearing on The State of Animal Rescue and Introduction 1018

Testimony of Alexandra Silver, Director of the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare  
September 13, 2024

Good morning, Chair Schulman, Councilmember Brannan, and members of the Health Committee. My name is Alexandra Silver and I have the honor of serving as Director of the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare. I'm joined by Risa Weinstock, President and CEO of Animal Care Centers of New York City (ACC), and Corinne Schiff, Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Environmental Health at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, both of whom will also offer testimony.

I am grateful to the City Council for recognizing that animal rescue is a significant subject worthy of government's attention, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

New York City has had an animal welfare liaison in the Mayor's Office since 2015, and since 2020, the first mayoral Office of Animal Welfare in the country. By creating this dedicated entity—and I thank Councilmember Brannan for his bill calling for it, and the Council for their support—we have elevated animal welfare considerations in city government and can stand as a model for other municipalities. There is much potential for growth, but I am heartened by this Office's ability to connect with agencies across the city on a wide variety of issues affecting animals, and—by extension, affecting people.

The well-being of animals does not exist in a vacuum; it is both impacted by and impacts many factors, and it is linked with the well-being of people. Animal shelters, rescue groups and individual rescuers in New York City and across the country are experiencing challenges that reflect broader issues. When we talk about animal rescue, we are talking about financial pressures and housing challenges facing animal guardians. We are talking about veterinary workforce shortages and lack of access to resources for people with pets.

As liaison for the city regarding animal welfare needs and concerns, I hear from and speak frequently with New Yorkers directly involved in animal rescue. We are fortunate in New York City to have many wonderful nonprofit organizations and compassionate individuals committed to helping both animals and the people who love them.

One of those organizations is Animal Care Centers of NYC, which is contracted by the New York City Health Department to operate our city's open-admissions animal shelters, and which also partners with an impressive network of other animal welfare organizations. As I stated the last time I appeared before this committee, and I wholeheartedly reiterate now, the Adams Administration appreciates the hard work and dedication of ACC staff. It is essential that we continue to support ACC, and all New Yorkers can join in their mission of ending animal homelessness, by adopting, fostering, volunteering, or encouraging others to do so.

This Administration is committed to helping get that message out, sharing information about adoption and fostering opportunities in newsletters and social media; including dogs available for adoption from ACC partners at press events; and facilitating opportunities for ACC to conduct outreach. Mayor Adams has hosted and participated in "Kitty Hall" and "City Howl" adoption events at City Hall, joined in the opening of the new Staten Island Animal Care Center, and filmed videos to help promote the importance of adopting, fostering, and volunteering. In our recent "Summer of Possibility" campaign

highlighting various activities and resources, we included “Adopting a Pet,” with the campaign landing page linking to ACC’s website.

Adopting a dog, cat, rabbit or guinea pig from an ACC shelter is now something that Queens residents are, at long last, able to do in their own borough, along with looking for their lost pets. Earlier this week we celebrated the opening of the Paul A. Vallone Queens Animal Care Center, the first full-service animal shelter in Queens. It was wonderful to see Chair Schulman there, and we thank the Council for all they did to make this center a reality. I know I am far from alone in wishing that former Councilmember Vallone, whose compassion for and advocacy on behalf of animals was an inspiration, could have stood with us to cut the ribbon.

Those of us who are familiar with the older centers, built in and for another century, can most appreciate the progress this new facility reflects. On a recent visit, I almost jumped for joy when I saw a sign by a room in the medical department that said “Dentistry.” (People who work and volunteer at ACC and in animal rescue understand why this is so exciting). I am thrilled by the rooms accommodating multiple cats, enabling them to socialize and explore, and the retractable skylight over many of the dog kennels, allowing for light and fresh air. We are aware of some recent concerns regarding conditions at the new center, but it is truly a remarkable, beautiful building that will make for a better animal, adopter, pet-owner, employee, and volunteer experience.

Meanwhile, the New York City Department of Design and Construction is managing ACC capital projects at three other sites. Construction of the new full-service Bronx Animal Care Center is moving along, and as with the Queens center, when it is complete it will bring an essential community resource to a previously underserved borough. The Brooklyn Animal Care Center is undergoing a total renovation, and the new Manhattan Pet Adoption Center is anticipated to open this fall. We marked the opening of the current Staten Island Animal Care Center in 2022.

In coming years, we will have full-service animal shelters in every borough, and welcoming facilities that will vastly improve the adoption experience, encouraging more New Yorkers to play a part in animal rescue. This is an essential component to ensuring the safety and welfare of companion animals in New York City.

But as stated earlier, animal rescue is part of a larger ecosystem, and in addition to improved facilities and promoting pet adoption and fostering, we must do what we can to prevent animals from needing shelter and rescue in the first place.

Leaders in the animal-sheltering field across the country are emphasizing the importance of keeping pets and people together, thereby reducing shelter intake. Doing so means helping animal guardians access resources, and doing our best to adjust policies so that they reflect our understanding that pets are family.

Mayor Adams’ two appointees to ACC’s Board of Directors have each demonstrated a deep commitment to helping people and pets stay together. Prior to focusing on such efforts in her current position with the Humane Society of the United States, Aleah Simpson helped build ACC’s surrender prevention program. Christine Kim—who was the first director of the Mayor’s Office of Animal Welfare—is the founder of My Dog is My Home, a national nonprofit organization that highlights and helps preserve the bonds between people experiencing homelessness and their companion animals.

We marked a milestone in New York City just this spring when the Department of Homeless Services joined with the nonprofit Urban Resource Institute (URI) to launch a pet-inclusive pilot program at a shelter for families experiencing homelessness, ensuring their four-legged family members can be kept with them. URI has led the way in keeping families together with their People and Animals Living Safely (PALS) program at many of their shelters for survivors of domestic violence.

Also this year, the Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare joined the newly created interagency Tenant Protection Cabinet, which aims "to better serve tenants by creating pathways to renter-focused programs and services, and to ensure safe and fair housing conditions." Our Office was eager to take part in such a cabinet, since housing-related challenges are a major contributor to the high populations that animals shelters across the country are experiencing. One of the initiatives that the cabinet is working on is a flyer to raise awareness specifically about protections for tenants with pets and assistance animals.

The Office of Animal Welfare is also exploring ways to make housing more pet-inclusive—more accessible to people with pets of all sizes, for example—to begin with. Doing so would not only enable more animals to stay with the families who already love them, but also widen the pool of potential adopters.

Efforts to keep pets and people together can also help address New York City's overpopulation of outdoor cats without owners, as it is likely that some of those community cats would have remained inside if families had had access to resources to care for them.

Among the places community cats call home are New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments across the five boroughs. At the end of last year, NYCHA awarded a contract to a leading New York City cat rescue organization to provide trap-neuter-release (also known as trap-neuter-return, or TNR) services to help manage this population. This is an important step.

As noted in our 2023 annual report, addressing street cat overpopulation requires a multifaceted approach, and it is essential that New Yorkers who have cats get them spayed or neutered and not let them roam outside. We recognize that affordable spay/neuter resources in New York City—for both owned and community cats—are limited and we continue to explore ways to improve accessibility.

Access to affordable veterinary care in general—not just spay/neuter—is also very much on our radar. This is a challenge for animal guardians, rescuers and shelters across the country, as we face not just high costs of care but a veterinary workforce shortage as well.

City funding for the new Queens ACC includes more than \$1 million for a veterinary clinic that will serve pet owners who, but for assistance with veterinary care, would have to relinquish their animal to ACC. Such a clinic is another significant step.

We have connected with those who run existing nonprofit clinics for companion animals, veterinary practitioners, LaGuardia Community College's veterinary technician program, and others invested in access to care, and we will continue to engage on this.

Earlier this year, Mayor Adams met with a Long Island University College of Veterinary Medicine student who had been awarded a scholarship designed to enhance diversity within the veterinary profession.

This scholarship, facilitated by the Administration, was made possible through the efforts of the Brady Hunter Foundation and Harlem Week.

Ultimately, helping more animals means helping one another, and coming together as a community to address several long-standing and deeply rooted issues.

We plan to sponsor capacity-building workshops and trainings tailored to animal rescue organizations to learn more about opportunities for securing city funding as well as to explore existing avenues for public funding.

The Office has also encouraged, and will continue to encourage, nonprofit organizations involved in animal rescue to register and share foster and other volunteer opportunities on the NYC Service website. Organizations can also post in-kind donation wish lists on this platform, where we are eager to see more animal welfare organizations represented.

Circling back to the role pet adoption plays in animal rescue: animals, rescuers, and shelters would benefit greatly if more people chose to adopt. We expect and are hopeful that the significant New York state legislation prohibiting the sale of dogs and cats in retail pet stores, which takes effect this December, will contribute to increased adoptions. We are interested in learning more about the Council legislation currently under consideration, Introduction 1018, which also addresses the sale of animals, and look forward to discussing details of this bill further with you.

Thank you for your attention and support in addressing animal welfare. We look forward to your questions and continuing our collaboration to improve the lives of animals across New York City. I will now turn it over to Risa Weinstock of ACC.

## **Testimony of Risa Weinstock, President and CEO**

### **Animal Care Centers of NYC**

**Before the**

**New York City Council Committee on Health  
Hearing on The State of Animal Rescue in New York City**

**Friday, September 13, 2024, 10:00 a.m.**

**Council Chambers, City Hall**

#### **Introduction**

Good morning, Chairperson Schulman, members of the Health Committee and City Council. My name is Risa Weinstock, and I am the President and CEO of Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would like to thank City Council, the Administration, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (The Health Department) for the commitment to ACC and the health and welfare of NYC's shelter animals with the addition of new full-service care centers in Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island; a complete renovation of the Brooklyn shelter; and the addition of a pet adoption center in Manhattan. With this substantial support and support from the private sector, ACC continues to grow as a national leader for open admission animal shelters.

#### **Background and Overview of ACC**

Established in 1995 as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, ACC has been dedicated to rescuing, caring for, and finding homes for New York City's homeless and abandoned animals for almost thirty years. Over the last decade we have expanded our services beyond the four walls of the shelter and into the community, identifying root causes for animal surrender or abandonment and targeting community needs rooted in surrender prevention and preserving the human-animal bond. Our services in our care centers and in the community are the foundation of our mission to end animal homelessness in NYC.

ACC is unique among all other animal welfare organizations in the city in that we are the only "open admissions" organization. Under our contract with the city and the Health Department, ACC accepts every animal brought to us, whether the animal has been abandoned, surrendered, or found as a stray. Since January of this year, ACC has taken in over 13,000 animals. To date, with the combination of our adoption program and a robust partnership with over 300 rescue groups in our New Hope program, ACC has been able to place 91% of cats, dogs, rabbits, and guinea pigs that have come through our doors.

#### **Animal Welfare Across the Country and in NYC**

Animal shelters nationally are navigating many post-COVID challenges that are dramatically and negatively impacting animal welfare. Adoption alone will not solve these issues or alleviate the strain on our shelters. Community support and collaboration, with the common goal of achieving the best outcomes for the most

animals, is necessary. No one organization can fix what is happening, but all of us working together can certainly lead to a stronger state of animal welfare in NYC.

## **Challenges Facing ACC**

### **Increased Intake Rates**

The two main drivers of animal intake at ACC are owner surrender and stray animals. The common thread to these intakes is financial hardship -- job losses, housing instability, pet restrictions in housing, the rising cost of basic pet care, pet food, and veterinary services. We have dedicated significant resources to provide social services to assist thousands of pet owners in successfully keeping their pets. Yet other constraints like pet restrictions in rental homes and apartments, and pet fees on top of an increasingly unaffordable rental market, and the rising cost of veterinary care leave our clients with no options but surrender. These are not issues that ACC can solve alone.

### **Stray Animals**

There has also been an uptick in stray animals being brought to ACC. These are the hardest to place animals because we have no access to important information like their temperament, their behavior, or any latent health issues. As we take in more stray cats and dogs, the amount of time animals spend in our care center also increases. That is because so many of the animals we take in are not spayed or neutered and by law ACC must sterilize cats and dogs before releasing them to adopters or rescuers.

### **Decline in Adoptions**

While there was a significant increase in pet adoptions during the height of the pandemic when many people were spending more time at home, the national trend as well as in NYC, is that the rate of adoption is declining. As people return to more regular work away from home and social routines, fewer individuals are looking to adopt pets, leading to longer stays for animals in shelters. For the same reasons that lead to surrender, the rising cost of pet care and a crisis of affordability of housing and daily goods, have all added to lower adoption rates.

### **Rising Veterinary Costs and Limited Access to Care**

There is also a very critical nationwide shortage of veterinarians and veterinary technicians. Affordability and availability of care have resulted in many pets going untreated for basic wellness issues to more serious conditions. At ACC, many of our clients cannot afford care. This is specifically why our surrender prevention program was implemented. We offer an array of resources including a pet food pantry, counseling, free/local vaccine clinics, vouchers for free or low-cost spay/neuter and medical services. With the addition of two clinics as part of our shelters in Queens and the Bronx, we will be able to increase pet retention by offering access to low-cost veterinary services to our clients who may need to surrender their pet because of an inability to pay for needed veterinary care.

### **Future Goals and Initiatives**

Even with the challenges I have outlined, ACC remains optimistic about our future and the potential to better serve the homeless and abandoned animals of NYC.

Earlier this week we officially opened the Paul A. Vallone Queens Animal Care Center. This large and modern facility provides an abundance of natural light throughout the building, a state-of-the-art medical suite with sophisticated and modern medical equipment like an X-ray machine and a separate suite for dental work.

In May of 2023, the city also broke ground on a brand-new Animal Care Center in the Bronx. Like Queens, this shelter will be the very first of its kind for the borough. Soon, the city will also cut the official ribbon on a new adoption center next to the Manhattan care center. Finally, the Brooklyn Animal Care Center is undergoing complete renovation. The upgrades are part of the Administration's and ACC's mutual commitment to providing the best possible environment for the animals in our care and enhancing the services we offer to our community.

Once construction on all these new and innovative buildings are complete, the Council and New York City will have fulfilled the late Paul A. Vallone's commitment and promise to New Yorkers -- a full-service animal shelter in every borough. ACC is grateful to be part of that reality and is committed to ensuring the best outcomes for the most animals in partnership with the animal welfare community of this great city.

**Conclusion:**

In closing, I want to express my gratitude to the City Council for its continued support of ACC. We are committed to our mission to end animal homelessness by being a resource for the community and ensuring that every New Yorker has access to the resources they need to adopt a pet or to care for their pets long-term.

I invite the Health Committee and all members of Council to come for a tour of our centers, meet our staff, attend one of our community pet vaccine and wellness clinics, or simply adopt or foster from one of our shelters. We have all kinds of dogs, cats, rabbits, and guinea pigs to choose from. I am certain we can make a good match for you. A visit to any of our care centers will give context to my testimony, but also it will help you see first-hand the challenge and meaning of our work and the positive impact that ACC is making on the pets and people of New York City. In fact, individuals who want to make an impact right away are encouraged to attend our online dog foster orientation this Sunday. More information and sign-up is available on our website at [nycacc.org/foster](http://nycacc.org/foster).

I welcome any questions you may have and look forward to working with you to improve the lives of animals and pet owners across New York City.

Thank you.

# Animal Care Centers of NYC COMMUNITY REPORT

## 1ST HALF OF 2024 | JANUARY - JUNE

### KEEPING PETS IN HOMES

**1,816**  
Surrender  
Preventions

**819**   
Boroughbreds  
Returned Home

 **1,549**  
Community Pets  
Vaccinated/Chipped



### IN SHELTER CARE

**16,564**  
Vaccinations  
Administered 

**3,317**   
Specialized Surgeries  
for ACC Animals

**7,375**  
Companion  
Animals Taken In

### FINDING PETS HOMES

**3,267** Public  
Adoptions  2,260  762  245

**3,710** Placed with  
Rescue Partners  2,105  1,382  223



### ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

**762**   
Boroughbreds  
Foster Placements

**72**   
New Hires  
on Team ACC!

**17,730**  
Hours of work  
by ACC Volunteers

### SHOWCASING BOROUGHBREDS

**36 million**  
Profiles Reached Across  
Social Media

**457k**  
Social Media  
Followers 

**82**  
Community Kids  
Presentations 



### PLACEMENT RATE

Dogs  
**89%**

Cats  
**92%**

Rabbits  
**96%**

Guinea Pigs  
**99%**

Michelle Villagomez  
NYC Legislative Senior Director  
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Good morning, Chairperson Schulman, and members of the Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on issues of significant importance to the well-being of both animals and residents in New York City—the need for increased support for Animal Care Centers of New York City (ACC), the critical need to support animal rescues and the essential role of affordable veterinary care and surrender prevention programs to keep animals from entering the shelter system.

I am here on behalf of the ASPCA, an organization headquartered here in New York City, with a mission to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States. Our deep commitment to New York City's animals is demonstrated by our ongoing partnership with ACC and the NYPD.

ACC's current situation is reflective of a national trend. Shelters across the country are full, with over 6.5 million dogs and cats entering animal shelters last year, but only 4.8 million of them finding adoptive homes. Many shelters, including ACC, are facing placement challenges due to animals with longer stays, often because of complex medical or behavioral needs, ongoing staffing shortages, and insufficient adoption rates. Despite these significant challenges, ACC has maintained a remarkable 90%+ placement rate since 2017, making New York City one of the nation's leaders in placing dogs, cats, and rabbits among high-intake shelters that publicly report data. This is an impressive achievement, but it underscores the critical need for continued and enhanced support.

One of the most effective ways to reduce shelter overcrowding is through the implementation of comprehensive surrender prevention programs. These programs should include not only affordable veterinary services but also support for pet owners facing housing instability, domestic violence, or homelessness. Many families are forced to surrender their pets because they cannot find pet-friendly housing or because shelters for domestic violence victims and the homeless do not allow animals. To address this, we must take a holistic approach to keep pets out of shelters. While animal rescues and non-profits such as the ASPCA are doing incredible work, the scale of the problem demands broader, systemic solutions.

Pet-friendly housing is a crucial component of this holistic approach. The city should work with developers, landlords, and housing authorities to increase the availability of pet-friendly apartments, particularly in affordable housing complexes. Housing laws and policies that ban pets, prohibit specific breeds, require cats to be declawed or dogs to

be debarked or severely restrict pet ownership based on size should be rejected. Additionally, policies that protect tenants with pets from unfair eviction or discriminatory practices must be strengthened. When families are forced to choose between housing and their pets, it often leads to heartbreaking decisions that result in increased shelter intake.

Similarly, we need to expand the availability of pet-friendly shelters for domestic violence victims and the homeless. For many individuals fleeing abusive situations or facing homelessness, their pets are their only source of comfort and stability. Yet, too often, they are forced to leave their animals behind due to a lack of pet-friendly options. This not only traumatizes the individuals involved but also contributes to the overcrowding of shelters. By ensuring that these shelters can accommodate pets, we can provide a lifeline to those in crisis while simultaneously alleviating pressure on our animal shelters. The creation of more pet-friendly housing options we can keep families together and reduce the burden on our animal shelter system.

The importance of affordable veterinary care cannot be overstated. For many New Yorkers, particularly those in low-income communities, the cost of veterinary care can be prohibitive. This lack of access often leads to preventable health issues in pets, and in some cases, forces pet owners to make the heartbreaking decision to surrender their beloved animals to already overburdened shelters. By expanding affordable veterinary care and supporting surrender prevention programs, the city can help keep pets with their families, where they belong, and reduce the strain on our animal shelter system.

Today, you will hear from my colleagues in community medicine, community engagement, and adoptions, who will provide further insights into the specific programs and services the ASPCA offers to ACC, pet owners, rescue organizations, and the NYPD. Our efforts are designed to complement and bolster the essential work that ACC does every day, but it is important to note that ACC needs more resources and continued support from the city, and the public to better meet the needs of New York City's animals.

It is important to emphasize that while the ASPCA plays a significant role, we cannot be the sole provider of these critical services. The need for affordable veterinary care, shelter resources, and comprehensive animal support far exceeds what any single organization can deliver. The ASPCA's efforts are designed to supplement and enhance the existing animal welfare infrastructure, not to replace it. We strongly encourage the City to support other organizations and community stakeholders to expand the network of care for New York City's animals.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to consider a multi-faceted approach to supporting animal rescues and preventing shelter overcrowding. This includes increased funding

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for ACC, for affordable veterinary care, the expansion of surrender prevention programs, and the development of more pet-friendly housing and shelter options for those in crisis. By addressing these issues holistically, we can keep pets with their families, reduce the strain on our animal shelters, and create a more compassionate, humane city for all.

Thank you.

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Lucy Jatón  
Manager, Training and Education Community Cats  
Community Engagement  
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Good morning, my name is Lucy Jatón, and I am the Manager, Training and Education, Community Cats for the ASPCA. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of increasing resources for animal rescues in New York City, particularly for those working tirelessly to support community cats.

We are here to highlight the urgent need for greater funding, access to affordable veterinary care, and overall support for the organizations that dedicate themselves to helping our city's most vulnerable felines. Today, you will hear from many rescuers about their needs and the challenging work involved in being an animal rescuer. These organizations are under-resourced, yet they continue to go above and beyond to save animals and support pet owners in our communities. Their dedication and perseverance are commendable, but they need more support to sustain their vital efforts.

Supporting community cats involves a tremendous amount of behind-the-scenes work, which is resource-intensive. Our Community Cats Program at the ASPCA guides the public and other rescue groups on cruelty referrals and works directly with law enforcement on such cases. We provide humane education to the NYPD and NYPD Explorers, enhancing our partnership with law enforcement and further supporting community cat work on the ground.

However, the reality is that many in our community are seeking more spay/neuter appointments, and our resources are stretched thin. The challenges faced by our program are mirrored across the broader rescue community, which is why we need the collective effort of the entire community—including the City Council—to truly make an impact.

We want to start by describing the services the ASPCA provides for community cats. Our program supports the community through education, training, and connections to outside resources. We offer workshops—both in-person and online—to train community members and agencies on how to manage and care for community cats effectively. We recognize that there are very few outside resources available, and we urgently need more. We ask the City and the rescue community to work alongside us to address this issue, as we all share the same goals of improving the lives of community cats across New York City.

Currently, just one person manages our Community Cats casework. This individual spends about 50% of their time on fieldwork and case management, which includes

conducting site visits to assess conditions, gathering information, and developing intervention plans. The remaining 50% is dedicated to education and training, aimed at empowering the community to take proactive steps in managing community cats. It is important to note that the ASPCA does not directly provide Trap-Neuter-Return-Monitor (TNRM) services; instead, our focus is on empowering the community through education and support.

To give you a better sense of the scope of rescues we work with, I would like to share some stats:

- 892 rescuers have signed the 2024 RSS agreement and are currently active with us.
- There are over 9,000 rescuers who have an RSS account and could become active.
- In 2023 we provided appointments to 46 different organizations and 116 individual rescuers

The ASPCA provides a minimum of 600 free spay/neuter appointments each month for community cats, including appointments for pregnant cats, which is significantly more than any other private organization in NYC. This September alone, we are offering approximately 1,318 free spay/neuter spots in NYC. However, there have been times when fewer appointments were available. This is not because we want to provide less support or see more unaltered community cats; it is simply what our capacity allows. The ASPCA has also provided funding for spay/neuter services to other groups to help bolster their efforts.

We are deeply grateful to all the rescuers and community members who are already making a difference. Your dedication is invaluable, and by working together, we can create a more sustainable and humane environment for the community cats of NYC. But to achieve this, we need the City's support. We respectfully urge the City Council to consider increased funding and access to affordable veterinary care for rescues and community cat programs across New York City. With your help, we can ensure that every community cat receives the care they need and deserve.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to working together to improve the lives of community cats and the dedicated individuals who support them.

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Matt Goldweber  
Senior Program Manager  
Community Engagement  
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Good morning. I am Matt Goldweber, Senior Program Manager for the ASPCA's Community Engagement team.

The ASPCA believes that surrender prevention programs are of critical importance to keeping pets and people together. These initiatives, which may include low-cost veterinary services, pet food assistance, and behavioral support, help pet owners address the challenges that might otherwise lead to surrender. By investing in these programs, the city can proactively prevent the influx of animals into shelters, ultimately saving resources and lives.

We recognize that pet guardians may not have access to vital pet care and services due to obstacles such as financial barriers, unexpected crises, and lack of nearby veterinary resources. The ASPCA Community Engagement (CE) team in New York City works with pet guardians and local agencies to identify solutions to keep animals in their homes whenever possible. The CE team is comprised of 11 animal welfare professionals and handles nearly 400 cases per year. In 2023, we assisted nearly 2,000 pets throughout NYC. CE does this by providing access to low-cost veterinary care (more than 1,000 appointment referrals to ASPCA clinics in 2023), spay/neuter services (more than 500 pets referred to ASPCA clinic for spay/neuter services in 2023) and additional resources such as pet food and supplies and proper pet housing. We also provide education and training on community cat care to help caretakers and rescuers position themselves to best care for their colonies and populations.

The CE program is a one-time, voluntary service, intended to provide relief to pets and guardians facing hardship, and educate them on pet ownership. We cannot compel pet guardians to accept our services, and any assistance is provided at their request, and/or our recommendation. For any pet needs that fall outside the parameters of what the program can provide, we make referrals to partner organizations and agencies.

We conduct a case management style of service, in which we first receive referrals from a variety of sources, contact each respective pet guardian seeking services, and if they qualify for our program, make a home visit to assess the needs of their pets and the guardians themselves. From there, our staff collaborates with the guardian to make a plan for service delivery, which will aim to see all their needs through. Once all needs are met, the case is closed, and the guardian is provided with information on other ASPCA programs and services that may be useful for them in the future.

In addition, we make referrals for pet guardians themselves if they have needs of their own, beyond those of their pets. This can include referring them to programs that assist with services such as food assistance, pet-friendly housing, job placement, and more.

Members of CE also attend outreach events held by community organizations and city agencies. These events give us an opportunity to have a presence in communities throughout NYC and reach pet guardians who can benefit from ASPCA resources.

We also work closely with the NYPD and human service providers, including domestic violence and elderly care programs to refer pet guardians to additional services and support for the entire family. With the NYPD, CE works to prevent and combat animal cruelty across the five boroughs. The ASPCA cares for animal cruelty victims by providing medical and behavioral treatment, housing, and placement for these rescued animals. The ASPCA also assists criminal investigations managed by the NYPD and New York City's District Attorney's offices through forensic evaluations, legal support, and training (the ASPCA trained more than 3,500 members of the NYPD in 2023 alone). We specifically support NYPD cruelty cases by removing animals from crime scenes and providing transportation of said animals to our 92nd Street facility where they receive the care and sheltering they need.

CE also frequently collaborates with ACC on large-scale cases, in which there are many animals involved. During these cases, both organizations are on-scene together and work in homes to remove animals to facilitate surrender to our respective facilities.

Finally, the CE program often receives case referrals from the ACC Community Pets regarding pet guardians who could benefit from our services. After receiving the referral, CE contacts the guardian and conducts standard case management.

We at the ASPCA have an acute understanding of the high demand for pet care needs in New York City. We hope this testimony clarified what we as an organization are capable of providing through our Community Engagement program, and as a voluntary program, what services CE is unable to provide. Our aim remains to improve the lives of our city's pets and pet guardians alike, and we look forward to continue working with fellow animal welfare individuals and organizations to accomplish this.

Thank you.

Rena LaFaille  
Senior Director Administration  
Adoptions  
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Good morning, I am Rena LaFaille, Senior Director of Administration for Adoptions at the ASPCA.

It is important to recognize that the challenges faced by ACC are not unique to New York City but are part of a national trend affecting animal welfare organizations across the country. Shelters and rescues nationwide are grappling with increased intake, limited resources, and a shortage of veterinary professionals. Despite these challenges, ACC has maintained high placement rates and continues to innovate with programs that support both animals and pet owners.

We have a unique perspective on the challenges and successes of animal welfare in our city, and our partnership with ACC has been instrumental in our shared mission to help New York City's most vulnerable animals. ACC, as the only open-admission animal care center serving all five boroughs, plays an essential role in managing the city's homeless pet population. We congratulate ACC on the opening of the Paul A. Vallone Queens Animal Care Center, which will give local homeless animals their best chances at finding loving homes, facilitate reunions of lost pets with their families, and alleviate pressure on shelter operations at the other facilities.

The ASPCA collaborates with hundreds of shelters and rescues across the country, including ACC, to support homeless animals through various means such as relocation, training, resource sharing, and legislative advocacy. Our partnership with ACC is a key component of this work, and through our collaboration, we provide ACC with grant funding for their innovative programs, spay/neuter services, and veterinary care for owned animals in underserved communities referred by ACC. We also regularly transfer dogs and cats from ACC to the ASPCA Adoption Center, providing these animals with the specialized support they need to transition into new homes.

The ASPCA has provided nearly \$9.5 million in grants to ACC to advance their efforts to reduce euthanasia, increase adoption and placement numbers, and improve access to care for the city's most at risk animals. In April 2022, ACC established a Special Case Advocate team, funded by the ASPCA, which includes two full-time special case advocates with social work backgrounds who work to keep people and pets together by offering resources and support to families and pets who may be temporarily separated. This innovative approach to preventing animal surrenders is just one example of how ACC continuously adapts to meet the needs of both animals and pet owners in New York City.

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At the ASPCA Adoption Center and Kitten Nursery in New York City, we focus on giving second chances to the most vulnerable animals—those who are often overlooked and who typically stay longer in shelters. Since launching in 2014, the ASPCA Kitten Nursery has supported more than 11,000 New York City kittens, providing lifesaving care during the peak of kitten season when shelters are overwhelmed with newborns. The majority of kittens are transferred from ACC, and our facility provides the specialized medical care and round-the-clock attention these vulnerable animals require.

Many animals come to us through our unique partnership with the NYPD, from our Community Engagement program, or as transfers from ACC, and often require extensive medical or behavioral rehabilitation. By providing these animals with the care they need, we help to alleviate the burden on ACC, allowing them to assist more cats and dogs in need.

The continued success of these efforts depends not only on the collaboration between organizations like the ASPCA and ACC but also on the public's active participation. We urge the public to support shelters and rescues by adopting, fostering, volunteering, and advocating for support to sustain this vital public service.

In closing, we commend ACC for their unwavering commitment and success in maintaining high placement rates despite the ongoing challenges. However, the support of this committee and the City Council is essential in ensuring that ACC and other animal welfare organizations have the necessary resources to continue their lifesaving work. We respectfully urge the Council to consider increased funding and support for ACC, as well as for the broader network of animal welfare organizations that serve this city.

By investing in ACC and supporting their innovative programs, we can continue to provide second chances to animals in need and help build a more compassionate and humane New York City.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and we look forward to working together to support ACC and the animals and families they serve.

**H u m a n e S o c i e t y o f N e w Y o r k**  
Animal Clinic/Vladimir Horowitz and Wanda Toscanini Horowitz Adoption Center  
306 East 59<sup>th</sup> Street, NYC 10022 / tel. (212) 752-4842

The Humane Society of New York thanks the New York City Council Committee on Health for holding a hearing on the State of Animal Rescue in New York City and on Int. No. 1018.

There is a great need in our city for high-volume low-cost and free spay/neuter and veterinary care for rescued animals and for those animals whose caretakers cannot afford to pay for these services. Preventing breeding is the most significant way to reduce overpopulation and its tragic consequences.

The Humane Society of New York performs free and low-cost spay/neuter and provides free and low-cost veterinary services each and every day. We are here to help people and animals in need. There is such a great demand for these services that we often must book months in advance. Clearly, so much more is needed in our city.

It is our hope that the New York City Council will provide substantial funding for free and low-cost spay/neuter and veterinary care in every borough. The testimony of the rescuers clearly demonstrates the seriousness of the dog and cat overpopulation problem, with animals suffering in our streets and rescuers making personal sacrifices that are far beyond what they should have to do. If the city offered these services, it would surely help to reduce the population, help people whose animals need medical care they cannot afford to keep their animals, and reduce the strain on the Animal Care Centers (ACC).

We also suggest that efforts be made to ensure that money in the state's Animal Population Control Fund (section 99-xx, State Finance Law) emanating from New York City residents is forwarded to the New York City Animal Population Control Fund (section 17-812 of the NYC Administrative Code). This would include, for example, money derived from the sale of Animal Population Control Fund license plates (section 404-p of the Vehicle and Traffic Law, which directs money to the state fund). Although these funds are only a small fraction of what is needed to address the dog and cat overpopulation crisis in New York City, it will still be worthwhile to obtain. State legislation has been introduced to require the money to be forwarded (A. 883, introduced by Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal).

The Humane Society of New York strongly supports efforts to ensure that the state law prohibiting the sale of dogs, cats, and rabbits at pet stores is implemented. We have concerns regarding the language of Int. 1018 in that it may be interpreted to allow people who are not breeders to engage in the business of selling dogs and cats (which may undermine the pet store sale ban). We support the intent of Int. 1018 and look forward to working with the Council on this legislation.

Again, the Humane Society of New York thanks the New York City Council Committee on Health for addressing animal welfare and we urge the City Council to support significant funding to ensure that the animals in our city get the care and protection they need. As the testimony of so many people indicated, time is of the essence.

Sandra DeFeo  
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Contributions and gifts are tax deductible  
Website: [www.HumaneSocietyNY.org](http://www.HumaneSocietyNY.org)



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

September 13, 2024

Chair Lynn Schulman  
New York City Council -Committee on Health  
250 Broadway  
New York, NY 10007

RE: The State of Animal Rescue in NYC

Good morning, Chair Schulman and Honorable Committee Members.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) takes this opportunity to request that Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC) receive increased budgetary support for its mission to end animal homelessness in the community.

**The accomplishments of this organization, particularly under current leadership, are meaningful and ACC's growth and development over the past 12 years is inspiring.**

Animal homelessness does not happen in a vacuum. Systemic inequity and institutional barriers create challenges for people in accessing pet resources and information. This extreme lack of access and the shortage of veterinarians for shelter work make for a national crisis. According to ACC, *“access to affordable vet care, the cost of housing, and even the cost of food has impacted family's ability to keep their pets. The same financial pressures that lead people to surrender their pets are the same ones preventing potential adopters from adding a pet into their home.”*

While the City provides capital funding and core staff salaries for ACC, more funding is needed for ACC to reach its full potential. We cannot rescue our way out of pet homelessness. In order to prioritize pet *retention*, resources are needed to bolster programs and increase spay/neuter and veterinary accessibility for average New Yorkers. The lack of access to these resources is a social justice issue. Access to medical care for pets and keeping them in homes reduces shelter intake, saves money and is the most humane outcome.

Currently, ACC must put its energy into fundraising for surrender prevention programs. The organization should *not* need to hustle for grants and donations to carry out this life-saving work. **ACC receives less funding per capita in comparison to other populous cities in the U.S. However, NYC is the largest by population, with an open admission shelter system. This disparity doesn't jibe, and it doesn't make sense.**

Thank you for the opportunity to present today. Please increase support for ACC so the organization can grow to meet the needs of New York City's homeless animals.

Sincerely,

**Brian Shapiro**  
New York State Director  
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**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
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9/13/24

## Memorandum of Support

On behalf of the Animal Legal Defense Fund—the nation’s preeminent legal advocacy organization for animals—and our supporters in New York City, we submit this memo respectfully requesting the New York City council make a serious investment in the state of animal rescue in New York City.

Companion animal issues stem from human made problems. A lack of funding for resources such as education regarding the importance of and spay and neuter, affordable veterinary care, and pet-friendly affordable housing—all contribute to overpopulation and an overburdened sheltering system. These are not issues that any single animal welfare entity can solve.

### **Nearly all (97%) of U.S. pet owners consider their pets a part of their family.<sup>1</sup>**

Over half of pet owners not only consider their pets a part of their family, but say their pets are as much a part of their family as a human member.<sup>2</sup> Yet overburdened animal shelters are witnessing families surrender pets, some who have been a part of the family for years, because of the lack of pet-friendly affordable housing in New York City.<sup>3</sup> No family should have to abandon one of their members in order to find a home.

### **Renters and lower income families with pets have fewer options.**

In 2021, New York passed legislation that prohibits insurance carriers from discriminating against homeowners based on their dog’s breed.<sup>4</sup> However, it is still lawful to allow the same discrimination against renters. New York City is largely a city of renters with over two-thirds of households renting their homes and roughly half of those households living in rent-regulated apartments.<sup>5</sup> This means over two-thirds of households in New York City may still be subject to insurance discrimination, based solely on dog breed. A family should not be forced to separate because of limited affordable housing options.

Keeping families together allows shelters and rescuers to put their time and resources toward providing needed services for the community rather than toward housing animals who already had a loving home. It is for these reasons that the Animal Legal Defense Fund respectfully requests the city council make a serious investment in animal rescue in New York City.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Brown, *About half of U.S. pet owners say their pets are as much a part of their family as a human member*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (Jul. 7, 2023), <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/07/07/about-half-us-of-pet-owners-say-their-pets-are-as-much-a-part-of-their-family-as-a-human-member/> (last accessed Sep. 11, 2024).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Kate Gibson, *Animal shelters are overwhelmed by abandoned dogs. Here’s why.*, SHELTER ANIMALS COUNT (Jan. 9, 2024), <https://www.shelteranimalscount.org/animal-shelters-are-overwhelmed-by-abandoned-dogs-heres-why/> (last accessed Sep. 11, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> N.Y. Pub. Health L. § 3421 (2023).

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Siegal, Jason Bram, & Astha Dutta, *Spotlight: New York City’s Rental Housing Market*, N.Y.C. COMPTROLLER (Jan. 17, 2024), <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/spotlight-new-york-citys-rental-housing-market/> (last accessed Sep. 11, 2024).

Sincerely,

Caitlin Kelly  
Legislative Affairs Program Fellow  
Animal Legal Defense Fund  
[ckelly@aldf.org](mailto:ckelly@aldf.org)

Elizabeth Forel  
Coalition for NYC Animals, Inc  
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elizabeth@nycanimals.org

**TESTIMONY BEFORE CITY COUNCIL – COMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
RE ACC OVERSIGHT & RESCUE  
September 13, 2024 -- addendum added 9/14/24**

*“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated” Mahatma Gandhi*

My name is Elizabeth Forel, and I am the president of the Coalition for NYC Animals – incorporated in 1994 for the sole purpose of dealing with NYC taking over animal control.

On June 3, 2001, I authored an article for Satya magazine about the NYC animal pound *“What we have been doing in this city has not been working. The present impound and kill system continues indefinitely because it is institutionalized, politically safe and operates behind a curtain of secrecy. Our politicians have been complicit in this tragedy, accepting the kill numbers as normal, while not speaking out against this slaughter of the innocent.”*

Here it is 23 years later, and we are still trying to get a different set of politicians to do the right thing for our animals.

I view this hearing as a referendum and evaluation of how the government has managed animal control, which is its responsibility – since the shelter system and the many homeless animals on the street is a reflection of how the government cares about its cats and dogs. I include in this – most all City Council members and Mayor Adams – all complicit in failing their constituents. If they cared, things would be much better. There are 35 Council committees and not one on animal issues – although it has been requested. Advocates must try to make their case before committees that do not have animal issues in high regard – and before committees whose members often do not pay attention and leave before the public testifies.

However, if Council Members were to use this hearing to step up and take responsibility for the animal control disaster in this city – things can and should be better. You have the power, and it is up to all of you.

## **REQUESTS**

### **Comprehensive Report**

I request that the Health Committee produce a comprehensive report – a white paper - addressing why conditions have been so mediocre and inferior for animals in NYC and what can be done to solve the many problems. It must include the lack of low cost or free accessible spay/neuter; related humane education about the need for spay/neuter, and responsible pet care, low-cost veterinary services - and the lack of pet friendly housing. It should also include the TNR rescue community that has little support from City government – and all homeless street animals.

An alarming 70-75% of the animals coming into the ACC shelters are not neutered – most having already had litters contributing to the overpopulation of cats and dogs resulting in animals being born or dumped on the street or at the ACC, since they are contractually obligated to accept all animals. Instead of focusing on making shelters larger, the focus should be on reducing the animal population via free spay/neuter - and by improving the quality of adoptions to reduce returns.

However, we cannot adopt ourselves out of this problem. Open adoptions – i.e. adopting to just about anyone – have resulted in many animals being returned or dumped on the street. Most animals coming into the shelter, whether a failed adoption or relinquished, become depressed, withdrawn, and fearful. They do not thrive in a stressful shelter environment. Many are not good candidates for a new adoption and are euthanized. This cycle must be recognized and stopped. Shelters around the country are beginning to see this new trend – that we cannot get to “no-kill” by promoting adoptions. Reducing the number of animals in the population through widespread spay/neuter is the obvious solution. But it takes serious government commitment and funding.

### **Hire a Management Consultant**

The City of NY should hire a management consultant – expert in animal sheltering - to provide an evaluation of ACC programs and practices and recommend solutions to improve their performance, efficiency, operations and transparency.

I suggest Ed Boks Consulting - <https://edboks.com/about/> Mr. Boks has much experience in this area, having served as the Executive Director of the ACC for several years in the early part of 2000.

### **Independent Oversight Committee**

There needs to be a permanent, independent entity to provide oversight of the ACC. There is ample reason for this request to bring accountability and transparency to this

organization – after all - it is our tax dollars at work. Without it, animal activists and advocates have no recourse and are helpless to affect change.

### **TNR Rescuers and homeless street animals – both cats and dogs**

TNR Rescuers, many of whom are also New Hope Rescuers and focus on cats – and all New Hope Rescuers – need more government support.

TNR – (trap, neuter and release/return) focuses on the many, many homeless, feral cats in NYC. The ASPCA, funded by the DoHMH for this purpose, does not provide enough vet appointments for spaying/neutering. This must change. In addition, all rescuers must privately absorb the cost of feeding and additional vet care for all the animals in their colonies or foster homes. It is a huge financial burden, depending on support from the public.

The huge population of feral cats at the Willets Point Project in Queens are called the Shey Stadium Strays. See NY Post article dated 9/8/24 by Katherine Donlevy. An area carved out of this project must be provided to care for these cats. The only other solution is to exterminate them as they are currently doing in Turkey – allowing the city of NY to further slip back into barbarism. This, of course, would be unacceptable.

### **What Independent Council Members can do:**

At this juncture, I ask the ten Council Members who are part of the Health Committee to give at least \$10,000 each to the ACC from your 2025 discretionary budget, marked for spay/neuter of animals belonging to NYC residents. If 51 Council Members gave at least \$10,000 each, totaling \$510,000 – it would cover spay/neuter for 3,400 animals.

According to Andrew Kaplan, DVM, owner of City Veterinary Care in Manhattan, and founder of the Toby Project, which has worked with the ACC, each spay/neuter is \$150. See <https://www.tobyproject.org/>

If something is not done soon, NYC will continue its slide into a third world country for its cats and dogs and possibly follow the countries that do mass poisoning of stray animals. Surely in this – the wealthiest city in the world, we can do a lot better.

### **Postscript:**

This past summer, the Coalition for NYC Animals introduced a spay/neuter project involving Council Members and the veterinarians in their districts. We did it because we recognize this serious problem, and that the City has failed to address this issue. We sent mailings to the ten Council Members in Manhattan. Of those ten, two of the members of the Health Committee - Carmen De La Rosa and Julie Menin were among

those notified. De La Rosa's office did not answer numerous mailings and phone calls. Menin's office was not interested and showed no understanding of the issue.

While some of the other Manhattan Council Members seemed interested, only one, Gale Brewer agreed to participate. This is shameful.

The Health Committee, which focuses on the human population, is not the right venue to hear the public's concerns about the ACC problems or the bigger issue of the serious cat and dog overpopulation problem. This is yet another reason why the City Council needs a separate committee on animal issues.

###

### **ADDENDUM 9/14/24**

At the hearing yesterday, which I viewed online, there was a lot of discussion about the dire need for readily accessible spay/neuter services and low-cost veterinary care.

I see the cycle like this –

1. humane education/advertising about the need for spay/neuter – this can happen ONLY if free/low-cost services are available. Educate the public. But it must happen first.
2. Low-cost services – while asking the city to build spay/neuter clinics in each of the boroughs could take years to do – just as the shelters in each borough did – pursuing public/private partnerships is the best solution for now. The Coalition for NYC Animals Spay/Neuter Project was presented to all Council members in Manhattan and only one – Gale Brewer “got it” – and has already sent letters to the veterinary clinics in her district. CM Brewer mentioned this at the Health Committee hearing on 9/13.

We also plan to present this project to the Staten Island council members. However, if any Council Member on the Health committee is interested, please contact me at [elizabeth@nycanimals.com](mailto:elizabeth@nycanimals.com) – I will be happy to work with you on this life saving venture.

3. We have an overpopulation crisis and must consider a law mandating that all animals be spayed and neutered – with a sunset clause letting it expire in a certain number of years – until we are out of this deadly catastrophe.

## **Following up on other issues presented at the 9/13 hearing:**

1. The existing law calls for all free roaming owned cats to be spayed/neutered. Bodega cats are often not fixed – yet they are owned. What often happens is that when the male begins to spray or the female goes into heat, they are thrown out on the street, contributing to the massive overpopulation problem. Many of the bodegas/delis offer more than 50% of their merchandise as open food, which makes it illegal for them to have cats. Many of these cats are not treated well; some are tied up in the basement, so they do not come into the store; not fed properly or vetted. If they are allowed in the store, they often run into the street and get hit by cars. The lucky ones get rescued. My suggestion is to get them fixed; leave them where they are – but phase them out.
2. This is not in the purview of the Health Committee, but it is a huge problem – and that is reporting animal cruelty to the NYPD. Cases are closed out almost immediately as if that is the goal – even though not resolved. This needs to change.
3. HOW does the public get a Council Committee that focuses on Animal Issues? All other committees assigned issues dealing with animals have come up short. Is this solely at the discretion of Adrienne Adams?



September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024

NYC Council Health Committee Hearing on the State of Animal Rescue

Testimony of **Edita Birnkrant**, Executive Director of NYCLASS; [edita@nyclass.org](mailto:edita@nyclass.org)

My name is Edita Birnkrant, and I am the Executive Director of NYCLASS, a NYC non-profit animal advocacy organization. I want to thank Health Chair Lynn Schulman and the Committee members for holding this hearing.

We fully support Intro 1018, sponsored by Council Member Brannan, which would prevent backyard breeders from exploiting loopholes on the ban on the retail sale of dogs and cats.

There is a desperate need for low-cost veterinary services for New Yorkers, and for widely available free or very low-cost spay neuter and my hope is that we can work towards making this a reality in New York City to alleviate our overburdened shelters inundated with surrendered animals.

In addition, many New Yorkers with pets, especially large dogs, cannot find an apartment willing to rent to them, and even renters with cats often have trouble. This needs to change, and we hope to work with the Council on passing Pets in Housing legislation so that we can empty the shelter cages and allow New Yorkers and their furry family members to live happily ever after.

I want to end on another species of NYC animal that needs desperate rescue, and that is the carriage horses. 71% of polled New Yorkers support ending the abusive horse carriage business, yet every day we see senior, unwell horses, many with agonizing untreated injuries and ailments, pulling carriages in chaotic traffic day and night.

Some crash into cars, some collapse or drop dead on the street. In fact, this morning there was a trial date at the Manhattan criminal courthouse for District Attorney Alvin Bragg's prosecution of longtime horse carriage owner Ian McKeever for criminal animal cruelty for working his sick horse Ryder to death.

Please, Chair Schulman and the Health Committee, let's not neglect these suffering horses a minute longer. We desperately need a Health Committee hearing on Ryder's Law, Intro 967, so that we can finally do what the overwhelming majority of New Yorkers want *you* and the City Council to do - **which is to shut down the ongoing criminal abuse of carriage horses on our streets.** Thank you.



Urban Wildlife Alliance, Inc.  
158 West 76th Street  
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845-276-0966

**New York City Council  
Committee on Health**

City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

September 12, 2024

**Re: City Council/ Committee on Health, Hearing on Animal Rescue 09/13/2024**

Dear members of the New York City Council Committee on Health,

The Urban Wildlife Alliance is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization dedicated to the welfare of wildlife in New York City. Founded in 2014, our mission is to rescue and rehabilitate sick, injured, and orphaned animals, provide essential services to the community, and promote compassionate coexistence with urban wildlife.

Since 2012, we have proudly served as a New Hope Partner with Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC), taking in hundreds of animals through ACC and the Parks Department. Our work is critical to the health and safety of wildlife in the city, yet we face growing challenges due to the rising costs of veterinary care.

In wildlife rehabilitation, nearly every animal we admit requires medical attention. While our team is trained to handle many of these issues, we depend on veterinary services for more advanced care, including x-rays, procedures requiring anesthesia, prescription medications, and, when necessary, humane euthanasia.

Wildlife rehabilitation is a free service. We receive no financial support and rely solely on personal funds and a modest amount of donations. For nearly a decade, we were fortunate to have the support of a local animal hospital that generously provided affordable care. However, following the hospital's acquisition by a corporate chain, we lost this essential support, and securing affordable veterinary services has become increasingly difficult.

The financial strain is immense. Without veterinary intervention, the average cost per animal is already \$250 to \$300. But with veterinary visits now costing between \$500 and \$800, our small grassroots organization is forced to make heartbreaking decisions, including turning away animals that we could have saved in the past.

We believe that access to affordable veterinary care is essential to our work and the broader mission of animal rescue in New York City. Without it, the well-being of countless animals is at risk, and organizations like ours struggle to fulfill their roles in the community.

We urge the City Council to consider the vital role that rescue groups play in animal welfare and to support initiatives that would make veterinary care more accessible and affordable for these organizations.

The wildlife and people of New York City depend on it.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Arina Hinzen  
Executive Director

Urban Wildlife Alliance, Inc.

Good morning,

My name is Allie Taylor, and I serve as the president of Voters For Animal Rights, a volunteer-run organization based in NYC. I also dedicate my time to rescuing cats in my Bushwick neighborhood. I want to express my sincere gratitude to Council Member Lynn Schutman, Speaker Adrienne Adams, and the Committee on Health for convening today's important hearing. A special thank you to Council Member Justin Brannan for introducing legislation aimed at tackling the issue of backyard breeders.

This hearing represents a crucial opportunity for the animal rescue community to share our experiences and collaborate with the City Council on meaningful solutions for both humans and animals.

Today, we will hear from representatives of over 350+ animal rescue organizations caring for dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, wildlife, and more. Additionally, we will hear from community cat colony managers, veterinarians, shelter staff, volunteers, and pet parents. Our collective efforts are driven by a deep commitment to our community, our neighbors, and the animals we share this city with.

Despite our dedication, we face significant challenges. The high cost of spay/neuter procedures and veterinary care, combined with inadequate support from city government, has created a dire situation. We urge the New York City Council to invest substantial and ongoing funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter services and affordable veterinary care for all New Yorkers, including rescuers and pet owners.

Over the past two years, many of us involved in animal rescue, particularly those focused on cats, have organized and met with City Council Members to advocate for accessible spay/neuter and veterinary services. It is surprising to many Council Members that when a constituent calls seeking help with stray cats—whether they are pregnant, sick, hungry, or cold—there is no city agency available to provide immediate assistance. Instead, the responsibility falls on volunteers like myself and others present today. Consequently, constituents have three options: 1) Do nothing and allow the cat to continue suffering or reproducing; 2) Address the issue themselves using their own resources; or 3) Reach out to numerous volunteer-run rescuers in hopes of finding help. We are an under-recognized, all-volunteer force providing a vital municipal service without compensation, often incurring personal financial strain. This system is unsustainable. Imagine instructing city workers to maintain clean streets and repair potholes, but without pay and with only their personal funds and equipment to use. This is the reality for animal rescuers in NYC.

Additionally, thousands of compassionate New Yorkers have become certified cat rescuers, yet due to the severe shortage of low-cost spay/neuter appointments, they are

unable to assist effectively. Currently, there are only about 12,000 such appointments available annually. To effectively address the outdoor cat population, we need at least 100,000 appointments annually. Expanding this service to include low-income pet owners would require nearly 200,000 appointments each year. For context, NYC's Department of Health allocates only \$2.89 per capita for animal care, while Los Angeles invests \$10 per capita, Miami-Dade County \$13.70, and Dallas nearly \$15.

Many private veterinarians who previously offered discounted services have either closed or been acquired by private equity firms. Additionally, numerous veterinarians are hesitant to treat community or feral cats due to their challenging nature. High-volume spay/neuter requires specialized skills that are not widely available among veterinarians. The City Council can make a significant impact by creating incentives for veterinarians to obtain training in high-volume spay/neuter and by funding the expansion of these services across all boroughs. I look forward to the day when every one of the 51 City Council districts has access to such clinics.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the dedicated cat rescuers of New York City.

# Animal Welfare Crisis in NYC

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**CAT OVERPOPULATION**

# WE ARE IN AN ANIMAL WELFARE CRISIS IN NYC

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The number of cats being abandoned by owners has skyrocketed. Abandoned cats, even when not locked inside an apartment or store or left on a hot street in a box, have a poor chance of survival.

Additionally, more kittens than ever are being born outside. The outcome for these cats, without human intervention, is also generally poor.

Unmanaged cat populations create a community nuisance. They also cause distress for caring community members who see the cats suffer, but lack the resources to help them.

Volunteer rescuers do their best, but are unable to keep up. Animal Care Centers is stretched beyond capacity.

How did we get here? How can we address this crisis?

# BACKGROUND

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- A single cat can give birth to dozens of kittens in her lifetime. An unmanaged cat population can quickly spiral out of control, which is what has happened in NYC.
- From the 1960's to the 1990's, the main method to handle cat and dog overpopulation was shelter euthanasia.
- Spay/neuter (sterilization) went into widespread practice in the 1970's for companion animals, which reduced the need for shelter euthanasia.
- By the 1990's spay/neuter was expanded to community cats aka feral cats (those who live outdoors and often are fearful of humans). Spay/neuter soon became the preferred method to control and reduce the population of community cats.
- Spay/neuter is a more complex and expensive population control method than “culling,” (killing) but is more likely to receive community support. It also stabilizes the population over time.

# THE PANDEMIC ERASED 15 YEARS OF PROGRESS

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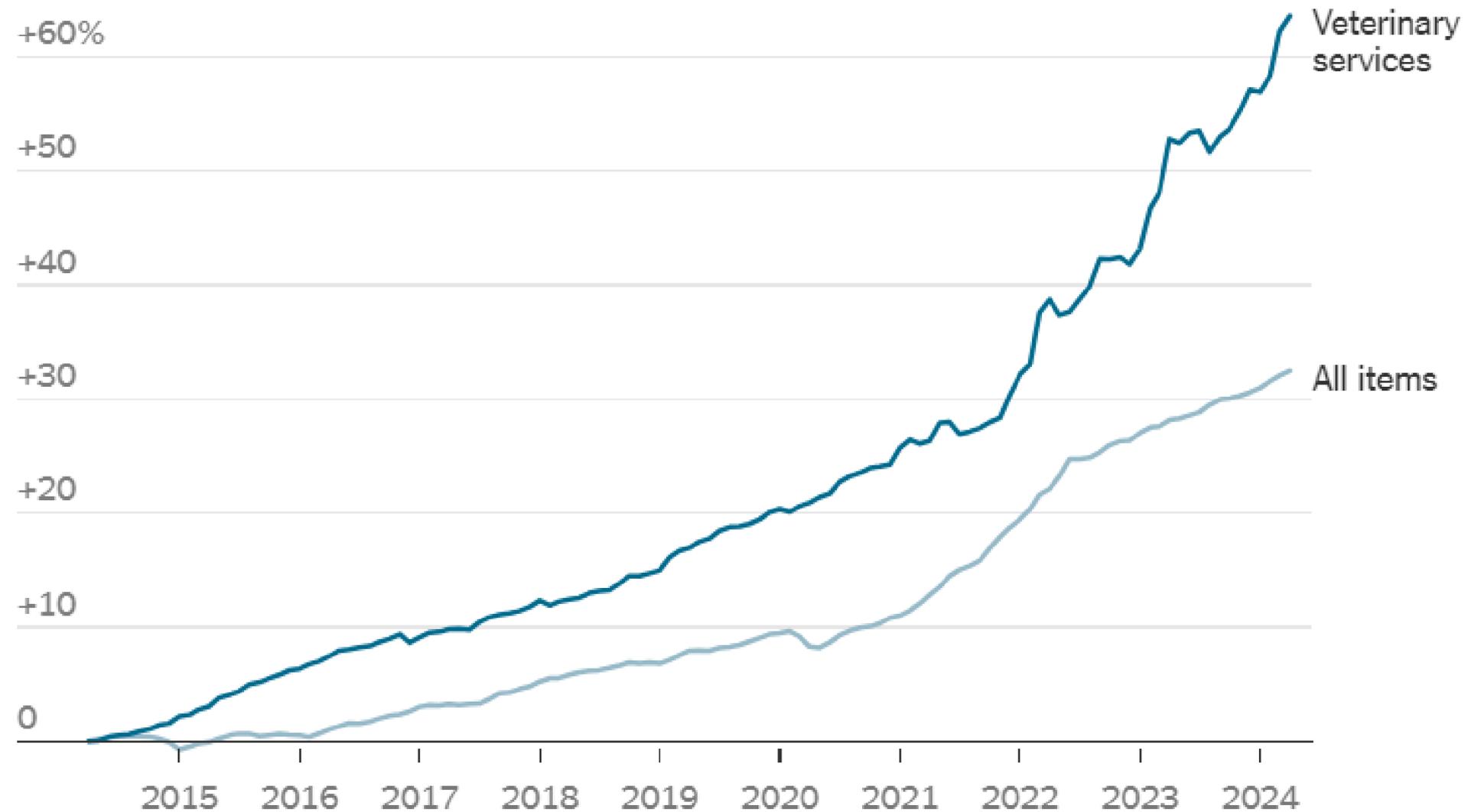
Before the pandemic, certain neighborhoods in NYC seemed to be making progress, however it's questionable whether relying on private funding alone was ever going to solve this public problem in every district.

- Privately funded discounted spay-neuter appointments for rescuers were suspended for almost a year and never returned to the volume that was offered pre-pandemic.
- The private equity buyout of vet practices, combined with inflation, drove up the cost of veterinary care. The average cost of spay/neuter on the private market in NYC is now \$1,000 - out of reach of the average New Yorker.
- Economic instability, lack of affordable housing and lack of pet-friendly housing contributed to an epidemic of pet abandonment, and most of these animals were not spayed or neutered.

# VETERINARY CARE PRICES HAVE SOARED

The chart on the right shows the national effect of the private equity buyout of veterinary practices. We expect that this is inflating prices even more in NYC.

Cumulative change in prices since April 2014



"All items" data is the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers. Data is seasonally adjusted. • Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics • By The New York Times

# NYC CHALLENGES

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- There is no Department of Animal Welfare for the many animal issues facing the nation's largest city. There is a single mayoral appointee to the Mayor's Office for Animal Welfare.
- There are no animal welfare / animal control resources, aside from a chronically underfunded shelter system (ACC) that occasionally closes for intake due to capacity constraints. The availability of free and low-cost spay/neuter services is a fraction of what is needed.
- With no leadership, policies, programs or services, animal welfare is 100% in the hands of citizen volunteers who take on financial hardship, physical labor, emotional exhaustion and mental stress to solve this municipal problem.
- Systems set up to handle hoarding and abuse have completely broken down, resulting in volunteers stepping in to handle overwhelming, complex, and dangerous situations.

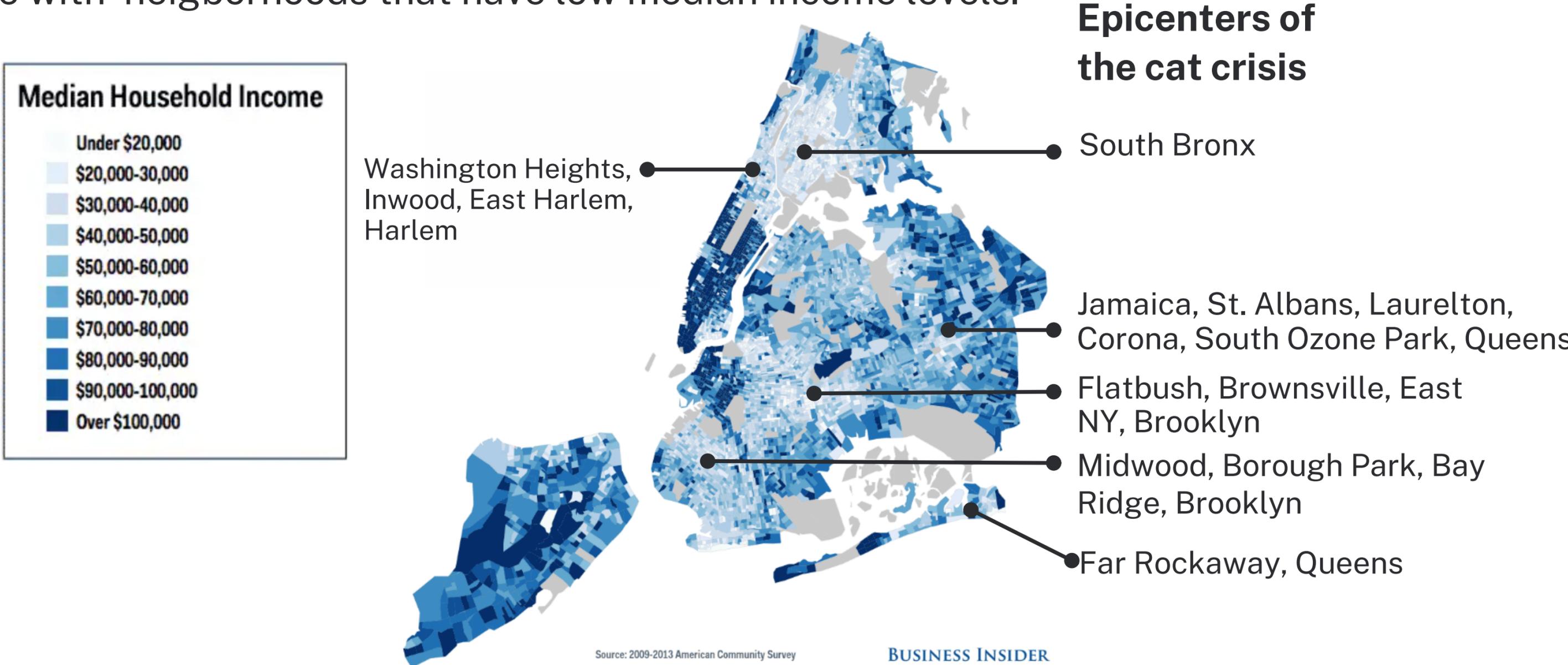
# THE BURDEN OF UNPAID MUNICIPAL WORK ON NEW YORK'S KINDEST

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- Residents in NYC's most under-resourced communities are taking on the municipal problem of stray cats, going into debt, unable to save money for retirement, and spending money they could use to better their circumstances, because they will not accept the suffering of animals around them.
- They are working to solve a problem they did not create and receiving no support, resources, or leadership from NYC government.
- Community members often assume they are paid animal welfare officers and that they have access to resources because there is a public expectation that the city is addressing this problem.

# THE ANIMAL WELFARE CRISIS IS CENTERED IN OUR MOST UNDER-RESOURCED NEIGHBORHOODS

Rescuers across all five boroughs report that the epicenters of cat overpopulation closely correlate with neighborhoods that have low median income levels.



# EQUITY STATEMENT

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Too little research has been done on how systemic oppression and interpersonal bias intersect with animal welfare, but a study published in April of this year that looked at four different American cities found that “members of the BIPOC community have less economic wealth, lower rates of home ownership, and less access to a vehicle. These systemic factors, rooted in discriminatory housing policies, coupled with lack of access to veterinary care directly impact pet owners’ ability to adhere to local animal welfare laws – especially those that require all dogs and cats to be spayed or neutered. Animal welfare organizations must recognize the lingering impact of historic and systemic inequities. Recognizing these inequities should inform efforts to best meet the needs of the entire community.”\*

\*Program for Pet Health Equity (PPHE) 2024, Racial Disparities in Animal Welfare, Report for Companions and Animals for Reform and Equity, by Blackwell, M. Daugherty, L., Galvez, E. Garrett, K. Butler, R. Mesa, A. Dorminey

# THE CITY'S OBLIGATION

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## **NYC Local Law 59 states:**

Every owner of a cat who permits such cat to roam outside the interior of the owner's dwelling shall have such cat sterilized. At the request of employees or authorized agents of the department, owners shall provide proof satisfactory to the department that a cat found roaming has been sterilized.

*If NYC requires residents to spay/neuter their cats, then the City must provide the means to comply.*

# HOW DO WE SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

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NYC needs city-funded high-volume spay-neuter programs.

- Provide free or low-cost spay-neuter to every New Yorker, not just rescuers. This will curtail cat abandonment and take the burden off of volunteers. Rescuers cannot and should not be responsible for spaying and neutering every cat in NYC.
- Solutions must be equity focused and empower those in low-income communities who are bearing the brunt of the problem.
- The municipal responsibility of solving the cat overpopulation and pet abandonment should fall on NYC gov, not only individual rescuers or private sector donors.
- We need legal frameworks that effectively address hoarding and abuse. And we need clear protocols for agencies that will enforce these.

# CASE STUDY: BOSTON, MA

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- In 1986, the Massachusetts Society for the Protection of Animals began the Spay/Neuter Assistance Program in cooperation with the Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association at a 50% discount for those who qualified at participating private veterinary clinics, fully donated by those clinics - no state or municipal funding.
- In 1996, MSPCA began directly performing spay/neuter for owned pets of low income families in the Boston Adoption Center.
- By 2008, they were providing spay/neuter at all shelter locations for the public (at the time this included Springfield, Brockton, Boston, Methuen, Cape).
- In 2009, they started free spay/neuter for pit bulls, \$10 for cats, focused on towns that were generating the highest intake numbers.
- In 2012, funding through the MA License Plate Program was created through the passage of the Animal Control Law and helped fund these lower cost services.

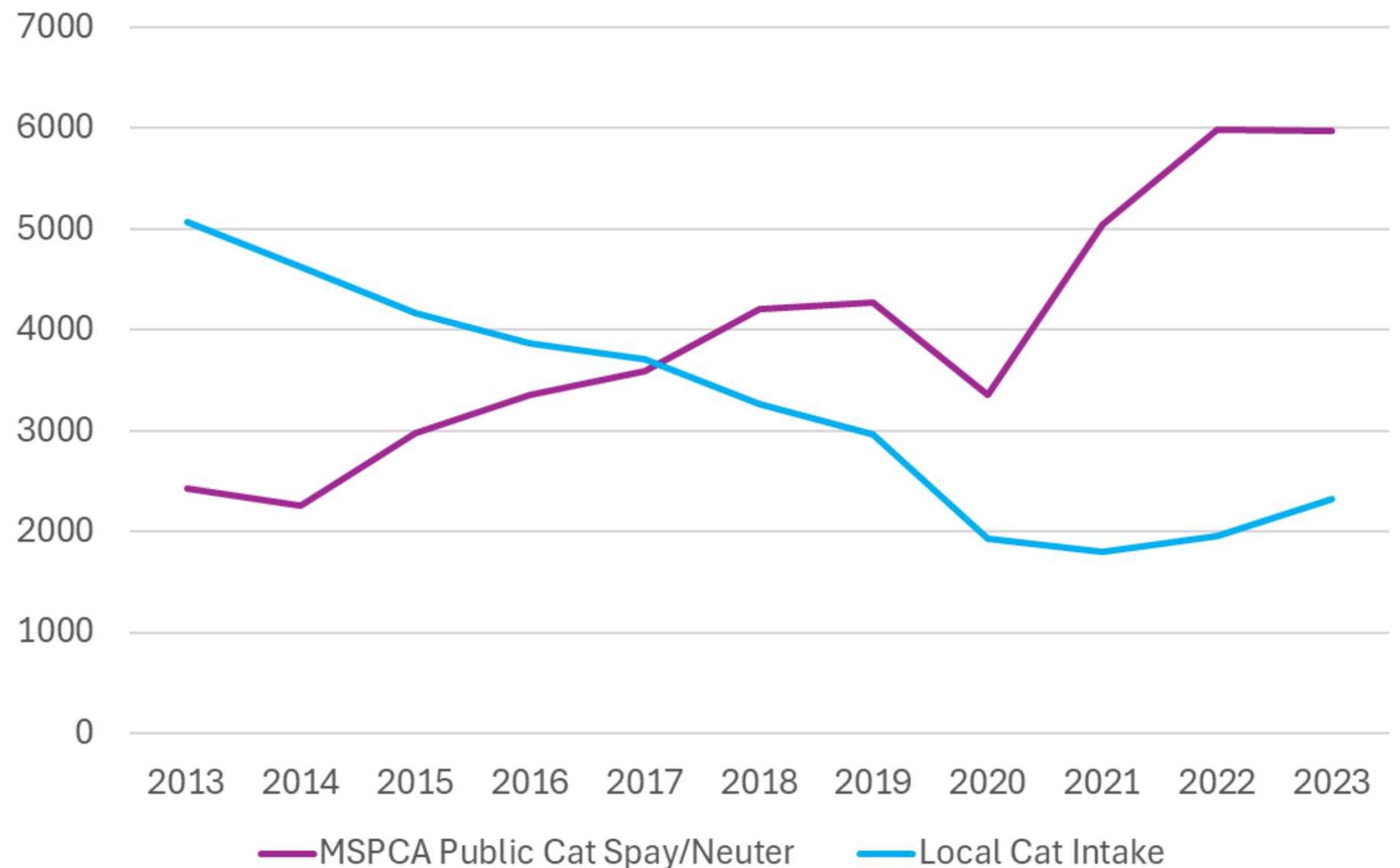
# CASE STUDY: BOSTON, MA

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In 2008, Boston shelters were flooded with cats – often taking in 20 cats a day with only 10 kennels available, which forced shelter workers to make decisions for euthanasia that no longer have to be made today, thanks to the decrease in volume of intake.

They focused on increasing spay/neuter to decrease intake and waived adoption fees to find homes for animals more quickly.

**Spay-neuter availability and shelter intake**

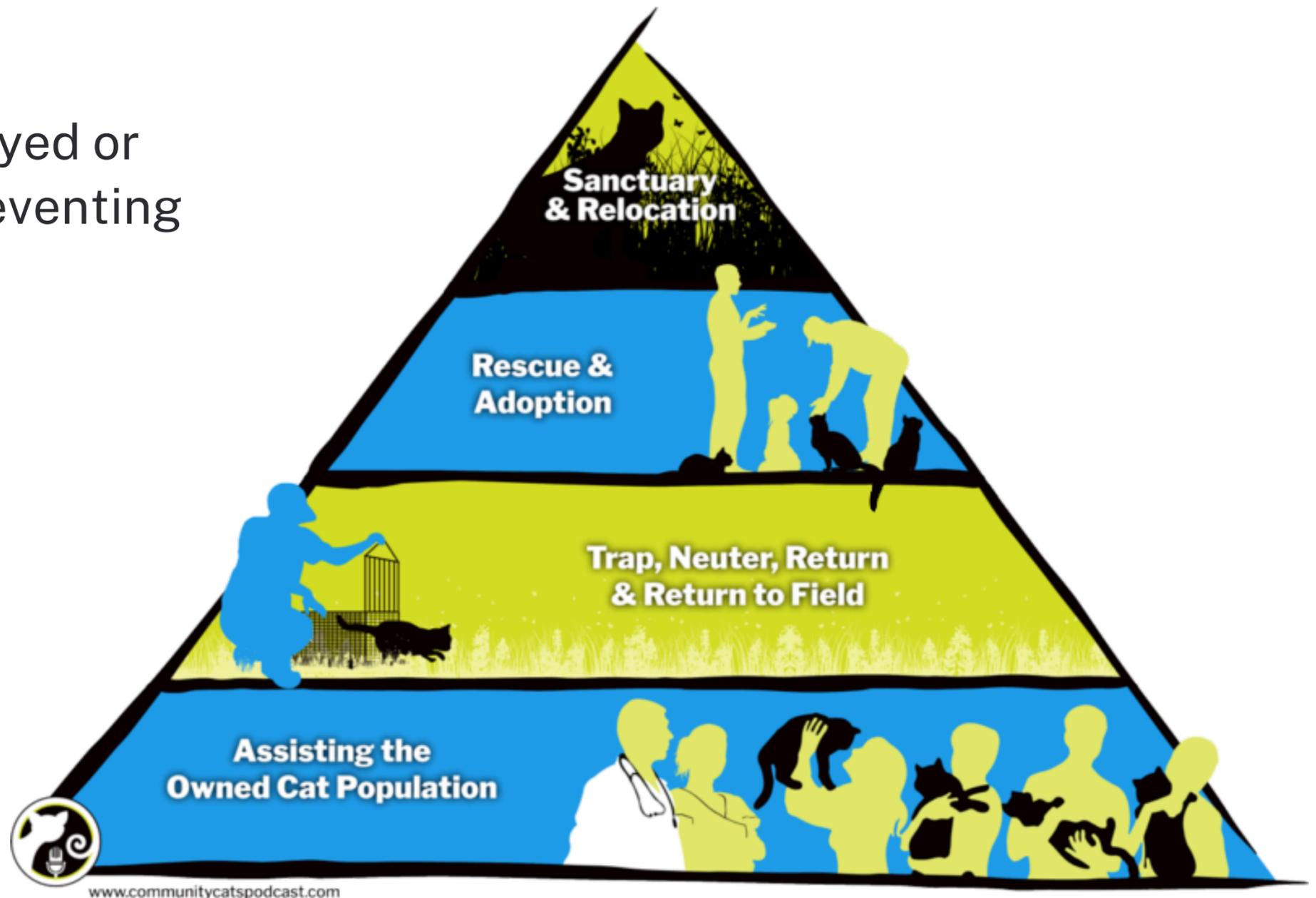


Data provided by Bryn Rogers of MSPCA

# COMMUNITY CAT PYRAMID

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Making sure owned pets get spayed or neutered is the foundation of preventing outdoor cat overpopulation.



# WHAT WOULD SUCCESS LOOK LIKE FOR NYC?

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- There are currently less than 1,000 discounted spay/neuter “rescuer” appointments each month. It’s nowhere near enough and it’s creating a bottleneck.
- The number should be closer to 10,000\* which should also include free or low-cost appointments accessible to NYC residents.
- Offering support services like holding space and transportation would help relieve the burden from rescuers.
- An army of volunteers is already mobilized and doing the work. We need the financial and logistical barriers lifted so we can get ahead of the feline reproductive cycle instead of remaining in perpetual crisis mode, burning out, and even resulting in talented people leaving the city.
- Strong leadership from NYC should make clear to all residents that spay/neuter is not just encouraged but required. A few individuals should not create problems that others must solve over and over.

\*See appendix slide on Operation Catnip to understand this estimate

# A VALUABLE INVESTMENT

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- Create a Community Cat program with free or low-cost outdoor cat spay/neuter to start getting the cat population under control.
- Increasing spay/neuter appointments 10-fold will cost money, but so do a variety of other municipal services that we have come to expect.
- The investment will be substantial up front when we are addressing the greatest need and stemming the tide of the crisis, but will gradually taper off as more and more outdoor cats are no longer reproducing.
- Within one year of widespread spay/neuter availability, ACC intake should begin declining.
- A short-term investment in stopping the cat crisis could generate long-term cost savings with fewer shelter animals to take care of and rehome.

# WHAT IF THE CITY DOESN'T ACT?

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- Disparity between the wealthy neighborhoods and the lower-income neighborhoods will increase as the cat crisis worsens in under-resourced areas.
- News stories about the cat crisis and overburdened volunteers will highlight stagnation of city government, reducing confidence in municipal governance.
- Pet abandonment will increase as veterinary costs continue to skyrocket. Pets will become a luxury item for an elite few while abandoned, unhealthy animals roam and reproduce in lower-income neighborhoods.
- Rescuers will increasingly take on financial burdens they cannot bear. Some will leave the city, while some will stay and suffer mental and physical health issues related to trauma and stress.
- The percentage of cats that entered ACC unaltered has increased to 58% - an 11% increase since 2019. The percentage of dogs that entered ACC unaltered has increased to 75% - an increase of nearly 24% since 2019. This will only get worse.

# WHAT NEXT?

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- Legislation to mandate high volume, free or low-cost spay neuter and veterinary care in every borough.
- Commit funds to an emergency response and to long-term solutions that will broaden access to veterinary services for all New Yorkers, reduce the future pipeline of surrendered and abandoned cats and dogs, and take the crushing municipal burden off of rescuers.
- Form a task force to address the crisis that includes rescuers, rescue organizations and those who work closely with the rescue community.
- Take a triage approach to set up spay-neuter services quickly and then establish efficient methods to make these accessible city-wide.

# TIMELINE TO SUCCESS

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●

## *Stabilize Cat Population*

### **3 Years**

Shelter intake begins to decline slightly.

●

## *Cat Population Declines*

### **3-6 Years**

Noticeable decline in cat population, intake to ACC should begin reducing.

●

## *Decline and Maintain*

### **6-12 Years**

Significant decline in outdoor stray cats as cats age out naturally and are not replaced. Focus resources on neighborhoods that have been overlooked.

●

## *Maintenance*

### **12 Years and On**

Outdoor cats are rarely seen. Significant decline in shelter intake. The cat crisis is over, but community volunteers are monitoring to prevent backslide.



# ANIMAL WELFARE IS A MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY — IT'S TIME FOR NYC TO STEP UP

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- Like potholes and litter, stray cats are a sign of neglect that negatively impact the quality of life.
- We don't expect the Department of Sanitation to be all-volunteer, but the City, through lack of funding, has decided that individuals in our communities should tackle the proliferation of outdoor cats with no support from NYC.
- Those who take on this responsibility act as community stewards and deserve support.

# ANIMAL WELFARE AND INCOME INEQUALITY

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Addressing animal welfare means allocating resources to our communities where the overpopulation of cats is greatest. This encourages community stewardship and uplifts the overburdened volunteers taking on this problem.

**No one should experience financial hardship because they are addressing municipal problems.**

# NYC'S ACC BUDGET COMPARED TO OTHER CITIES

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Annual budgets for animal services in 4 cities

NYC ACC

**\$24.0M\***

Population: 8.3M

Per Capita:

**\$2.89**

LA Animal  
Services

**\$39.3M**

Population: 3.9M

Per Capita:

**\$10.08**

Miami-Dade, FL  
Animal Services

**\$37.0M**

Population: 2.7M

Per Capita:

**\$13.70**

Dallas, TX  
Animal Shelter

**\$19.2M**

Population: 1.3M

Per Capita:

**\$14.78**

\*0.8% of the Department of Health's \$3B budget

[NYC ACC Budget 2022](#) (between Department of Health and grants from NYC Council)

[LA Open Budget](#)

[FY 2023-24 Proposed Budget and Capital Plan Miami-Dade County](#)

[Dallas News: Dallas Animal Services Had a Great Year for Animal Services](#)

# WHAT ARE WE ASKING FOR?

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In order to reduce and stabilize intake at ACC and reduce the outdoor cat population in general, we will need

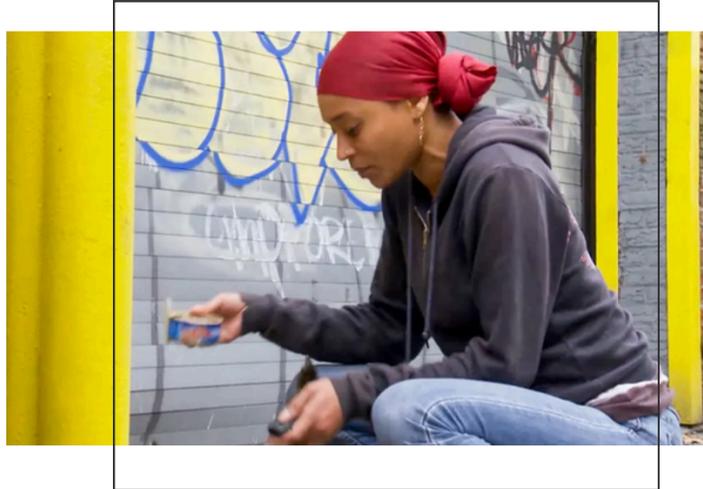
**10,000** spay/neuter appointments monthly

At a cost of **\$65M** annually

(3.25% of the Department of Sanitation annual budget)

# MEET THE RESCUERS

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*Sassee Cats*  
**Sassee Walker**

“I’ve been trapping and helping cats for 15 years. I live in NYCHA housing and I trap in my community, other NYCHA properties and neighborhoods in every borough. This summer has hit new lows. I’m completely overwhelmed. Everyone is asking me for help, but I’m just one person who doesn’t have enough resources to help them.”



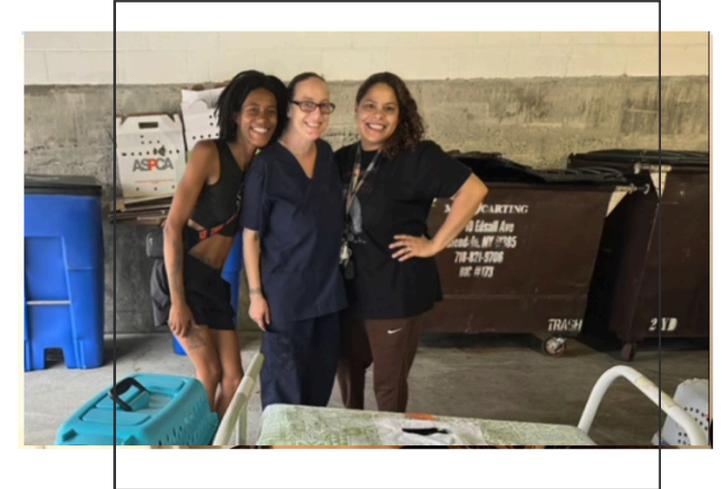
*PuppyKittyNYC*  
**Meagan Licari**

“We’re reaching a breaking point. We have struggled to pay our bills for months. We cannot cover our cats’ medical care and are scrambling with our debt. Every single day we have a new foster backing out and returning cats. It’s like taking one step forward and ten steps back. Our emergency fund is empty.”



*Bronx Community Cats*  
**Tanya Copeland & Laura Pisoni**

“As long as we live in the Bronx and have mobility, we’ll be trapping cats. However, the associated costs are a huge barrier to more people participating: helping animals shouldn’t be an activity reserved for privileged people. We have met people who may not have extraordinary amounts of money or other resources who still care very deeply for the animals.”



*Paws of Hope*  
**Gissell O’Donoghue**

“It’s a heartbreaking reality that many homeless cats and kittens face, living without shelter, consistent meals or human intervention. Their only hope lies in crossing paths with someone whose compassionate heart can change their fate. I strive to be that beacon of hope. I’m dedicated to rescuing these vulnerable souls, but there’s no way I can do it alone.”

# MEET THE RESCUERS

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## *Victory for the Voiceless* **April Soto**

“We are maxed out in space and in extreme financial strain. We really need the community to step up, but who will empower them to do so? Surgeries, vaccines, flea treatment, FELv/FIV testing, microchip, food, litter...this all costs money. Abandoned cats are being left behind like trash, and when you're the one who cares, it becomes your burden to help.”



## *For Animals, Inc.* **Gracita Samuel**

“Jamaica has one of the largest outdoor cat populations in Queens. I describe it as a war zone. Abandoned pets, ferals, strays...and they're reproducing faster than I can get them fixed. I need more resources, more volunteers to help. I do the work because I know we can solve this, but it's time for the city to step up and take responsibility for this.”



## *Queens Rescuer* **Clelia Ramos**

“I've always loved animals and I can't stand to see them suffering. I used to focus on feral cats, but now everyone is abandoning their pet cats. It breaks my heart. I don't want to put them back on the street after neuter because they have no survival skills. but every organization is full of friendly cats right now. No one has any room, not enough fosters.”



## *Brooklyn Rescuer* **Jackie Borodan**

“I have been doing TNR for over a decade. This includes helping other rescuers transport and recover ferals. Many of us are venturing into other neighboring communities to assist. Rescuers are exhausted - both mentally and financially. We are unable to do it all. Changes need to happen.”

# MEET THE RESCUERS

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*Bronx Gatos*  
**Aniko Horvath**

“The suffering of animals in NYC is shameful. The Bronx has zero municipal shelters, about 1.5M residents, and one of the highest poverty rates in the country which results in abandoned pets that multiply exponentially into feral cats. The amount of calls for help I receive is staggering. People assume we’re funded by the City or an organization—we are not. We need massive change.”



*Bronx Tails*  
**Betty Arce**

“What I'd like to see is an independent Office of Animal Welfare with ACC under that umbrella - that's what we need to move towards. The Department of Health does not care about animals and it shows. We need to bolster ACC's budget to provide the type of services we need like low cost spay/neuter for pet owners and for rescuers, too.”



*Itty Bitty City Kitties*  
**Sam Knox**

“It never gets easier. I got 27 requests in 14 hours for help with everything from abandoned piles of cats in boxes, to dying kittens in yards, to people asking me to take the kittens their cat birthed because “they’re not cute enough to sell.” It’s getting harder to handle grief and hostility on a near-constant level and maintain my strength.”



*LIC Feral Feeders*  
**Victoria Kouloris, Monica Blanche, Jannatul Ahmed**

“Our rescue has been operating at a higher volume than ever before. We are overwhelmed with requests and do not have adequate resources to manage the cat overpopulation crisis in LIC and surrounding areas. We are all working professionals who volunteer in the limited free time we have. We need more nonprofit and low-cost vet services.”

# MEET THE RESCUERS

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*Astoria Cat Rescue*  
**Charlotte Conley**

“Running Astoria Cat Rescue has been an incredibly challenging journey. I’ve been doing this work since 2010, and since 2020, life has quadrupled in difficulty. The closure of the ASPCA during COVID led to a massive increase in the cat population across all five boroughs. Every day, we are called to rescue with no space or lack of food, yet we continue to care for our cat colonies.”



*Brooklyn Rescuer*  
**Christina Liew**

“In late 2020, after noticing many unfixed cats in my neighborhood, I knew I had to help. Despite limited financial resources for veterinary care, insufficient space, transportation issues, and finding placement for friendly cats, I got involved in the rescue community. It’s a repeated cycle of exhaustion that never ends. We need sustainable, long-term solutions instead of temporary fixes.”



*Brooklyn Rescuer*  
**Lisa Lamberty**

“I’ve been rescuing cats for 12 years, and it all started when I saw a neighbor feeding cats. I’m asking the City of New York to step up and please help us. We need low-cost or free spay/neuter. We are drowning in bills! We’ve become unpaid animal control officers for the city. We’re the boots on the ground that make it happen. We do so much - the City can do a little to help us.”



*Greenpoint Cats*  
**Becky Wisdom**

“I feel tired. A volunteer rescue force just can’t compete with the cats’ staggering reproduction rate citywide. And the closer you are to the cat problem, the more likely you are to experience a sense of futility. I’m on the verge of being priced out of my neighborhood, but sometimes I don’t feel like I can leave. If everyone who does this went on strike, it would be out of control in six months.”

Can we count on your support at the hearing?

# Thank you!

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**LET'S SOLVE THIS TOGETHER**

# Appendix

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# SOLUTIONS TO THE VET CRISIS

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- Form partnerships with local vet schools to have a student learning program / student debt relief program.
  - Long Island University College of Veterinary Medicine
  - NYU College of Veterinary Medicine
  - Cornell
  - Rowan University in NJ will launch Schreiber Vet School opening in 2025
- Launch a student summer program for vet students from other states - summer is the time of greatest need and NYC is a desirable location for students
- Introduce midlevel practitioners (vet techs who can do neuter/ spay surgery - requires State legislation)
- Country - city exchange: in many smaller towns and in rural America, veterinary prices haven't skyrocketed. Fly in these vets to do one-month or 2-week commitments. The licensing process for out of state is a simple process and a \$105 limited permit.

# OPERATION CATNIP - GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

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High volume, spay/neuter clinic in Gainesville, Florida that serves as a model for addressing a high-needs area in crisis.

- Free service / donation only for rescuers
- Provides 400-500 spay/neuter appointments monthly to a metro area of about 400,000
  - This ratio of service relative to the NYC 5 - borough population would be about **10,000 spay/neuter appointments per month**
- Relatively small staff of highly skilled in-house veterinarians who coordinate with local veterinary college students to train in rescue medicine and high-volume spay/neuter.



# EXPECTATIONS FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

Communities across the country are increasingly demanding humane treatment of animals.



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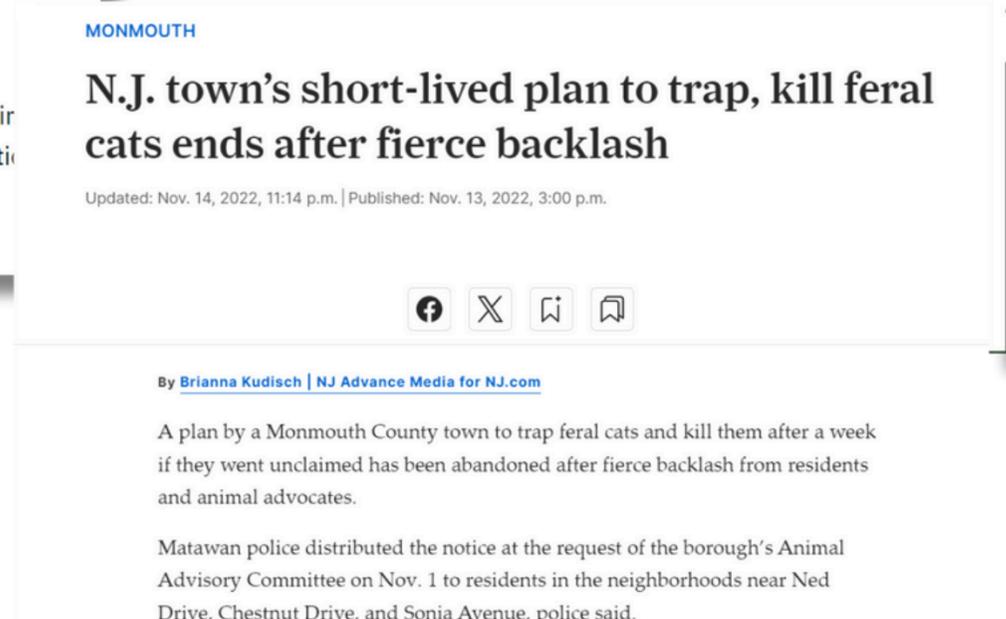
PACs raising big money to influence voters | A's to sell stake in Coliseum | Volunteer to help Oakland students | Things to do Aug. 8-10

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT

## The park district used to shoot stray cats. Now it's finding them homes

Public outrage erupted in 2020 over East Bay Regional Park District staffers killing cats. The district and Oakland Animals Services came together with a new solution.

by Callie Rhoades  
Aug. 5, 2024, 3:40 p.m.



MONMOUTH

## N.J. town's short-lived plan to trap, kill feral cats ends after fierce backlash

Updated: Nov. 14, 2022, 11:14 p.m. | Published: Nov. 13, 2022, 3:00 p.m.

By Brianna Kudisch | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com

A plan by a Monmouth County town to trap feral cats and kill them after a week if they went unclaimed has been abandoned after fierce backlash from residents and animal advocates.

Matawan police distributed the notice at the request of the borough's Animal Advisory Committee on Nov. 1 to residents in the neighborhoods near Ned Drive, Chestnut Drive, and Sonia Avenue, police said.



13 WREX.COM YOUR WEATHER AUTHORITY

## After backlash, Rochelle works with animal advocacy groups to deal with feral cats

By Cassandra Bretl Oct 26, 2019



# CASE STUDY: WASHINGTON DC

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- In 2007, through a public/private partnership, DC began providing all the spay-neuter appointments rescuers needed, no appointment necessary, on clinic days 3 or 4 days a week.
- In 2008, the District adopted an ordinance that endorsed spay/neuter as the humane and effective method to control the outdoor cat population.
- One centralized service, the Humane Rescue Alliance (HRA), was set up to manage the Community Cat spay/neuter program and serve as the District shelter and adoption center.
- In 2021, the HRA completed a 3-year cat census to collect information on cats known as the DC Cat Count. Data revealed an incredibly low number of outdoor unowned cats, around 2,000 (out of a total of 200,000 most of which were owned indoor cats and some were owned outdoor cats).

# CASE STUDY: WASHINGTON, DC

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Washington, DC's taxpayer allocation for the Humane Rescue Alliance ( the District shelter and community cat spay/neuter program) is \$5M, serving a population of 672,000

DC prevented a cat crisis and was effectively managing their outdoor cat population well before the pandemic started through their proactive rollout of spay/neuter in the late 2000's.

If NYC allocated an equivalent amount to animal welfare services in the five boroughs, the budget allocation would be over \$65M.

# URBAN CAT LEAGUE CASE STUDY: SAN REMO COLONY ON THE UPPER WEST SIDE

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A colony of 76 cats was reduced to ZERO in 16 years.

- 100% of feral cats on the block were spayed or neutered in 1999
- Adoptable cats and kittens were rehomed
- Community members and volunteers provided ongoing daily care and monitoring for arrival of any new cats

In 1999 there was ample access to low-cost spay/neuter

1999	2005	2010	2015
76 Cats	50 Cats	6 Cats	0 Cats



# URBAN CAT LEAGUE CASE STUDY: HUDSON RAIL YARDS

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Support from Councilmember Corey Johnson and cooperation with one of the Hudson Yards developers, Tishman Speyer, facilitated protection of the cats and bringing the colony of 100 cats to ZERO even during the complex redevelopment



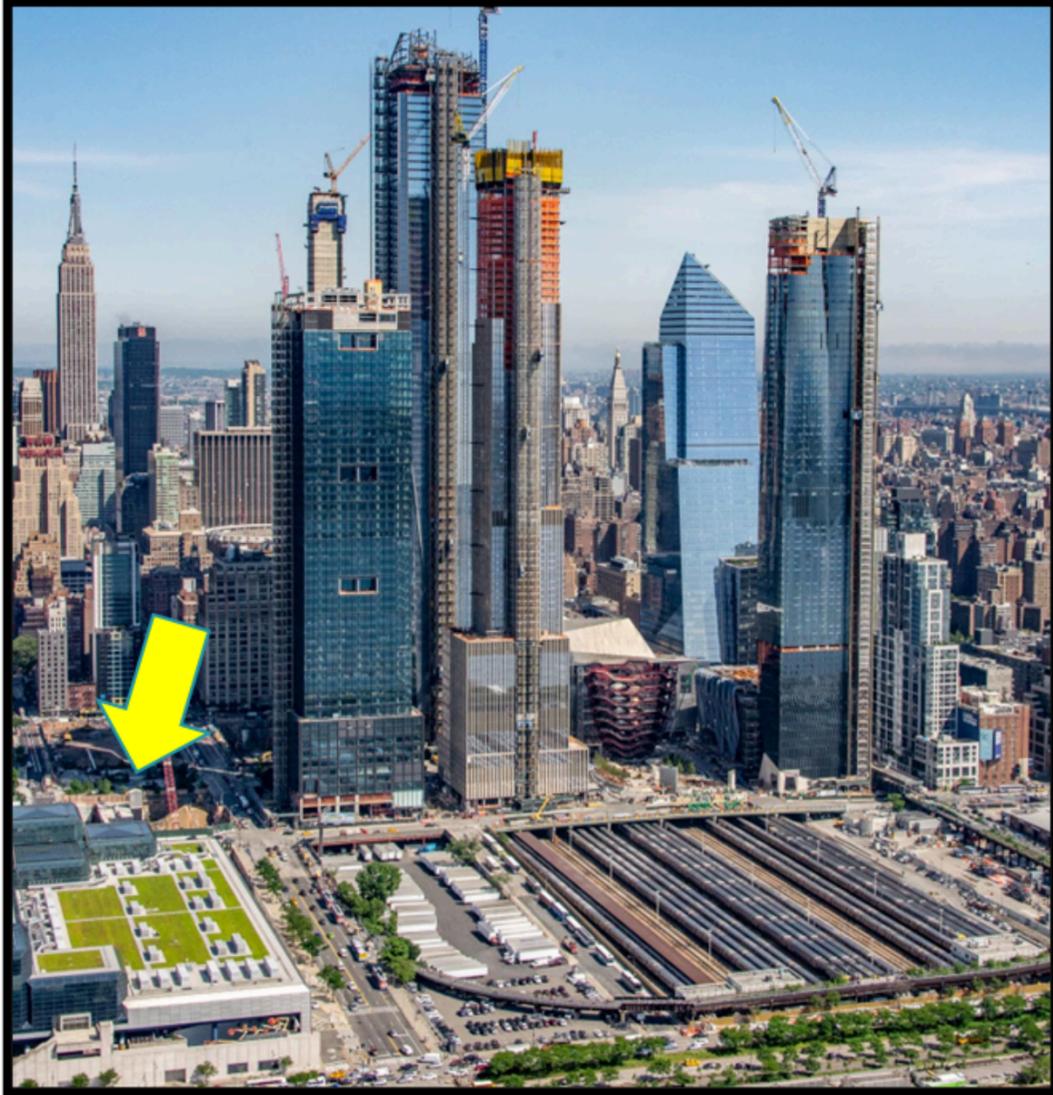
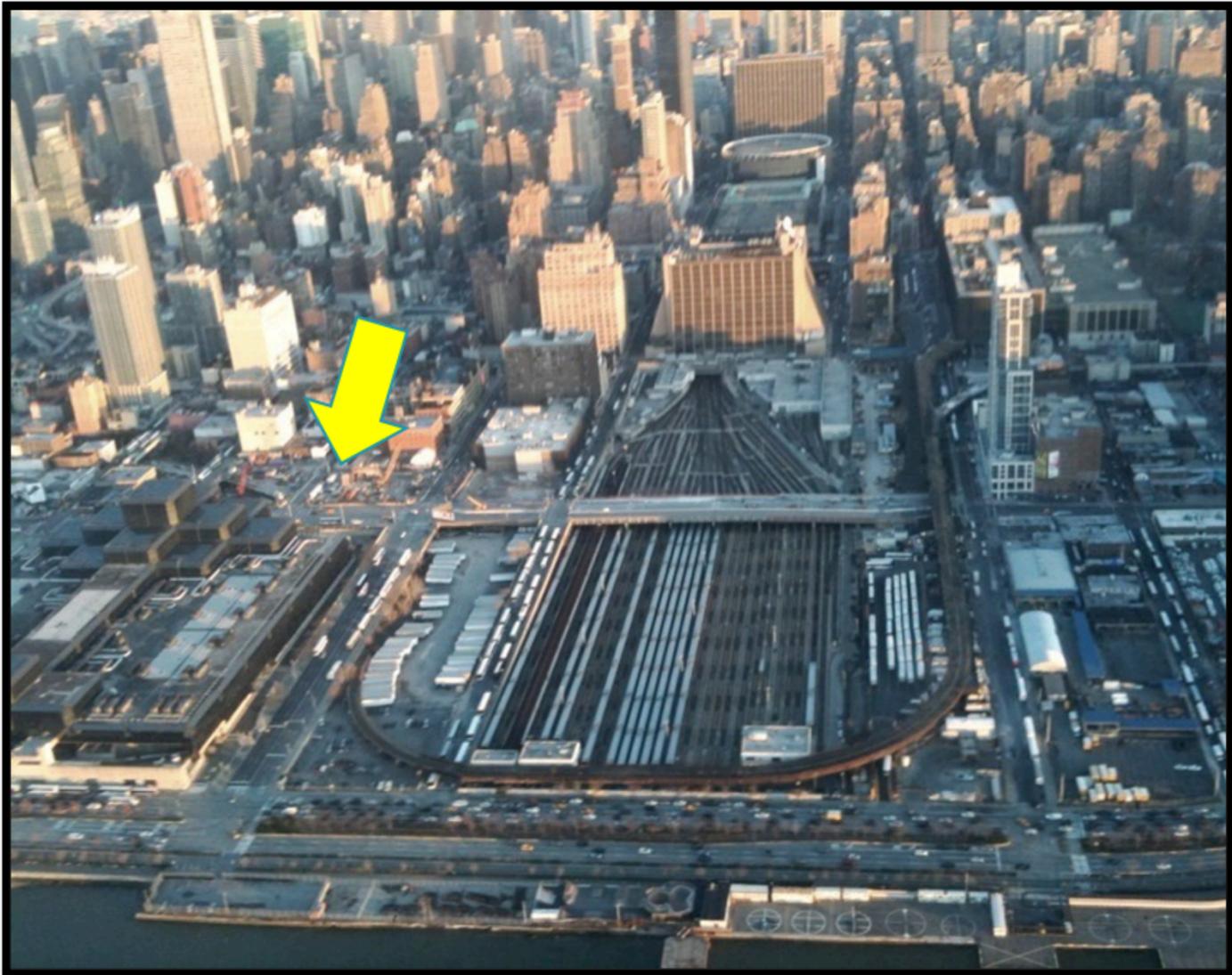
- Colony brought to zero over 15 years with spay/neuter plus ongoing daily care and monitoring.
- Rabies vaccination records lent credibility with gov't to defend the cat colony's presence.



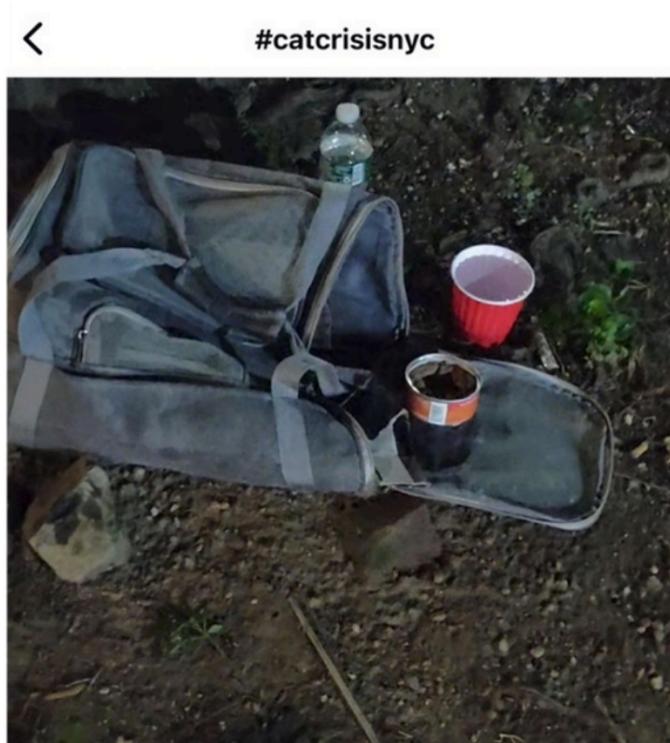
# URBAN CAT LEAGUE CASE STUDY: HUDSON RAIL YARDS

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Colony in 2003 - 100+ cats and in 2017 - 0 Cats



# RESCUER POSTS ON SOCIAL #CATCRISISNYC



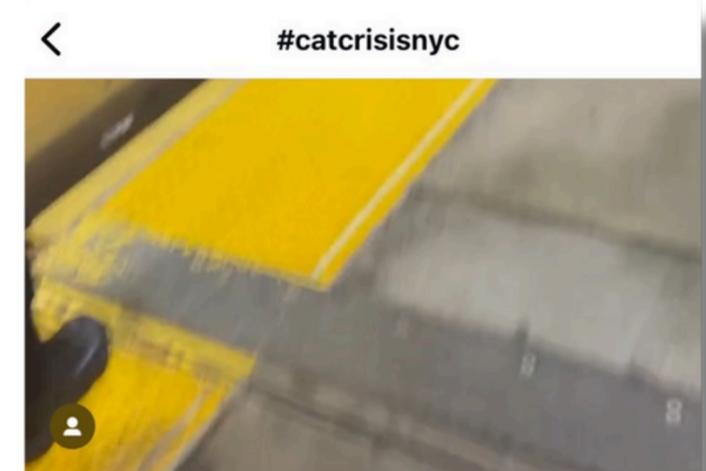
Liked by vicmuniz78, sheilawatko and 89 others  
halfwaycats URGENT !! Foster needed !! A new cat dumped on the street! @sweet\_kats5 spotted an empty cat carrier near a feeding station and a few days later the cat appeared probably because he was starving. He needs off the street asap but a foster is needed as this cat has no place to go!! A house cat dumped, just like Smoky who @sweet\_kats5 also saw and scooped up right around the same spot. The dumping is out of control! And it's heartbreaking. Imagine your own cat(s) trying to suddenly survive outside. Can anyone please foster to get this poor cat off the dangerous street and out of harm's way?? Please share!! SOS SOS SOS SOS SOS SOS #catcrisisnyc



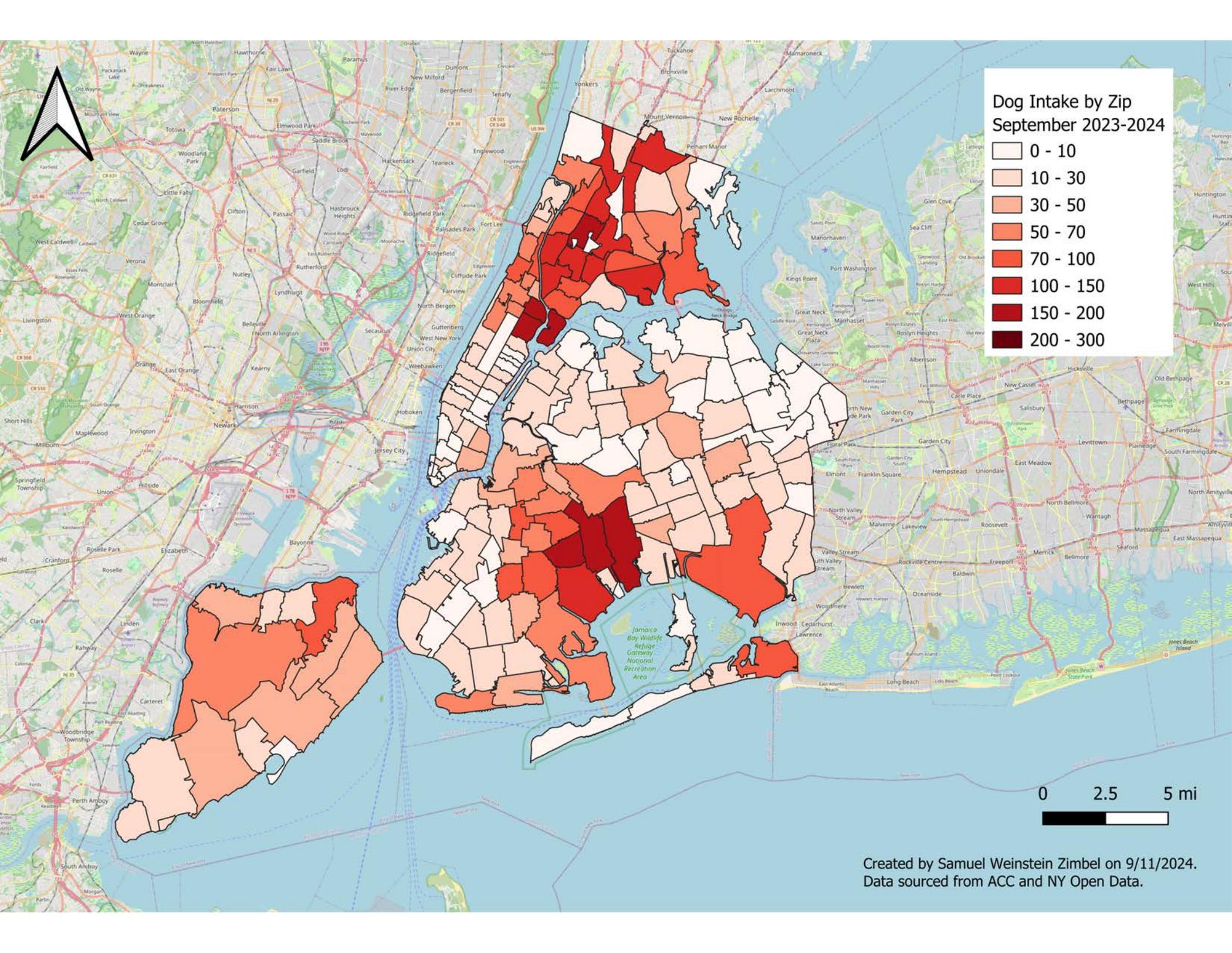
Liked by ulandajb, candicekumai and 114 others  
harleanimalrescue Meet: DESTINY. Spent five hours at that lot yesterday. Never saw her. Went to go get food 2 blocks away....almost back, started to cross the parking lot... And there she was. Even though we have nowhere for this animal to go at the moment, I could not leave a hungry, friendly, probably six month old kitten in a parking lot. I picked her up and took her inside, put her in a bathroom, looked out the window and saw two more cat/kittens outside in the lot.  
  
THIS IS NOT NORMAL FOR THIS AREA! SOMEONE recently DUMPED KITTENS... 🙄🙄🙄🙄  
  
#foster #donate #rescue #tuxedokitty #starving #catcrisisnyc



puppykittynycity  
My heart dropped when I saw this. This poor ...  
meyowyow and 245 others commented  
Original audio puppykit  
New York, Ne  
Fundraising for Puppy Kitty NYCity  
\$4,837.87 raised of \$4,500



Liked by halfwaycats, mikejrsanctuary\_9livesrescue and 301 others  
harleanimalrescue SOS Injured cat found on empty subway car!! SOS  
  
Got a call tonight from a caring transit worker @Bowleggz43 who had found a sweet kitty with what looks like a broken leg, hiding under a parked subway car seat. We are unable to take on any new cats right now due to lack of funds, but were lucky enough to have @johnd7293 say "Yes" to helping, even though he's in Long Island. So off we went to get her.  
  
NYPD was already on the scene and the kitty seemed grateful be rescued. Thank you to @harlemkittiechick1 for offering to keep her for the night!! And for connecting us with @littlewanderersnyc who are much closer than John and have agreed to take over. It truly takes a village!!  
@nypd @mta  
  
#SubwayCat #CatCrisisNYC #RescueWorks #Teamwork #ItTakesAVillage

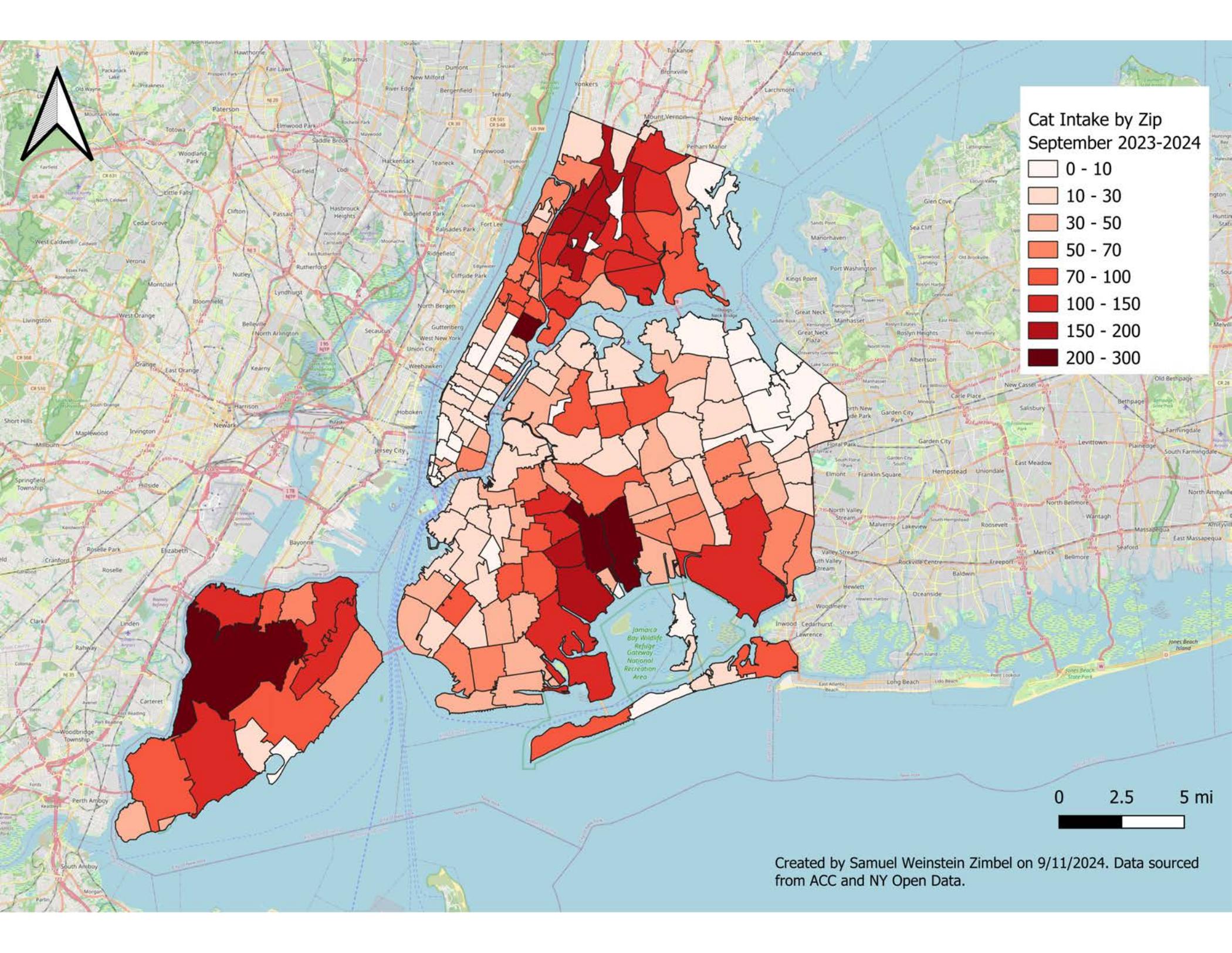


### Dog Intake by Zip September 2023-2024

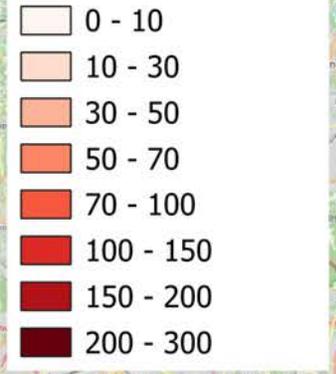
- 0 - 10
- 10 - 30
- 30 - 50
- 50 - 70
- 70 - 100
- 100 - 150
- 150 - 200
- 200 - 300

0 2.5 5 mi

Created by Samuel Weinstein Zimbel on 9/11/2024.  
Data sourced from ACC and NY Open Data.



### Cat Intake by Zip September 2023-2024



Created by Samuel Weinstein Zimbel on 9/11/2024. Data sourced from ACC and NY Open Data.

**Hearing before the New York City Council's Committee on Health  
Oversight – The State of Animal Rescue in New York City  
September 13, 2024**

Sydney Rae Serrano, LMSW  
Community Engagement Liaison  
Animal Haven

Good morning, Chairperson Schulman and members of the Health Committee. My name is Sydney Serrano, I am the community engagement liaison with Animal Haven and I am very grateful to have the opportunity to speak to you all today. As you have heard from many of my colleagues, the need for increased support for Animal Care Centers of New York City (ACC), and animal rescues is essential to the well-being of both animals and residents of New York City.

I am reminded of these needs daily while assisting families across the five boroughs seeking resources and support for their beloved pets. Just this week we have received numerous requests for temporary boarding, assistance accessing affordable veterinary care, and surrender inquiries from families who believe they have no other option. These families are facing homelessness, domestic violence, unemployment, medical emergencies, or deteriorating health conditions but all wish for one thing, their pets to remain safe.

Our community engagement program aims to preserve this important bond between animals and their families, one that is far too often jeopardized due to lack of pet friendly housing and affordable, accessible services within NYC. No pet owner should have to choose between their health, safety, or home and their pet, especially considering nearly all U.S. pet owners (97%) say their pets are part of their family.

However, this is a very real reality for many New Yorkers, and often a layered one. For example, I recently worked with a family who was at risk of homelessness and were preparing to enter the shelter system. While they were proactive about seeking assistance during this difficult time, Animal Haven's ability to help is complicated by overcrowding in our own shelter, low adoption rates across the tri-state area, and their

animals lack of vaccinations, which they report is due to no low cost vet options in their area. In this case, we were able to set them up with vaccinations and assist with the reasonable accommodation process as their dog is their child's emotional support animal, prior to their entering the shelter system, but this is not often the case. More likely, families come to us in crisis, when their pets need immediate assistance and they are forced into making heartbreaking decisions. When these pets come to us intact, unvaccinated, and sometimes with behavioral concerns, our ability to intervene changes drastically. Being that we, like many NYC rescues, are beyond capacity, we are unable to take every pet that comes through our community engagement program into our shelter. When possible, we will assist families by providing boarding at an outside facility, but this is again complicated by the lack of access to veterinary care, as the pets require vaccinations prior to being boarded. Thankfully Animal Haven isn't alone in this fight, and I am extremely thankful to my colleagues at ACC, the ASPCA, and beyond for their support, but we cannot do this without broader, systemic solutions from the city. Specifically it is our hope that the city will work with developers, landlords, and housing authorities to increase the availability of pet-friendly apartments, particularly in affordable housing complexes.

Similarly, we need to expand the availability of pet-friendly shelters for domestic violence victims and the homeless. For many individuals fleeing abusive situations or facing homelessness, their pets are their only source of comfort and stability. Separating them not only traumatizes the individuals involved by creating another obstacle for the individual to work through but also contributes to the overcrowding of shelters. By ensuring that these shelters can accommodate pets, we can provide a lifeline to those in crisis while simultaneously alleviating pressure on our animal shelters.

As I've mentioned, the importance of affordable veterinary care cannot be overstated. For many New Yorkers, particularly those in low-income communities, the cost of veterinary care can be prohibitive. This lack of access often leads to preventable health issues in pets, and in some cases, complicates their ability to seek further resources or services. By expanding affordable veterinary care and supporting surrender prevention programs, the city can help keep pets with their families, where they belong, and reduce the strain on our animal shelter system.



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**Hearing before the New York City Council's Committee on Health  
Oversight – The State of Animal Rescue in New York City  
September 13, 2024**

Tiffany Lacey  
President & Executive Director  
Animal Haven

Good morning, Chairperson Schulman and members of the Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Tiffany Lacey and I am the executive director of Animal Haven, a New York City animal welfare organization founded in 1967, with a mission to place cats and dogs in loving homes. I am proud to have been with the organization for nearly 20 years.

With that said, I have never witnessed the crisis level that we are currently experiencing. Shelters across the country are full. Many shelters, including Animal Haven, are facing increased intakes and fewer adoptions.

My comments today will focus on three direct areas that Animal Haven believes will help alleviate some of the issues facing animal welfare in NYC. And my colleague Sydney Rae Serrano will discuss suggestions related to our community engagement program and pet retention, all of which will illustrate the multi-faceted solutions that are needed to help NYC's animals and pet owners.

**Increase funding to ACC.**

Animal Haven is a proud ACC New Hope Partner. We are very much aware and respectful of the monumental undertaking ACC faces each and every day. Additional funding for ACC will help other animal welfare groups in the city. If ACC doesn't have the appropriate support, Animal Haven is faced with many more surrender requests and, as a result, overcrowding. And too often, we must say "no" – a word that is heartbreaking in animal welfare. Just to put it in perspective, for the last two years, Animal Haven has been running overcapacity. We are certainly not alone.

Additional funds going to ACC will help groups like Animal Haven by slowing the amount of surrender requests. Smaller private nonprofits should not have to shoulder the burden that our city government should be addressing.

**Offer more pet-friendly housing**

Pet-friendly housing is vital. The city should work with landlords and housing authorities to increase the availability of pet-friendly apartments, particularly in affordable housing



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complexes. Housing laws and policies that ban pets, prohibit specific breeds or severely restrict pet ownership based on size should be rejected. Additionally, policies that protect tenants with pets from unfair eviction or discriminatory practices must be strengthened.

**Expand affordable veterinary care.**

For many, the cost of veterinary care is unreasonable. This often leads to preventable veterinary issues, which force pet owners to surrender their beloved dog or cat. By expanding access to affordable veterinary care, the city can help keep pets with their families.

And so I am here today to respectfully ask the committee to step up to the plate and help all the smaller to medium sized New York City animal welfare groups like Animal Haven combat this crisis. We can't simply adopt our way out of this one. The solution includes increased funding for ACC and affordable veterinary care, expansion of surrender prevention programs, and the development of more pet-friendly housing.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

9/13/2024

Dear Council Members,

I Justin De Sola CEO of Astoria Animal Society, Inc located in Astoria Queens. I have a nonprofit animal clinic which we have been in the area for over 3years. We have been helping a lot o f rescue groups with Low cost spay and neuter With Free Vaccines (DAPPV / FVRCP and Rabies)

We only have surgeries once a week on Wednesday's, we are in need of funding to bring in more staff to be open more days. , As of our numbers of spay and neuter we do is are around 200 a month for a small staff/ clinic that is a lot , that is only one day a week we do that much for the month. If we can get funding from the city we can triple those numbers, which is more than what ASPCA and ACC stated at the hearing today where they did 400 for the month. ( They didn't state they have a sign and tell people they turn away to come to my clinic and they get funded and I don't)

I do Spay and Neuter at a low-cost with free vaccines. I also do free vaccines for the general community. I also make sure my pricing is affordable for every client that comes in. I sometimes come out of my own pocket to make sure an animal is taken care of. With the the help of the city Astoria Animal Society can get more surgeries done to help the cat and dog population.

It's the rescues that are going out there doing all the trapping and rescuing bringing the animals in for Spay And Neuter also vaccinations and trying to get the animals adopted which need help from the city a lot of adopters like adopting animals from rescuers because they have a good relationship with veterinarian so the adopters can go and bring the animal back to the vet where it was taken care of and see the history that was taken from the cat before they adopt to understand what was going on.

Thank You,

Justin De Sola  
CEO



**From:** Marlan Roberts <marlanr@bestfriends.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 13, 2024 8:46 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue in New York City

My name is Marlan Roberts, and I am the Executive Director of the Best Friends Animal Society's NYC Lifesaving Center in lower Manhattan. It is a privilege to stand before you today, especially after witnessing the grand opening of the Paul A. Vallone Queens Animal Care Center. This center truly exemplifies a strong commitment to its four-legged residents and their human families. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to their dedicated staff and volunteers, as well as the organizations that support their success.

Best Friends Animal Society is a leading animal welfare organization with a mission to end the killing of dogs and cats in America's shelters by 2025. Our reach extends nationwide, with a significant local impact here in NYC. We partner with Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC NYC) in several impactful ways:

- Best Friends provided a \$150,000 grant to ACC NYC over a two-year period, supporting the facilitation of 650 animals annually to rescue partners to help ease their capacity challenges.
- We sponsored two off-site adoption events, covering all adoption fees, which resulted in over 100 dogs and cats finding loving homes. We are committed to continuing this support in 2025.
- Additionally, Best Friends transfers animals directly to our NYC Lifesaving Center.

I am here today in strong support of the Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC NYC), the largest animal shelter in our city, which is on track to achieve a remarkable 90% save rate for the animals in their care. Despite their success, the shelter faces ongoing challenges due to the high number of animals being surrendered. Families are often forced to make the difficult decision to give up their pets due to the rising cost of living, veterinary care, and other financial pressures. This situation places an increasing demand on ACC's and families already strained resources.

With their facilities currently over capacity, ACC NYC urgently needs the community's support to continue finding loving homes for animals and, when possible, to help keep families together.

I urge the Council and its members to seek and allocate additional funding to ACC NYC. By doing so, you will be supporting a vital institution dedicated to the welfare of both animals and people and helping to make a significant positive impact in our community. Continued financial support will enable the shelter to expand their services and save even more lives.

Best,  
Marlan Roberts  
Executive Director, Best Friends New York City

Best Friends Animal Society

[Bestfriends.org](http://Bestfriends.org)



Book a time to connect with me [HERE!](#)



Thank you, Chair Schulman, and the Council.

My name is Elyse Hallenbeck and I'm the Director of Community Initiatives at Bideawee.

Since 1903, Bideawee's has saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of at-risk homeless animals through our shelters in New York City and Long Island.

Expanded in direct response to the lack of free and low-cost veterinary and spay/neuter services in the wake of the pandemic, Bideawee's Community Initiatives program, including the Feral Cat Initiative, aims to stop the pipeline of at-risk shelter pets from entering our shelter in the first place.

We provide NYCHA and NORC residents with free pet food, free vaccines, and free basic mobile vet care, ensuring owned pets can stay healthy with the people who love them, instead of being surrendered to an already overburdened and critically underfunded shelter system.

We provide community cat rescuers with low-cost spay neuter surgeries, preventing countless litters of kittens from being born on the streets, ultimately closing cages for adult cats who are already on the streets who need our care.

As anyone in this room who is a part of the shelter and rescue community can tell you, the gap in accessible and affordable veterinary care is larger than ever. We know that early intervention to keep pets healthy through affordable vet care and preventing births through high volume spay/neuter is the only way we begin to close that gap.

Bideawee's capacity of care is dwarfed in comparison to the need because of a lack of funding...

But neither Bideawee, nor any singular organization can solve this problem on our own. Our ecosystem of animal welfare in New York City has always relied on our collaboration—a collaboration that the City Council can singlehandedly accelerate by joining us in this new era of lifesaving work.

Thank you, Lynn Schulman and council members, for making today possible. Thank you to my council member Oswald Feliz for being here.

My name is Teresa Noto. I am a co-founder and officer of Bronx Tails Cat Rescue. I take part in all aspects of our small organization along with our amazing volunteers: we do street rescue, rehabilitation, fostering, provide medical care, and do adoptions.

Here are just a few circumstances I am currently working on:

- \* I rescued a cat with a injured leg from being tossed out of a window
- \* I'm helping a 70-year-old woman who cannot care for her 25+ unaltered cats
- \* Abandoned kittens we rescued are positive for feline leukemia as a result of being on the street
- \* An abandoned adult male cat who was severely emaciated when we found him - he now weighs 5.5 lbs - he should weigh 10 lbs

I could continue. I won't.

I live and work in the Bronx as a speech pathologist - my heart is for Bronx residents, Bronx children, and Bronx animals. My neighbors cannot afford spay-neuter services. So their pets reproduce - over and over. They give the kittens and puppies away because it's too costly to feed and care for them. Those pets also reproduce. Many are discarded like trash. And the cycle of abandonment and cruelty continues. I willingly volunteer my time and resources, but it's not enough.

Low-Cost Spay-neuter programs for the community and small rescuers WILL result in fewer homeless pets, healthier shelter animals, direct support for residents, and improved relations with local community leaders.

Please help our communities - provide low-cost spay-neuter in the Bronx and in NYC. The greatest city in the world should have the greatest heart for its people and animals. Thank you.



**BROOKLYN BRIDGE ANIMAL WELFARE COALITION**  
**BBAWC RESCUE CLINIC | BROOKLYN CAT CAFE**



Testimony before New York City Council Committee on Health  
on the State of Rescue in NYC  
September 13, 2024

I represent Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition, which operates the Brooklyn Cat Cafe and the BBAWC Rescue Clinic. BBAWC would now like to highlight the individuals and small group rescuers who have stepped up to fill the gaps left by the inadequate shelter system and lack of accessible vet care, while the city and its agencies are shielded from the harsh reality of the NYC cat crisis.

A sadly common story: a family facing eviction is forced to leave their pet cat behind after being turned away from a full animal shelter. NYCHA employees then put the cat outside with no shelter or food, where it ends up critically ill or injured due to their lack of survival skills. Most rescuers get calls about situations like this multiple times a week and, knowing the cats have no other options, take on the costs and effort required to get the cats fixed and adopted.

This is draining mentally, emotionally, physically, and financially, yet rescuers feel unable to stop or even take a break because they know no one else will help these cats.

Until long-term humane policies and programs are established, the city can lend immediate support to rescuers by enforcing existing laws and policies:

- Ag and Markets Law 355 prohibits abandoning an animal + NYCHA policy states unowned animals are to be taken to shelters. Empower NYCHA employees to bring pets to the city shelter rather than leave them unsterilized on premises.
- Help residents comply with nycha policies requiring animals to be spayed and neutered, so if a cat does end up outside it cannot reproduce freely.
- Fine pet owners who let their intact unvaccinated cats outside.
- Leverage dog licensing fees and other fines to fund the animal overpopulation fund.

Every day of inaction is another day homeless cats suffer and another day you are failing your constituents and the community.



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BROOKLYN, NY 11202-2948

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**BROOKLYN BRIDGE ANIMAL WELFARE COALITION**  
**BBAWC RESCUE CLINIC | BROOKLYN CAT CAFE**



Testimony before New York City Council Committee on Health  
on the State of Rescue in NYC  
September 13, 2024

Thank you for your time. I represent Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition, which operates the Brooklyn Cat Cafe and the BBAWC Rescue Clinic.

Ensuring widespread access to low-cost, high-quality spay/neuter services would address the two biggest drivers of the NYC homeless cat population: first, it would prevent the birth, suffering, and early death of hundreds of thousands of kittens. Second, it would decrease the number of pets abandoned due to nuisance behaviors shown by unaltered cats, such as fighting and spraying.

Vet care today is unaffordable for many pet owners and rescuers. In 2020 we called every veterinary hospital in the city to find out how much they charge for a spay/neuter. The average cost of a neuter was \$480 and \$540 for a spay. Few offered discounts for rescuers or individuals on public assistance. Prices have only grown since then; we were recently quoted as much as \$1650 for a spay, over ten times what BBAWC Rescue Clinic charges for the same procedure.

Cost is not the only barrier - in 2020, existing high volume low-cost spay neuter providers stopped providing surgeries entirely and even now perform only a fraction of the surgery volume that is needed.

Pet owners and their beloved cats are the other group to suffer the consequences of this scarcity. It's easy to demonize people who abandon their cats to the streets, but we have met pet owners terrified of losing housing due to complaints or who cannot handle their intact cats' nuisance behaviors. Too often they release their cats outside once they reach puberty which exacerbates the already exponentially growing outdoor cat population.

To effectively address the homeless cat crisis, NYC needs an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 low cost s/n surgeries to be made widely available to rescuers and pet owners, each year. No singular group can achieve that alone. It can only happen with productive collaboration among individuals, municipal, and private entities.



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Testimony before New York City Council Committee on Health  
on the State of Rescue in NYC  
September 13, 2024

Thank you for your time. I represent Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition, which operates the Brooklyn Cat Cafe and the BBAWC Rescue Clinic. Today I am going to share the numbers that show that the existing shelter system in New York City does not adequately address the needs of the city's existing cat population.

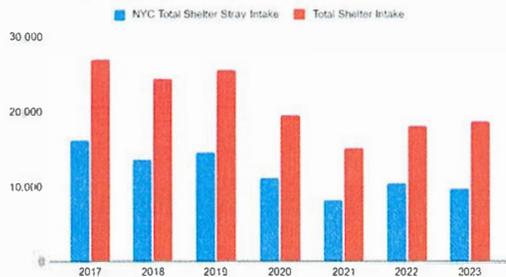
According to data reported to Shelter Animals Count, in 2023 a total of 18,566 cats were taken in by participating shelters and rescue groups. (this does not include the large number of cats helped by individual and small group rescues). Just over 9.5K were stray cats, in other words, removed from the outdoors. The rest were owner rehoming or transfers from other shelters. That means that in 2023, the existing NYC shelter system was able to help less than 2% of the (minimum) 500K cats suffering on the streets.

As a city we are failing the over 500,000 outdoor cats suffering on the streets, the over 2.3 million (2,352,000) kittens born on the streets, and the over 1.7 million (1,764,000) kittens that die before reaching 6 months. These cats affect every single community in the city from animal lovers to residents who see the cats nuisance behaviors, reproducing, starving, and suffering on their doorstep.

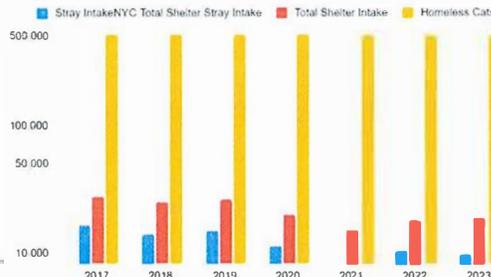
The traditional shelter system and current adoption rates are not and will never be sufficient to solve the New York City cat crisis for good. Individual and small group rescuers have stepped up to try and fill the gap, however, with little financial help, extremely limited access to affordable veterinary care and no municipal support we are constantly overwhelmed by the numbers, the death, and the suffering.

Please hear our concerns, recognize the magnitude of the cat crisis in the city, and work with individual rescuers and small rescue groups to help us implement systemic, humane solutions to the NYC cat crisis.

Stray Cat Shelter Intake 2016-2023



NYC Intake vs Homeless Population 2016-2023





# **united community centers** INC.

613 NEW LOTS AVENUE, BROOKLYN, NY 11207 • Phone 718.649.7979 •  
Fax 718.649.7256



**East New York Farms!** A Project of United Community Centers, Inc.  
For the Committee on Health  
September 13th, 2024

Thank you to the Committee on Parks and Recreation for holding today's budget hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony.

We write today to speak on behalf of the Trap-Neuter-Release efforts, historical and ongoing, at and around East New York Farms by the community. We are asking for affordable veterinary care for all New Yorkers, especially those maintaining the stray cat populations in East New York.

East New York Farms is an urban-ag non-profit uplifting food justice, youth and community development in East New York, Brooklyn at our in-ground farm and beyond since 1998. We, dedicated neighbors, and organizations like Bushwick Cats have been caring for, maintaining and rehoming the stray cat populations for decades. To do so, we most often rely on the labor of these volunteer-led or non profit organizations, arranged low-cost vet care, and money out of our own pockets.

At ENYF, we maintain the cat population because in turn, cats suppress the rodent and pest population on our agricultural operation. The cost of maintaining the cats far outweighs the cost and impact of toxic and violent pest eradication efforts. The ENYF community does this without pay and without the city's ask.

The effects of the ongoing cat crisis in NYC has become largely apparent. The organizations and individuals we have historically relied on for neutering/spaying, fostering, feeding and vet visits are, again and again, over capacity. They are unable to help us, financially and physically, as cats are continually showing up and in need of care and maintenance.

For us as human service workers with unlivable wages in an increasingly expensive city, absorbing the cost of veterinary care is extremely difficult. Frankly, if Mayor Adams can fork over millions of taxpayer dollars for rat mitigation and management, funding is absolutely essential to go to support the people that are already doing the city's work of maintaining cat populations. We, and NYC, cannot afford otherwise.

Thank you for your time and consideration to support.  
For more information please contact: [compost@ucceny.org](mailto:compost@ucceny.org)

City council testimony 9/13/24  
Will Zweigart  
Executive Director, Flatbush Cats

- My name is Will Zweigart, I'm the founder and Executive Director of Flatbush Cats. Our mission is to reduce overcrowded animal shelters in New York City.
- Thank you to the Chair, and the members of the committee for convening this hearing
- Behind every overcrowded open admission animal shelter is a city that has not yet made basic veterinary services like spay neuter affordable and accessible for its residents
- Affordability is the top issue for New Yorkers.
- It's also the number one reason why people are surrendering their pets to shelters - and why many say they will never be able to adopt again.
- Intakes are up, adoptions are down, and currently less than 5% of the city's animal welfare budget supports upstream efforts like spay neuter.
  
- Flatbush Cats started out as a 501(c)(3) rescue organization, but soon realized that we cannot rescue our way out of this crisis.
- So last year, with support from the public and pilot funding from this council, we opened Flatbush Veterinary Clinic, a nonprofit facility offering affordable spay neuter services and preventative care for pet owners and rescuers.
- Because spay neuter is surrender prevention.
  
- Next year we'll perform over 10,000 affordable spay neuter surgeries, which will provide a massive, direct benefit to reducing shelter intake.
- We built this clinic as a model to show you what is possible -
- Because we need a minimum of 100,000 spay neuter appointments per year to dramatically reduce shelter intake numbers.
- Imagine the possibilities if we scaled community clinics like Flatbush Vet to every borough.
- And imagine this council as the catalyst that finally turned the tide - and inspired the rest of the country to follow suit.
- Think of how many lives you will save and improve.
- Because behind every city with a manageable shelter population - is a group of **leaders** who made spay neuter services more accessible for both pet owners and rescuers.
- This is a solvable problem.
- Let's get it done.
- Thank you.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Harlem Animal Rescue <harlemanimalrescue@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:34 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] TESTIMONY on State of Animal Welfare

[REDACTED]

My name is Aimee Jolson, co-founder of Harlem Animal Rescue transitioning to President of the newly formed 501c3, Be The Change Animal Rescue. We are a tiny, mostly two to four person group of rescuers operating in Central Harlem, District 9. In a five block radius, there are at least 100 homeless cats, that we know of. In the 10-12 blocks we cover and the five colonies we feed, we estimate at least 200 cats are unfixed and unvaccinated. We would love to invite a council member for a tour.

Every single day we are fielding pleas for help. Every single day we say no, because we cannot keep up with what is happening. **A MINIMUM of 60% of the cats we rescue are friendly dumped house pets, or their direct descendants.**

I am allergic to cats, so much so that I hated them because growing up, when friends got a cat, I couldn't visit them anymore. I have been a vegetarian/vegan and animal advocate for over forty years. I have lived in NYC since 1991 and I never saw a homeless animal until 2017 when I moved to Central Harlem. It was in a lot behind the library on 135<sup>th</sup> street where I encountered my first colony of kittens living in a trash pile with friendly adults around. I reached out for help on FB and found other rescuers nearby...and so it began.

I am so overwhelmed and so exhausted by the state of rescue in Harlem at this time that to even imagine how to testify feels impossible. I would like to emphasize the toll that doing this work takes on the humans who show up for these animals every day. The humans who find animals that have been hit by cars or have fallen out of windows and are lying on the ground writhing in pain.....we deal with all of it. Burn out is real, mental health crisis is real, and compassion fatigue..... that burnt out two years ago. It is so bad.

**WE NEED HELP NOW!!! WE NEED EMERGENCY FUNDING!!**

**At the recent hearing, the lack of preparation and concern from the DOH, made my had explode. SHAME SHAME SHAME SHAME!!! There is an entirely volunteer army doing work that is a city crisis and a CITY RESPONSIBILITY..We need a person who actually CARES to be doing that job. It was truly unconscionable.**

We manage a mega colony at a Mitchell Llama complex near 147<sup>th</sup> and ACP. The management is on board with us working there but the situation is OUT OF CONTROL. There are a minimum of **40 UNFIXED, UNVACCINATED cats on just ONE block between ACP and Lenox**. At least 20 of those are kittens under the age of 16 weeks. And the moms- are already pregnant again. In August we took 12 kittens, and were able to fix two moms. There are at least five more unfixed females who have certainly given birth or are about to any moment. We have no more funds to help. This colony will be 80 by the end of the year, and so much suffering and death. Not to mention parasites, worms and the kittens tested positive for zoonotic organisms.

**The management company would like the DOH to issue citations to shareholders on the property who insist these are their cats and fight with us when we work to rescue and TNR. DOH NEEDS TO DO THEIR JOB. No more funds needed?!!!!!!**

**HARLEM NEEDS FREE/AFFORDABLE SPAY/NEUTER and vet care options. WE ARE DROWNING.**

And as for the ACI Unit...it is a joke. Impossible to report anything, impossible to get any actions taken without a gigantic social media campaign. Most officers tell us to call the ASPCA. THEY DON'T EVEN KOW IT IS THEIR JOB TO RESPOND TO ANIMAL CRUELTY.

On a Sunday in February, Super Bowl Sunday, we received a **horrifying video of a small maybe two pound ginger kitten lying on a sidewalk on 136<sup>th</sup> street. His THROAT HAD BEEN SLIT!!!** This is a street where we have done extensive work in fixing the community cats and is a colony we have been caring for. Clearly we were behind in our information or he could have been saved. Police were called. They came and saw the kitten. It is unclear if he was thrown away or taken to ACC. There are cameras – at least si- that point to the exact spot where this murder occurred. Anyone knows that a person who is slitting the throats of kittens, is also a danger to humans. **NOTHING WAS DONE.**

As a rescuer, I took it upon myself to get access to management security, but I could only get so far because IT ISN'T MY JOB. Animal Cruelty Unit kept passing the buck and saying it was not our business.

We know the exact time that this incidence occurred as there is video of the baby taking last breaths. Even the police officer who came to pick up the animal said injury was consistent with throat being slit. To this day, we have no further information.

I say again **SHAME ON THE DOH. WE NEED HELP!! WE NEED FUNDS!!! WE NEED AFFORDABLE SPAY/NEUTER. WE NEED IT YESTERDAY!!!!**

**We work on a metro transit property- a CITY PROPERTY because the workers there BEGGED us to help the out of control population of cats that were getting in their workrooms, peeing, giving birth, dead cats, cats overflowing from the ones being dumped by people in Esplanade Gardens. They had been trying for two years to get help from the city, from ACC or ASPCA. No one helped.**

Since that time we have taken dozens of cats and kittens from the property and fixed the community cats. At this location. Unfixed. Probably from the Mitchell -Lama Housing at Esplanade Gardens.

People there constantly dump pets, and then refuse help when it is offered. DOH needs to be fining them. NYC needs to fund affordable care.

Lastly: have a hearing for RYDER'S LAW. How many more animals need to die in our streets. This situation has a SOLUTION. The only thing standing in the way is corruption. WHEN IS ENOUGH????!!!!

Thank you for holding this hearing.

Aimee Jolson,  
Co-Founder  
Harlem Animal Rescue  




## TESTIMONY FOR NYC COUNCIL HEARING – FRIDAY, 9.13.24 – COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Submitted by Allyson Johnson ~ Co-Founder, Harlem Animal Rescue

In the summer of 2016, I became a cat rescuer by accident when a cat gave birth to a litter of kittens in the basement of my building. She was able to get in and out through a broken window. Once the kittens were old enough to walk, they too began to emerge. I began to feed all of them, outside on the front steps of my home, on a very busy street. Then, one day, someone on the sidewalk approached mama cat with food, startling her. She ran into the street and got hit by a car, orphaning 6 kittens.

Until that time, I'd only ever dealt with domesticated, indoor cats. I didn't know there was a vast network of grassroots rescuers in NYC until someone suggested I go to my local police precinct and speak with their animal liaison [a position that apparently no longer exists]. That officer put me in touch with a woman who was rescuing a block away from my home. Thanks to her, I became connected with other local rescuers who came to my aid, providing guidance on how to trap and socialize feral cats. They taught me about spay/neuter, giving up some of their own appointments to get my kittens fixed and vaccinated. I didn't know just how valuable those appointments were until I began rescuing myself, attempting to find *anyplace* that would be affordable where I could get the most basic services!

Since that summer, 8 years ago, I've lost count of the number of cats and kittens I've rescued. It numbers in the hundreds, and we're talking about an area encompassing less than a mile in any direction. Along with a few rescue partners, I've set up feeding stations and winter shelters in the vacant lots in our neighborhoods where community cats live. These shelters are frequently thrown away, and have to be replaced, when city workers come in to clean up the lots. We feed, and rescue, and fix as many cats as we can...no matter the season, no matter the temperature. Because outdoor cats still have to eat, and continue to breed, whether it is convenient for us or not.

I've joined forces with a handful of other Harlem rescuers, pooling our limited resources and supporting one another as we attempt to stem the never-ending tide of cats that are either born on the streets or are dumped there by humans. Not all of these abandoned cats are unwanted, mind you. But without access to free, or **affordable**, spay/neuter services, pet parents have no way to responsibly take care of the animals they lovingly took into their homes.

As boots-on-the-ground rescuers, we spend thousands and thousands of dollars out of our own pockets to feed, transport, spay/neuter, and provide veterinary care for the animals we take in. We are not a shelter. We have no holding space. So, unless we're

able to find fosters, we keep many of these animals in our own homes, often isolated in bathrooms, as they recuperate from surgeries and heal from medical conditions, large and small. We typically have no choice but to pay the exorbitant costs of bringing them to private vets because there are no other alternatives when we find cats in need of immediate medical attention.

We are exhausted. We are broke. We live in apartments that are overflowing with animals, just like our overburdened city shelters are. And we are barely making a dent in the problem. We need the city's help to ensure that the barrage of animal suffering on New York City's streets comes to an end. We're already doing the work. What we desperately need is money and support to continue providing the care that we give this city's homeless animals, day in and day out.

*Heart and Hand Society, Inc.*

319 East 50<sup>th</sup> Street

New York, NY 10022

September 16, 2024

Re: State of Animal Rescue NYC hearing 9-13-24

To: City Council NYC

I would reiterate the need for massive funding for spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care. Programs outside the City are subsidized by the town where resident lives-\$25 for voucher for spay and rabies shot. As most cats come from reproduction of stray/outdoor cats, we need a program to fund TNR - hiring trappers/trapping, spay/neuter, transport and holding.

Also improve operations at NYC ACC, that is killing too many animals, especially dogs. And cats are dying in cages or euthanized for behavior or illness. Could ACC Intake Diversion program be more successful? I get the impression ACC encourages surrender. Additionally, are New Hope Partners not pulling or leaving the program? I know many have left. Enact Shelter Animal Rescue Act S7245.

Thirdly, we need a NYC Department of Animal Welfare independent, apart from DOH and an Animal Welfare Committee on City Council.

Sincerely,

*Karen Meierdiercks*

Karen Meierdiercks

President

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Itty Bitty City Kitties <ittybittycitykitties@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 14, 2024 11:37 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony for Sept 13 Health Hearing on Animal Welfare

[REDACTED]

My name is Samantha Knox and I am the director of Itty Bitty City Kitties, a non-profit animal rescue based in Rockaway Beach, Queens.

In the last 10 years the population in Rockaway has increased over 8% to nearly 125k people – one of the largest population increases in Queens. The median household income in 2022 was \$66k, approximately 14% less than citywide median household income, with the poverty rate in Rockaway/Broad Channel at 18%. Of our population, 14.1% of residents live in Public Housing.

52% of the residents of the area have pets.

For all of those people, there are TWO vets. Neither of those vets offers any low-income assistance. The basic cost of an exam and annual wellness vaccines is over \$175 per pet. This does not include spay and neuter services, which increases those costs to \$1,000 or more, per pet, which is far outside the financial possibility for anyone struggling to feed their family.

With no access locally or city wide to affordable vet care, the animal population becomes unmanageable and explodes. Pets who are problematic or sick get surrendered to an already overburdened shelter system, or abandoned, making more animals found on the streets, in parking lots, dumpsters, playgrounds, or on the boardwalk. It creates situations where pet parents who take in a few strays, end up with 100 cats in their home because they couldn't afford to sterilize them. In January, I worked a case where a former NYPD officer couldn't afford to get her three cats sterilized and in a few years, three cats became more than 100 animals in her 850sqft bungalow. I worked with another man, a veteran, who couldn't afford to sterilize his pets and ended up with so many in his small home, he panicked and started to throw living kittens in the trash or drown them in Jamaica Bay.

This is just the beginning. This is not the dog fights. This is not live kittens used as fight bait, or live animals found tied up in bags in dumpsters.

I am one person. My small rescue cannot hold the burden of 125,000 Rockaway residents who have no options, no help, and no assistance. We do, however, have a plan to begin to help our area, one we've discussed at length with Council Member Ariola. It is not a plan our tiny organization, or a single member of the city council, can enact alone.

It is impossible without the physical and financial support of the city to promote and expand programs like mine, not just in Rockaway, but citywide.

--

Itty Bitty City Kitties Inc.  
Samantha Knox, Director

Testimony for New York City Council Members  
Committee on Health

September 13, 2024

Dear Council Members,

My name is Victoria Koulouris, and I am the President and Founder of LIC Feral Feeders and Cat Rescue Corp., a 501(c)3 corporation based in District 26 - Long Island City, Queens.

I began feeding neighborhood cats several years ago, which led me to uncover a harsh reality in our city: every construction site, empty lot, and alleyway harbors colonies of homeless cats.

A female cat can start reproducing as early as six months old, producing multiple litters each year. Without proper management, a small colony can quickly multiply into a large, uncontrollable population. The crisis is severe, and individual rescuers and organizations cannot solve the problem alone. We are witnessing a relentless increase in abandoned pets coinciding with rising costs for veterinary care, making the situation even more dire.

We need your help. We need accessible, low-cost or free spay/neuter and veterinary services. Such services must be available not just to rescue organizations but to community members who cannot afford the exorbitant costs of private veterinary care.

The city's homeless cat population is a problem that demands a citywide solution. I urge you to allocate a budget to address this urgent issue and support our efforts to manage and reduce the number of homeless cats in New York City.

My Director of Operations, Jannatul Ahmed has also submitted testimony, along with our annual report. I think you will find the data eye-opening and strong justification for the assistance we require.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Victoria Koulouris



*NYC Council Health Committee Hearing September 13, 2024*  
*The State of Animal Rescue in New York City*

Good afternoon Chair Schulman and members of the Health Committee. A special acknowledgement to Council Members Holden, Brewer and Ariola for being true champions for animals. I'm Kathy Nizzari, Founder and Chair of Lights Out Coalition, a group of more than 50 organizations dedicated to protecting urban wildlife. We are grateful to the committee for holding this hearing on important animal issues and hope the overwhelming support for bills like the guinea pig sale ban and the rat contraception program demonstrates a positive shift in the Council towards compassion for animals.

We support Intro 1018 calling for regulations and protections for all animals sold in pet stores. Not only do birds and exotics need protection and proper health care, but we hope to see a day where these sales are also banned, especially since illegal dumping of animals in public areas is so prevalent. We also appreciate that any breeder or seller must be issued a permit and look forward to the day they are outlawed as well.

As for the state of New York's Animal Rescue, we feel free spay and neuter services as well as fully funding Trap Neuter Release {TNR} programs and care by the many volunteer and rescue groups in the city are necessary to reduce and hopefully eliminate the practice of euthanization.

Further, there is a serious need for looking at rescue more holistically or inclusively. Presently, there is no city agency that will take in or attend to injured or abandoned birds and other exotics. Whether it means expanding the scope of ACC or giving significant grants to Wild Bird Fund, the city's only wildlife rehabilitation center that tends to wild birds and other animals injured in parks, on the streets, by building collisions, or dumped in parks and other public locations. So many unnecessary deaths could be avoided if we all take our role as stewards more seriously. This also includes the carriage horses who have a long history of abuse. In fact, one of the owners is presently being prosecuted by the Manhattan District Attorney for criminal animal abuse of an elderly, sick carriage horse.

The coalition has many ideas on how the City can better protect its animals and we look forward to meaningful discussions on how to achieve these goals.

We would love to speak with you, CW Ariola, offline about the Queens issue you raised.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Kathy Nizzari

Lights Out Coalition

[kathy.nizzari.nam@gmail.com](mailto:kathy.nizzari.nam@gmail.com)

Hi. I'm Michelle Marwitz, president of Lincoln Terrace Park Cats. Our organization spays and neuters community cats and rescues unowned cats in district 41 where I lived for many years. I now live in district 46, which unfortunately *also* has a very high number of cats on the street.

Unlike typical volunteer jobs, rescue work is always on call. There is very little off time for most of us. On top of our full-time day jobs, we're taking cats to the vet, transporting them to foster, helping neighbors who don't want so many cats in their yard... And when we finally get home from an exhausting day, there's often an urgent message about an emergency situation – cats who have been hit by a car; cats in such poor condition they're unable to move; orphaned neonatal kittens... And though our bodies call out for rest, the cry for help is louder. We know we're usually the only ones who can help. If there are neighbors involved, they often lack the skills necessary; if there are other rescuers awake, they're just as overwhelmed as we are. So we spend the night in the ER with the sick cat: we pick up the neonatal kittens, feeding them every 3 hours and providing basic medical care because most vets aren't even trained in how to handle kittens that young. (And the few who are have long waitlists.)

*We are the first responders to cats.*

But unlike traditional first responders, *our* organizations aren't funded by the city. There's no support for all the fires *we* put out; there's no coverage for the medical care *our* patients require; for our vehicles; for all the supplies we need...

We have to *beg* over and over again on social media just to raise funds for *basic* care like spay/neuter and vaccines.

***At the very least, we desperately need city funded, high volume spay/neuter services and basic veterinary care for rescuers as well as pet owners.***

The hundreds of thousands of cats on city streets are far more than the number of rescuers can handle, and it's not fair for all the work to fall on us.

*The animals on the city streets are a city problem; we cannot reduce their numbers in a meaningful capacity without the city's help.*

Thank you.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Save Shelter Animals <thepawsouls@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 18, 2024 4:16 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony for -Sept 13 2024 Health Committee Hearing on Rescue & Shelter Crisis  
**Attachments:** Bill Thompson Audit 2002 (1).pdf; Led-Astray-Reforming-New-York-City-s-Animal-Care-and-Control-January-2013 (1).pdf; Stringer-s-2015-NYCACC-Audit.pdf

[REDACTED]

Hello. Marilyn Galfin, founder Voices for Shelter Animals. The shelter & homeless animal crisis is out of control. Everyone involved in trying to save these animals are physically and emotionally burnt out and pleading for help from the government. For many this has created a mental health crisis. The city needs to declare a state of emergency and implement immediate protocols. A special emergency task force or commission could be created.

We need an emergency fund to help New Yorkers keep their pets out of the shelter with large scale subsidized s/n, microchipping, vet care, dog training, education on proper pet guardianship, and an increase in pet food pantries. Microchipping should be mandatory as long as it is subsidized. Lost dogs can be reunited with the owner and lost dogs abandoned can be tracked down to the owner and legal action taken. The DOH has failed in their role to subsidize such life saving programs.

This city is losing a lot of money that could go into the Animal Population Control fund because DOH has been delinquent in enforcing the mandated dog licensing law. *We estimate that there are approximately 500,000 dogs in New York City. Of that number, 107,836 were actively licensed as of FY 2023. Data for FY 2024 is not available currently.* Pest Control Property Research/Dog Licensing - NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene-City of New York

There is a need for extensive awareness campaigns such as: Educating the public on the benefits to spay and neuter pets. Programs are needed to incentive neutering for those who would otherwise not, such as paid to neuter. Mandatory spay/neutering is controversial and will need more discussion.

The city needs to enforce a moratorium on back yard breeders now while no nonsense breeding legislation gets created. Backyard breeders fall through the cracks and do not fall under pet dealers allowing them to sell animals without being spayed or neutered. A law needs to be created to ban free pets being given away online and banning pet sales online such as on Craigslist.

There needs to be negotiations with landlords to waive pet discrimination policies.

Humane education in public schools mandated by state law needs to be enforced. New York State Education Law §809 requires that all public elementary schools provide instruction on the humane treatment of animals. There are so many benefits that include fostering empathy and compassion, promoting responsibility, encouraging critical thinking, improving emotional well-being, strengthening academic skills, increasing social

awareness, and preventing violence.

There is a need for a major print and tv media campaign including a PSA with a celebrity to encourage adoption and foster over buying and to dispel any myths on shelter animals and bully breeds. Planning should begin now to create such a campaign as holidays are coming up when there is a big surge to buy puppies as presents and tie in the message that no more pets for sale in NYC allowed mid december when the Puppy Mill pipeline legislation goes into effect. ACC has still not properly made clear that ACC is not the ASPCA as the public still confuse them. They need to fix their branding.

Campaigns needed to educate the public on their rights as pet owners in housing as well as educating people on what to do if they find or lose an animal to reunite people with their pets and keep them out of the shelter. Many people do not realize they cannot legally just keep an animal they find. Resources and support including pet food if they cannot afford it can be given to them to hold the animals and keep them out of the shelter while trying to find the owner.

Funding which the DOH fails to supply is needed now for rescues and for feral colony caretakers. The community cat crisis has spiraled out of control. There can be massive organized spay and neuter sweeps in one neighborhood at a time. TNR lessons should be free to all and held in different languages. Feral colony caretaking should be subsidized. Feral caretaking can be a paid job position. Big Spay and Neuter events including bringing in out of state vets and out of country like Canada, can get many cats done at once, and bring the community together to help in the massive community cat crisis. Getting local businesses involved to fund such events can attract them more customers. Creating out of box events on a big level may be able to entice vets to donate their services to participate. Getting the boutique vets in NYC to have a way for their clients to donate to spay/neuter events. Working with veterinary schools, creating funding that pays tuition to get more vet students to learn to spay neuter and train already established vets and other creative initiatives & incentives can add to the pool of needed vets for more access to free low cost/free services. . There needs to be a centralized database for all people who do TNR whether not for profit or individual members of the public to share information and help each other.

The city needs to crack down on animal abandonment and neglect which has spiraled out of control. Abandonment is against the law. A massive media campaign along the lines of the see something say something campaign and offer rewards for people to report people abandoning. There needs to be a special animal welfare unit created, not police, to find, heavily fine and prosecute perpetrators to the fullest extent of law and send a message that abandonment and neglect will not be tolerated in this city. There needs to be legislation to strengthen penalties. At the same time needed is a media awareness campaign to alert the public to any resources that may be available at this time to help them keep their pets.

A special animal welfare unit can also be in charge of other animal issues. The city needs something similar to do what the ASPCA originally did. There needs to be access to a 24 hour helpline. 311 and 911 system for alerting police in getting help for animals must be revamped. But right now the public needs to be aware which one to call when an animal needs help. Some officers in the precinct are not aware their precinct may have an animal liaison. At one time I believe every precinct had one. Each precinct needs to have a working scanner..

There is a need for a special unit and a special number to call which could be the Department of Animal Welfare. The DAW should be a portal for all animal related issues of this city that people know to call as the number would be well publicized. A one stop shop for all animal needs. Legislation needs to be created if necessary in the meantime to get more prompts on 311. Many times the person at 311 will ask the caller is it this or is it that and many choices that are offered do not target the specific animal concern.

The animals in this city have no standing. We need an animal welfare committee created in the City Council,

something we've been fighting for years, to address animal concerns, focus on shelter reform and animal welfare legislation informed by shelter reform advocates. Every other type of caucus or committee exists but nothing for animals. This also points out why we need immediate legislation to get animals status as sentient beings and stop the outdated view of animals as property.

The office of Animal Welfare does not serve the needs of shelter animals. There is no welfare for these animals. It cannot be in the best interests of these animals if the director of AW Department is a former ACC employee. It is a conflict of interest. We need a director with no ties to the shelter, who will challenge the ACC, fight for the welfare of these animals and an entity with a wider purview. Again why there is a need for a Department of Animal Welfare. And there is no one for advocates to call to address concerns once animals are in the shelter. We need an office that is responsive to calls and emails.

The Bureau of Veterinary and pest control services whose name sums up their view on animals, oversee ACC. They continue to fail the shelter animals as well as all the animals of the city. They need to be replaced. We need a Dept of Animal Welfare. We need a stand alone independent entity with creative vision to address animal homelessness. We need to get rid of this tired, outdated status quo shelter system based on killing for population control. This city needs something new, innovative that will bring excitement to NYers. A whole new paradigm that saves more animals by helping people keep their pets through innovative programs. A vision that will gain support and get New Yorkers to proudly fund and it will increase community involvement.

The city needs a shelter where good samaritans can bring found animals without regretting it. Here is something a distraught member of the public posted on social media after bringing in a found pet to ACC.

**Women Regrets Bringing Found Dog to Shelter. She Didn't know it was a High Kill Shelter**

*Hello, I'm the one that found this dog. I am truly heartbroken that he is on the Euthanasia list for tomorrow. I don't know what to even say. When I brought him I really believed I was doing the right thing at the time, even though I cried hysterically on the ride there. I called everyone and anyone I knew before I brought him. Unfortunately, I have two pit bulls at home and bringing here was not an option.*

*My experience with him was traumatizing, witnessing him being hit, standing on the side of the road with him in the pouring rain but the entire time he stood next to me and listened when I told him to come or stay. I will say this yes, he was fearful and weary of me but at no point did he try to lunge or attack me. I drove with him for 20 minutes and he was okay, just sticking his head out the window, wagging his tail when I said he was a good boy...probably thinking I was saving him. Instead, I let him down. I wish I could have done more, I really do. I wish so hard someone will pull him and give him a chance. I know he is just so scared and probably in pain. I'm so sorry this is happening to him and idk if I could even forgive myself for bringing him. If there is anything I could do or any way I could help. I'd be happy to.*

Under DOH watch lack of humane treatment continues today in the brand new ACC Queens shelter recently cited for neglect.

<https://nypost.com/2024/08/22/us-news/dogs-at-new-nyc-animal-care-center-shelter-neglected-inside-cramped-filthy-cages-council-member-and-whistleblowers-say/>

Everyone waited for over 20 years for this shelter. This city cannot allow neglect to be tolerated as business as usual. We can't have 30 more years of this as the unheard of 34 year 1.4 billion dollar DOH/ACC contract is in effect locking out any accountability.

The shelter system is set up to fail the animals from the oversight by DOH, ACC running it and the Board structure. Members of the board appointed by the Mayor keep allegiance and are not going to make waves. No one wants to challenge the status quo of this shelter system. A former director of the Office of Animal Welfare who was not responsive to fighting for shelter changes is on the board of ACC. Another conflict of interest.

Attempts to get the board chair to create a dedicated email so members of the public could contact them to continue discussion after the board meetings (only 2 minutes to speak) went nowhere.

This city should no longer stand by and accept the continued failed shelter system. The shelter is supposed to ensure the safety and well being of animals entrusted to their care. This broken system starts with failed leadership. A solid foundation is needed to build the system on. How can it be that the same executive director is still in charge when in the city comptroller audits of ACC continue to be cited for lack of humane treatment. In other businesses that person would have been replaced.

There needs to be transparency and accountability. Also the monthly asilomar reports no longer have data on the health status of transfers to rescues. <https://www.nycacc.org/about/statistics/>

Right now dogs are sitting in their cages hardly getting walked or receiving enrichment. Then when they start to deteriorate, they are put on risk lists/kill lists, many given terrible bios making them appear dangerous and unadoptable, many labeled rescue only. Most dogs are nothing like the bios once out of the shelter. ACC has to stop the assessments against these dogs. Assessments have been proven invalid by experts in veterinary behavior. It is not the animals that are the problem, it's the shelter & animals are being senselessly destroyed including 1 year old adoptable puppies.

Link to the dogs on the at risk list now <https://newhope.shelterbuddy.com/Animal/List?Animal>

### **Testimony sent to Voices for Shelter Animals from Woman on Inaccuracy of Dogs Behavior Assessment She Adopted**

*My name is Danielle P. I recently adopted a dog from the Brooklyn shelter who was on the kill list. She was going to be put down for "behavioral issues with other dogs". She is the sweetest girl ever and adores every dog she has met so far yet she was going to be killed because of reactivity towards other dogs while she was being forced into her dark damp kennel. I really think these dogs need better assessments.*

*Most are being marked as no kids or no other pets when they in fact are quite friendly. It's the shelter environment that's making them act out. My dog I adopted was marked for no kids and no pets yet she loves both! She was going to be killed because of a poor assessment as are hundreds of other dogs. Also the networking to get these dogs adopted could be much better. I'm from the lake George area and there are so many people looking to adopt up here that have no idea the shelters are overflowing to the point where you're killing great pets on a daily basis. It's heartbreaking and i'd really like to see you do better. It kills me to think of this dog getting killed. She is an absolute sweetheart who just loves everyone and you were going to put her down for a reason that wasn't even real. It's very disappointing to see the lack of compassion from the people who are put in place to prevent this.*

Healthy dogs enter the Manhattan shelter , then get deathly ill from the shelter and then the financial burden is put on rescues to save them or they can be killed. How is this acceptable in this city? We need emergency overflow spaces and to make use of unused spaces in the Queens shelter. Why is the Manhattan adoption center not open to the public yet? The DOH needs to get money to ACC - offer decent salaries, come up with creative incentives & get people in the shelter to give the animals the care they deserve. They can't wait for volunteers so they can save money. Someone needs to intervene asap and take over if DOH/ACC are not capable of getting these animals help. This is inhumane.

ACC needs to immediately implement life saving policies. There are many . One example is getting a dedicated phone line for at risk animals. There are no excuses why they still have not done this. We have asked for years. The question is , if there are things that can save lives, why are they not implemented. What is the real agenda of this shelter system? Dogs that people wanted have lost their lives simply because this was not in place and will continue unless these simple things are implemented. There is confusion on 3rd party sites where these dogs are promoted. ACC should be promoting them on their FB pages. The website is still confusing. The application process to save a life should be simple and time efficient. A phone with assistance in different

languages can make the process quick, providing better customer service and saving lives.

Proper and thorough screening including background checks must be implemented. In an effort to move dogs out fast from the shelter ACC can not bypass Dogs can end up in inappropriate homes and can end up being brought back to the shelter. For example we have seen dogs returned with a bite history or something that is not the fault of the dog because the person did not properly follow instructions. Then it can be used against the dogs.. We have seen dogs come back and put on the at risk list and some on bite holds and then killed. If adopters don't follow instructions for proper decompression etc it should not be used against the dogs. And ACC needs to have a continuous follow up of dogs that leave the shelter.

ACC had claimed on their FB page months ago that the emergency placements lists would be updated when advocates continued to reach out repeatedly making a complaint to ACC. That is still not happening consistently. That means advocates are unknowingly promoting dead dogs. Not only have volunteers wasted their precious time when other dogs could have been promoted but members of the public who put in applications and were looking forward to getting their beloved new family member are devastated and so emotionally traumatized many want nothing to do with the shelter ever again.

Emergency Placement Outcomes List <https://www.nycacc.org/adoption/at-risk-outcomes/>

Recently a dog named Zeusy Bear 209045 at Manhattan Shelter was posted as Safe On the EP outcomes list on ACC website. Day later the post was updated saying Zeusy Bear euthanized. That meant the dog was not promoted for days because everyone thought he was saved. There are no excuses that a simple task of updating a list and ensuring accurate information is not able to be executed.

**Here is the bio of ZEUSY BEAR killed 9/10 at Manhattan Shelter**

<https://www.facebook.com/mldsavingnycdogs/posts/540291205176223?rclid=qJzzdHftBF1Urw4a>

Here are a few more dogs recently destroyed at ACC to get a glimpse into the ongoing atrocity.

**PATCHES killed 9/15 at Queens Shelter**

<https://www.facebook.com/mldsavingnycdogs/posts/542318751640135?rclid=kXNhqSoCAQIw91sP>

**MIDNIGHT Killed 9/15/ at MACC**

HE HAD A VIDEO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6Mt44e-AgI>

**LULU killed 9/15 QUEENS**

<https://www.facebook.com/NYCDogsLivesmatter/posts/678580590970137?rclid=57wbjoP9taeo0vuk>

**ROSA killed 9/17 QUEENS**

<https://www.facebook.com/NYCDogsLivesmatter/posts/921889393305921?rclid=4e5NkrZtfpKtTHK5>

**NATSU killed 9/17 Queens**

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/860382255712309>

<https://www.facebook.com/NYCDogsLivesmatter/posts/923203823174478?rclid=9Er8wwtb8s4WWP5A>

The toxic environment and dysfunctional culture of ACC has to end. ACC needs to rethink these non-disclosure and silencing rules. There needs to be a 3rd party entity like a resolution committee. Rescues, volunteers, shelter workers need to be able to speak freely to resolve internal conflicts with management without being petrified of retribution.

2010 Julie Banks Ex Director of ACC Institutes Non-Disclosure Policy

<https://citylimits.org/2012/10/08/top-staff-depart-animal-care-system-amid-criticism/>

There needs to be an independent oversight committee created and on the floor of the shelters. Someone needs to oversee the daily operations to ensure they run smoothly. Anything that affects saving lives. Volunteers

need to be overseen to see if offering the appropriate resources for people to keep their pets. Sometimes volunteers are giving misinformation and that needs to be addressed which is potentially costing animals their lives

Also the use of drugs needs to be monitored. There were persistent pleas to Councilmembers to get an oversight hearing to no avail, since some dogs were getting what advocates documented that appeared to be too high of drugs that can cause negative behaviors in dogs which can get them on the at risk kill lists and can be contraindicated with other drugs.

An oversight committee can also look at data to confirm accuracy. No one oversees the numbers of Live Release Rate that the shelter claim. There is no data on the monthly ACC reports on owner requested euthanasia or the health status of animals transferred to rescues. There also needs to be a portal for rescues and members of the public to report dogs that got sick right after receiving them and any effects of trazadone.

Testimony was given by Voices for Shelter Animals in 2018 supporting intro 1483 - Creating a Dept of Animal Welfare (which got amended to the office of Animal Welfare) We need a Dept of Animal Welfare. The inherent underlying problems still continue for the nearly 30 years that advocates have been fighting for shelter reform.

The inadequacies come from the fundamental objective of the DOH which focuses on human health and an archaic approach in which animals are viewed only in relation to danger and diseases contagious to humans. The provided supporting documentation shows why we need a Department of Animal Welfare to replace DOH

**Find attached:**

**PDF Comptroller Thompson 2002 Audit**

**PDF Scott Stringer 2015 Audit**

**PDF Led Astray Report**

**Then Comptroller William Thompson 2002 CACC audit**

Bill Thompson 2002 Audit: Results In Brief CACC does not provide humane conditions for all of the animals in its shelters and has not made aggressive efforts to increase adoptions of homeless animals.

*Our survey of 33 CACC customers revealed a few more incidents of poor veterinary care. Five of the 33 customers voiced complaints about CACC's veterinary care. One customer felt that the CACC-contracted veterinarian from whom he picked up his cats was not truthful when he released cats to him without informing him that they were infected with fleas and upper*

**Comptroller Scott Stringer's 2015 AC&C audit-lack of isolation rooms**

*Potentially longer term problems observed included isolation rooms for sick animals and service rooms with healthy animals that share the same HVAC system, and doors to the dog isolation room that did not close fully in the Brooklyn shelter.... there is a large underutilized garage with approximately 2,500 square feet of space attached to the facility used for storage.*

As per the April 2018 Health Committee hearing, the DOH/ACC acknowledges Manhattan also has inadequate Isolation facilities.

While ACC intake reports continue to show a commendable decline often resulting, by observation, empty kennels, the garage space has yet to be converted. ACC responded to Stringer's audit noting In 2015, the city and DOHMH announced that it would commit capital funding of \$5 million to create an adoption center where the garage currently stands. A year after Comptroller Stringer's audit an April 2016 Press Release by Mayor deBlasio states:

Added \$5 million in capital funds for the Manhattan shelter to convert underutilized garage to an adoption center.

Two years after that Press Release, during the April 2018 Council Health Committee hearing the DOH and ACC again refer to the garage conversion.

Four years after the Stringer audit the garage conversion to an adoption center has not yet begun. A Dept focused on Animal Welfare may have greater focus to shepherd through this project or otherwise report to the city the setback and delays.

**DOH lack of assistance to ACC on animal Health Care.** 6 years later and the adoption center is still not open to the public yet. Animals still come in and get deathly ill in the MACC shelter.

DOH/ACC testimony Council Health Committee April 2018 on whether Garage conversion to an adoption center creates an opportunity for improved ISO facility <https://youtu.be/oThYrqKUweo>

**DOH and the relationship to ACC Scott Stringer’s 2013 report “Led Astray” continues the theme of DOH being the problem.**

*“The root of the problem is structural: AC&C is controlled by the DOHMH. The DOHMH both administers the City’s contract with AC&C and oversees its board – leaving little room for AC&C to question DOHMH priorities and decisions. In short, AC&C’s Executive Director and board members lack the independence, animal care expertise and fund-raising capabilities necessary to properly fulfill their mission. As a result, AC&C has experienced years of under-funding, mismanagement and service cuts – and the animals under its control have suffered severe neglect at shelters.” He adds: “AC&C needs a strong Executive Director with genuine authority over shelter operations, as well as an independent board with animal care and development expertise. To accomplish this, the DOHMH and other City officials should be relieved of their operational responsibilities and an expanded board should be established, comprised of expert stakeholders with broad knowledge of animal welfare issues and dedicated private citizens with a passion for supporting the City’s animal shelter system.”*

**The failure of the DOH/ACC shelter is cited in the last 2019 audit**

**2019 Comptroller Stringer Audit has Similar Scathing findings as last ACC Audit**

<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-audit-reveals-breakdowns-at-city-animal-care-centers/>

There is no lack of media over the years citing the same issues. In **2020 Council Calls for probe into ACC.**

<https://nypost.com/2020/12/01/nyc-pols-demand-probe-into-acc-after-post-expose/>

It is evident that this crisis is a complex issue. Will the council commit to ongoing dialogue? This cannot stop here. Animals lives are at stake. This city can and must do more for these animals. It is simply a matter of having the will to do it. These sentient beings deserve better, their lives do matter.

Thank you



*The City of New York  
Office of the Comptroller  
Bureau of Management Audit*

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**WILLIAM C. THOMPSON, JR.**  
*Comptroller*

**Audit Report on the  
Shelter Conditions and Adoption Efforts of the  
Center for Animal Care and Control**

**ME01-109A**

*June 6, 2002*

**William C. Thompson, Jr.**  
*Comptroller*

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*The City of New York  
Office of the Comptroller  
Bureau of Management Audit*

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Background**

The Center for Animal Care and Control (CACC) is a not-for-profit corporation that was formed for the purpose of providing animal care and control services in the City of New York. CACC's contract with the New York City Department of Health (DOH) took effect on January 1, 1995, when it followed the ASPCA as New York City's provider of animal care and control services.

CACC's contract with DOH requires that it "provide animal seizure, shelter and care services . . . and related services." In order to provide these services, CACC is to maintain an emergency telephone number for receiving complaints regarding animals, in response to which CACC is to seize "unlicensed or unleashed dogs, cats whose owners are not identified, vicious and dangerous animals, animals that have bitten, rabid or suspected rabid animals, prohibited, exotic or wild animals, and venomous reptiles and bats." CACC is also required to accept "animals which are lost, stray, homeless, unwanted or abandoned with professional caretakers," and to maintain a process by which all licensed dogs and owner-identified cats seized "may be expeditiously claimed and returned to their owners." CACC's contract further specifies that it "shall operate animal shelter facilities in the boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island . . . open to the public on a 7 day a week, 24 hours a day schedule, every day of the year excluding major holidays." The "care of animals at the shelters shall include feeding, boarding (including bedding and cleaning of cages), watering, exercising, and provision for immediate first aid as required, including but not limited to isolation of sick animals as necessary." CACC is to "operate and maintain animal receiving facilities . . . in the boroughs of the Bronx and Queens." CACC "shall provide adoption services at the shelters and receiving facilities and shall promote

adoption as a means of placing animals.” In addition, “for all adopted dogs and cats [CACC] shall provide, or cause to be provided, spay/neuter services and administer rabies immunizations pursuant to the New York City Health Code.” The contract also requires that CACC “enlist the aid of volunteers and . . . conduct education and community outreach concerning animal control and public health issues related thereto.”

CACC’s mission statement is quoted on its website and in its *Report 1998 & 1999* as follows:

“The Center for Animal Care and Control, Inc. is dedicated to providing humane care for all New York City animals in need, while protecting the public health and safety of New Yorkers. CACC will give the most humane care possible to the hundreds of animals that are brought to our shelters each day. The CACC works together with the citizens of New York City, including area shelters and humane organizations, to reduce the number of homeless animals through increased adoption, spay/neuter programs, animal rescue services and by heightening awareness about the responsibility of having an animal companion.”

In addition, according to the description of its mission in its staff manual,

“The CACC has numerous programs and provides numerous services. These include but are not limited to sheltering animals; picking up animals that are at-large, sick, or dangerous; returning lost animals to their owners whenever possible; providing for the adoption of homeless animals to responsible persons; and, when necessary, providing a humane and painless death.”

CACC provides these services to the approximately 60,000 animals that come into its shelter system each year at five facilities—three full-service shelters in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island, and two small receiving centers in Queens and the Bronx. The vast majority of the animals that come into CACC’s shelters are cats and dogs. The Manhattan shelter can house approximately 500 cats and dogs; the Brooklyn shelter, approximately 400; the Staten Island shelter, 150-200; and the Queens and Bronx receiving centers, 19 and 50, respectively.

CACC also has a Field Operations Division, which responds to calls from the public and government agencies, using a fleet of 15 rescue vans to pick up stray or homeless animals, animals that threaten public safety, and sick, injured or dangerous wildlife.

According to CACC’s Monthly Animal Activity Reports, during calendar year 2000 a total of 60,877 animals came into its shelters—55,376 cats and dogs,

and 5,501 other animals. Of these 60,877 animals, 14,270 were adopted, 677 were returned to their owners, and 41,203 were euthanized.

During calendar year 2000, CACC had a total budget from DOH of approximately \$8.3 million. In addition to its five animal facilities, CACC has an administrative office in downtown Manhattan. During calendar year 2000, CACC employed approximately 170 people in its shelter, administrative, and executive functions.

## **Objectives**

The objective of this audit was to evaluate the following two aspects of CACC's services:

- the conditions under which animals are sheltered in CACC's facilities; and
- the level and success of CACC's efforts to promote the adoption of animals from its shelters.

These two aspects of CACC's services are addressed in both CACC's contract and its mission statement. Specifically, CACC's contract with DOH states that CACC "shall meet all its obligations under [the contract] in a humane manner . . ." and that CACC "shall provide adoption services at the shelters and receiving facilities and shall promote adoption as a means of placing animals." CACC's mission statement states that CACC "is dedicated to providing humane care for all New York City animals in need . . . [and] the most humane care possible to the hundreds of animals that are brought to our shelters each day" and "works . . . to reduce the number of homeless animals through increased adoption, spay/neuter programs, animal rescue services and by heightening awareness."

Other areas of CACC's services that were not covered by this audit are described in the body of this report (page 4).

## **Scope and Methodology**

The scope of this audit was CACC's shelter conditions and adoption efforts between January 1, 1999, and June 30, 2001.

To obtain an overview of CACC's structure, services, operations, policies, and procedures, we interviewed all members of CACC's executive and managerial staff, and two members of CACC's board of directors. We reviewed CACC's written policies and procedures, the Monthly Animal Activity Reports that CACC is required to submit to DOH, CACC's staff manual, CACC's 2000 Certified Public Accountant (CPA) report, and minutes for meetings of CACC's

board of directors from January 1999 through June 2001. We also attended three board of directors' meetings. During the course of the audit, we reviewed CACC's personnel, disciplinary, financial, and marketing files, as well as data in the CACC shelter management computer system, known as "Chameleon."

To determine whether CACC is sheltering animals under humane conditions in compliance with its contract, we visited CACC's five facilities a total of 15 times between February and April 2001.

To evaluate the success of CACC's adoption efforts, we analyzed the data in the CACC Monthly Animal Activity Reports submitted to DOH for January 1999 through June 2001. To assess the level of CACC's efforts to promote adoption as a means for placing animals, we interviewed executive and managerial staff regarding adoption programs and marketing efforts, reviewed CACC's files on special events, off-site adoptions and advertising, and reviewed the CACC website.

To evaluate CACC's use of volunteers to help improve shelter conditions and increase animal adoptions, we interviewed executive and managerial staff and reviewed CACC's files on volunteer activities.

To determine how CACC's shelter operations, adoption efforts, reliance upon volunteers, and fundraising compare to those of other shelters across the country, we conducted a telephone survey of 13 municipal animal care and control centers in other major cities throughout the country. We also gathered information on several New York City area shelters to determine how CACC compares to them in terms of staffing levels, adoption efforts, reliance upon volunteers, and fundraising.

To determine the general public's level of awareness of CACC and its services, we conducted a telephone survey of New York City residents.

To determine the level of user satisfaction with CACC's adoption and shelter services, we conducted telephone surveys of CACC customers and rescue groups.

Since we were prevented from speaking to current shelter staff without a supervisor being present (See "Audit Limitations"), we interviewed former CACC employees in order to obtain information on CACC's actual practices.

To determine the merit of allegations of animal mistreatment at CACC made by former employees and rescuers, we attempted to review the personnel files maintained at CACC's administrative office, and the disciplinary action notices, notes-to-file, and managers' logbooks kept at each of the three full-service shelters.

To determine whether DOH's funding level and CACC's budget were sufficient to allow CACC to properly care for and effectively promote the adoption of the animals in its shelters, we compared DOH's funding level of CACC and the CACC calendar year 2000 budget to the standards of the Humane Society of the United States.

This audit was conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS), and included tests of the records and other auditing procedures considered necessary. This audit was performed in accordance with the City Comptroller's audit responsibilities as set forth in Chapter 5, § 93, of the New York City Charter.

### **Audit Limitations**

Throughout the audit, CACC imposed obstacles that prevented us from conducting audit tests as we deemed necessary. CACC prevented us from obtaining a complete and accurate view of its operations and from obtaining all of the information necessary to develop a full set of constructive recommendations to help improve its operations.

The limitations imposed by CACC included its refusal to allow us to interview staff members without a supervisor being present, its refusal to allow us access to certain documents, and its delays in the production of some other records. In addition, it was very difficult to arrange a meeting with the board of directors, and only two members of the board eventually met with us. The audit limitations necessitate certain qualifications to our findings, described below.

Since we were unable to independently interview any employees, such as kennel attendants, veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and adoption counselors, who would have been able to give us direct, first-person observations of CACC's actual daily operations, we could not obtain a full account of management problems, inaccuracies in the organization's records, or possible misstatements of the organization's policies and practices.

Because CACC denied us access to certain records that may have contained adverse information regarding the conditions at CACC shelters and the treatment of the animals kept there, and delayed our access to other records (providing the opportunity for the removal or alteration of records), our record review may not have uncovered the full extent of the problems of animal abuse and neglect, accidental euthanasia, and poor veterinary care described in this report.

In addition, since we could not interview all of the board members—who are ultimately responsible for overseeing CACC's operations—we may have

missed the opportunity to gain insight into the reasons for some of the problems CACC is facing.

## **Results In Brief**

CACC does not provide humane conditions for all of the animals in its shelters and has not made aggressive efforts to increase adoptions of homeless animals. This report describes our findings in three main sections.

The first section, “Animals Are Not Always Sheltered under Humane Conditions,” discusses the inadequacies discovered during our visits to the shelters, including that dogs are rarely, if ever, exercised, animals were not provided constant access to water, contagious animals were sometimes kept in the same wards as non-contagious animals, and at the two larger shelters, animals’ cages were not consistently spot-cleaned; evidence that animals in CACC shelters are sometimes subjected to abuse and neglect; the fact that some animals have been accidentally euthanized; and evidence of poor veterinary care in CACC shelters.

The second section, “CACC Has Not Made Aggressive Efforts to Increase Adoptions,” presents recent CACC adoption statistics and discusses some of the likely reasons that adoption levels are low and have not improved over the last three years. These reasons include: limited public awareness of CACC and its adoption services and a lack of aggressive efforts by CACC to improve public awareness; inadequate use of off-site adoptions; inadequate efforts to ensure that the adoption process is encouraging to all potential adopters; CACC’s discouragement of some rescue groups that take animals from its shelters; the apparent inappropriate limitation of the pool of animals available for adoption; and a lack of adoption services at CACC’s Queens and Bronx facilities.

The third section of the report, “Possible Causes of CACC’s Shortcomings,” discusses the fact that CACC compounds the problem of underfunding by failing to aggressively raise funds on its own and by failing to take sufficient advantage of volunteers. It also discusses a problem evidenced by CACC leadership apparently interpreting the organization’s mission more narrowly than it was originally conceptualized and failing to aggressively pursue some of the goals outlined in its mission statement, such as, “providing humane care for all New York City animals in need” and “reducing the number of homeless animals through increased adoption.”

Lastly, under “Other Issues,” we discuss the facts that: CACC’s board violated its bylaws by meeting and voting on certain items without the required quorum present; CACC’s board appears to have violated the letter and spirit of the Open Meetings Law by speaking at almost a whisper and thereby preventing

attendees from hearing their discussions; and CACC's contract with DOH does not include specific and measurable performance requirements or standards.

Many of the findings in this report are supported by the results of our surveys of individuals acquainted with CACC's operations (former employees, customers, and individuals from rescue groups who work with CACC) in addition to our document reviews, observations, and interviews with CACC management. In total, six of eight former employees, 36 of 59 rescuers, and 14 of 33 customers we surveyed criticized aspects of CACC's operations and management. Their allegations and the results of our testing painted a similar picture—that of a shelter system in which: inadequate resources and staffing levels prevent the provision of some of the basic necessities for humane animal care; the frustrations of over-worked or unqualified employees are sometimes taken out on the animals; opportunities to help animals and increase adoptions are squandered; and, perhaps most notably, the status quo is perpetuated by a management that is not truly committed to all aspects of the organization's contract and mission, namely, to provide high quality, humane, animal care and place as many animals as possible in adoptive homes.

### **Notes Regarding Exit Conference**

An exit conference with DOH and CACC officials was held on March 4, 2002. Three issues raised during this meeting should be mentioned here.

First, DOH noted an inconsistency between our finding that animals in CACC's care are not always sheltered under humane conditions, and the results of its own inspections of CACC facilities. To illustrate this point, DOH provided us with reports of 531 inspections of CACC facilities that were conducted by DOH veterinarians and public health sanitarians between January 1, 1999 and June 30, 2001. As DOH stated, those inspection reports did not reveal any cases of poor veterinary care or inhumane treatment. However, we do not believe that this is necessarily inconsistent with the findings in our report, because DOH veterinarians and public health sanitarians evaluate conditions in the shelters and the quality of care differently than we did. During their inspections, DOH veterinarians and health sanitarians look at 13 different areas, including floors, washrooms, wards, and infirmaries (many of which were not covered by our audit.) However, just as we did not cover in our audit all the areas that they cover in their inspections, they do not evaluate all of the conditions that we did (for example, how many animals had access to water at the time of the inspection). In addition, their inspections evaluate conditions more generally than we did, resulting in "yes" or "no" answers for conditions such as, "cages washable and clean," and "separate, adequate, clean area provided for sick animals"; in contrast, we counted the number of cages that were soiled, and the number of wards in which healthy and contagious animals were housed together. Lastly, DOH inspections cover a specific point in time, and therefore could not have identified

the instances of poor veterinary care, accidental euthanasia, and abuse and neglect that we uncovered through our review of CACC's records and our surveys of past employees, rescuers and customers. Thus, while DOH's inspection reports show that DOH has monitored CACC facilities through frequent on-site inspections, they are not comparable to the type of review that we conducted and therefore neither contradict nor are inconsistent with the findings in this report. (In response to this audit, DOH officials used the above-mentioned inspection reports to formally disagree with our finding regarding inhumane conditions. We therefore conducted a more thorough analysis of DOH's inspection process and reports, and the results of that analysis, which concluded that the process and reports are flawed, are described starting on page ES-11 of this report).

The other two issues worth discussing were raised by CACC. First, CACC's executive director repeated a prior claim that the mission statement quoted in this report is not CACC's mission statement. In response, we pointed out that we quoted CACC's mission statement exactly as it appears on the organization's website and in its *Report 1998 & 1999*.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the mission statement as cited in this report was quoted directly from CACC's own description of its mission statement. Shortly after the exit conference, CACC's mission statement was removed from its website.

Second, CACC's executive director claimed that CACC cannot use volunteers more than it does because of prohibitions imposed by the employees' union. She stated that she would provide us with correspondence between CACC and the union documenting this fact, as well as with a copy of the union contract. The correspondence she described was never provided, and after reviewing the union contract, our attorneys concluded that the contract is very clear regarding this issue and directly contradicts the executive director's claim that CACC is limited in its use of volunteers. Specifically, the contract gives CACC the unlimited right to utilize volunteers as it sees fit, as long as the use of volunteers does not cause the layoff of any regular employee or prevent the replacement of a regular employee who leaves or is terminated.

## **Recommendations**

The audit resulted in 41 recommendations, the most significant of which are summarized below.

- While additional funding will most likely be impossible to obtain in the near future, given New York City's financial situation after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on the World Trade Center, we recommend that, if it ever becomes possible, DOH consider amending CACC's contract to fund the hiring of additional kennel attendants and veterinary staff.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the sources of the mission statement are specified in this final report and the draft report, they had not been specified in the preliminary draft report.

CACC should take the following steps, and/or DOH should monitor CACC to ensure that these steps are taken:

- Ensure that: dogs are walked; all animals have constant access to water; animals' cages are kept clean; animals are put only into dry cages; and cats, dogs, contagious, and nursing animals are kept in separate areas.
- Investigate the possibility of obtaining additional interns through area colleges to supplement staff in providing animal care.
- Immediately terminate any employee who physically abuses any animal.
- Provide more supervision of CACC employees, particularly the kennel attendants, who are directly responsible for the care of the animals.
- Provide additional training on and increase supervision of the euthanasia process to ensure that all control procedures are followed.
- Quickly terminate any veterinary staff members who are found to be unqualified or who consistently provide poor care.
- Evaluate the performance of all veterinary technicians and determine whether there is an advantage to employing licensed technicians. If there seems to be an advantage, CACC should consider hiring only licensed veterinary technicians in the future.
- Implement a process to monitor and evaluate the performance of contracted veterinary clinics.
- Ensure that the photographs posted by CACC on Petfinder are clear and attractive.
- Increase CACC's outreach, public education, and advertising efforts. CACC should speak to other shelters to obtain ideas, and pursue relationships with local media outlets and enter into partnerships with private companies willing to sponsor special events or advertising campaigns.
- Increase CACC's participation in adoption events and expand its off-site adoption program.
- Develop a formal customer service quality assurance program as required by the contract with DOH.

- Work more cooperatively with rescue groups interested in helping CACC place animals. CACC should ensure that all employees understand the importance of maintaining good working relationships with these groups, that they treat rescuers professionally and courteously, and that they return calls from rescuers in a timely fashion.
- Make the PET application process less cumbersome and less paper intensive, and inform rescue groups by letter that: CACC is implementing the PET program incrementally; it plans to eventually provide PET applications to all rescue groups; and it will not stop working with those rescue groups that have not yet received PET applications.
- Ensure that all animals initially given a “4” status are re-evaluated for temperament.
- Cease the practice of limiting the adoption of older animals.
- Use its Bronx and Queens receiving centers to show adoptable animals until the opening of the planned full-service shelters in the Bronx and Queens.
- Plan and implement additional fundraising efforts. CACC should contact other non-profit animal shelters to obtain ideas regarding effective fundraising methods.
- Aggressively increase its number of volunteers through a stronger recruitment effort aimed at individuals interested in the care of animals. CACC should consider enlisting the aid of rescue groups and other area animal welfare organizations in recruiting volunteers.
- Expand duties available to volunteers to include more direct animal care, such as dog walking, cage cleaning, and cat grooming.

We also recommend that:

- CACC’s board of directors and executive management convene to discuss the organization’s mission, to determine whether the current mission statement accurately reflects CACC’s purposes, and to reconcile its organizational and management philosophy with its contract and stated mission. If the board and executive management determine that the current mission statement is accurate, then they must develop a plan for the organization to change direction and bring its operations in line with the pursuit of all of the goals in its mission

statement. If the board and management decide that they are not interested in pursuing all of the goals in CACC's mission statement, they should change the mission statement accordingly, and negotiate any necessary amendments to CACC's contract with DOH.

- CACC's board of directors should comply with the Open Meetings Law and ensure that all board members, officers, and invited speakers speak audibly so that members of the public who attend the board meetings may hear what is said.
- DOH should amend CACC's contract to include specific and measurable performance requirements and/or standards for all appropriate service-related areas.

### **Agency Response**

The matters covered in this report were discussed with officials from CACC and DOH during and at the conclusion of this audit. A preliminary draft report was sent to DOH officials on December 31, 2001, and a revised pre-draft was distributed and discussed at an exit conference held on March 4, 2002. On April 19, 2002, we submitted a draft report to DOH with a request for comments. We received a written response from DOH on May 6, 2002.

In its response, DOH stated that it "disagrees with the report's main findings: that animals are not sheltered under humane conditions and often receive poor veterinary care." However, DOH agreed with our adoption-related findings stating, "CACC has not been as successful as hoped in the area of increasing adoptions." DOH also agreed with our other findings, stating that its own on-site monitoring, which was expanded in July 2001, "to include a comprehensive review of all contractual requirements . . . has found deficiencies in CACC's . . . customer service, volunteer program and education and outreach efforts." DOH also committed itself to increasing its site visits to four times a year, effective July 2002. DOH's response is discussed in detail in the body of this report and is included in its entirety as an Addendum to this report.

DOH also appended a 28-page response from CACC to its own response. In its lengthy response, CACC took strong exception to nearly every aspect of the audit's methodology and conclusions. Specifically, CACC alleged that:

"Many of the conclusions reached in this audit are not credible, as evidenced by: the antagonistic tone throughout the audit; the use of words and phrases of an inflammatory nature; the failure to use experts in areas requiring specialized knowledge; the slanting of the data presented; the inadequacy of the sample taken; the failure to make explicit the significant differences between CACC and the organizations with which it is compared in the audit; the failure to

credit CACC's significant accomplishments; and the use of anecdotal information from unnamed sources holding clear potential for bias against CACC."

Moreover, CACC alleged that there was "political influence in the audit process," claiming that the audit was "motivated by the political interest of [former Comptroller Alan Hevesi]." CACC further alleged that "the audit was conducted during the Mayoral campaign in which Alan Hevesi was a candidate who supported the special interest group's call for the abolition of CACC." CACC's executive director also stated, "CACC is surprised . . . that Comptroller William Thompson could be so ill served by his staff both in reporting and the issuance of this audit; one that was clearly motivated by the political interests of his predecessor."

In addition, CACC claimed that the audit was not conducted in accordance with GAGAS. Specifically, CACC alleged that:

"The auditors established their own criteria for evaluating the performance of CACC ignoring technical standards for care . . . [The Comptroller's Office] assigned auditors with no known skills or knowledge in the areas of humane animal care, veterinary medicine or labor law . . . samples were neither random or statistically significant . . . the subject audit is neither objective nor balanced . . . [auditors] failed to provide a reasonable perspective for the findings they recorded as they have repeatedly failed to provide the proper context for the frequency of occurrences . . . four different scopes suggest that the auditors knowingly ignored the Governmental Auditing Standards relating to audit planning and that CACC was not afforded proper due process."

Obviously, there is a stark contrast between the audit's findings and CACC's response, and in order to present and discuss fully CACC's position on the matters presented in this audit, a separate section has been added at the end of this report entitled "Discussion of CACC's Response." The Comptroller's Office, after carefully reviewing CACC's response, has concluded that CACC's arguments are invalid, that they are based upon distortions and misrepresentations, and that the audit's findings should not be changed. The full text of CACC's response is included along with DOH's, as an Addendum to this report. The "Discussion of CACC's Response" begins on page 73.

As stated earlier, DOH disagreed with the audit's "main findings: that animals are not sheltered under humane conditions and often receive poor veterinary care." In support of that position, DOH argued:

"These findings are contrary to observations by DOH Veterinarians and Sanitarians. DOH has been closely monitoring the operations of CACC, the contractor that provides services to

the City under contract, since its inception, January 1, 1995. From that date through April 2002, DOH has closely monitored CACC's contract performance and conducted over 1,200 inspections of CACC facilities. During these inspections, DOH did not observe evidence of inhumane treatment or substandard veterinary care cited in your audit. Although the audit notes on pages ES7 and ES8 that differences in review methodologies may have yielded different results, the training and experience of the DOH staff who conducted these inspections provide us with a high degree of assurance that the animals in CACC's charge are appropriately cared for. While DOH did not see evidence of such deficiencies, the Department is nonetheless concerned by the audit's findings.

“During the audit period from January 1, 1999 through June 30, 2001, DOH conducted over 531 inspections of CACC facilities. Copies of these inspection reports were provided to the Comptroller's Office at the March 4, 2002 meeting. . . . These inspections included frequent unannounced visits that investigated the physical plant, ward conditions, humane treatment, rabies observation of biting animals, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, record keeping and other activities that affect shelter operations. During site visits, DOH Veterinarians inspected all caged animals and reviewed medical records.

“Based on the observations by DOH Veterinarians and Sanitarians during these inspections, we disagree with the findings of poor veterinary care and inhumane treatment reported in the audit. Specifically, DOH did not observe any cases of poor veterinary care, contagious animals being caged in general wards with healthy animals or inhumane treatment during 531 inspections conducted by DOH Veterinarians and other staff during the audit period. The auditors may have drawn other conclusions about the handling of contagious animals based on a misunderstanding of how cage cards are used by CACC. In addition, we also monitor animal bite cases and found no instances where these animals were accidentally euthanized.”

The intent of this audit was to review CACC's compliance with its contract's requirements, not DOH's monitoring of CACC. That is why only a cursory review was made of the 531 inspection reports that DOH provided, and why that review concluded (as stated in the “Notes to Exit Conference” section of this report) that there was no apparent inconsistency between DOH's inspection results and ours, mostly because of apparent differences in the inspection methodology. However, in its response, DOH uses those reports as the foundation for its disagreement with our findings regarding inhumane conditions, and we therefore conducted a more thorough analysis of those DOH reports in order to evaluate the validity of DOH's argument. The results of our analysis lead

us to conclude that if those inspection reports are truly reflective of DOH's monitoring of CACC, then DOH's monitoring process has significant weaknesses, as discussed further below.

- **No Criteria For Inspection Ratings:** When DOH officials first argued at the audit exit conference that its own inspection reports showed a different picture of shelter conditions than ours, we asked them what criteria their staff use when they conduct inspections and enter "yes" or "no" ratings on the inspection sheets. DOH officials could not provide any specifics on what would lead their staff to answer "yes" or "no" to each of the questions on the inspection reports, and stated that they do not have written criteria or standards for use by the DOH Veterinarians and Sanitarians when they perform such inspections. It is therefore clear that the DOH inspection reports are subjective in nature and may not be a reliable source to illustrate shelter conditions. (See Appendix III for a sample inspection report.)
- **Inspection Reports Indicate Near Perfect Performance:** Each of the 531 inspection sheets that DOH gave us contains 13 rating categories (e.g., "Floors," "Washrooms," "Wards," and "Infirmary") and those categories include a total of 37 "yes/no" questions (e.g., "Cages washable and clean" in the "Wards" category), for a total of 19,647 questions on the 531 reports. Of those 19,647 total questions, 18,216 had an accompanying "yes/no" entry (some were left blank), and of those 18,216 with an entry, 17,855, i.e., 98 percent, were answered "yes," indicating a near perfect performance.

Of even greater interest were the answers to the seven questions in the "Wards" category and the two questions in the "Operations" category, questions that are most similar to the areas tested by the auditors. These questions included: "Cages not overcrowded"; "Cages washable and clean"; "Cages intact"; "Animals in appropriate cages"; "Clean, appropriately filled cat litter pans provided"; "Temperature appropriate"; "Ventilation adequate"; "Veterinary protocols adhered to"; "Food protocols adhered to." Of the 3,717 questions in the "Wards" category, 3,536 had an accompanying "yes/no" entry, and of those 3,536 with an entry, 3,528, i.e., 99.8 percent, were answered "yes," indicating a close-to-perfect rating. Equally astonishing is that 100 percent of the 907 questions with entries in the "Operations" category were all answered with a "yes", indicating a perfect rating.

What makes such inspection report results even more dubious, however, is the context in which they were derived. On the one hand, the audit determined that CACC's performance was deficient in many areas, and DOH agreed, stating that "DOH monitoring has found deficiencies in CACC's adoption process, customer service, volunteer program and

education and outreach efforts.” On the other hand, DOH argues that such an organization, that is widely known to be under-funded and under-staffed, that does poorly in terms of recruiting volunteers, that needs to improve customer relations and fund raising, and whose adoption efforts need improvement, otherwise performs perfectly in terms of treating animals humanely and providing appropriate veterinary care. We are not convinced.

- **Other Obvious Flaws in the Inspection Reports:** When reviewing the 531 reports provided by DOH, we noted that 932 of the 19,647 questions were not answered at all and were left blank: specifically, in the “Wards” category, 181 questions were not answered, and in the “Operations” category, 121 questions were not answered. This indicates that these areas were not evaluated during the inspections. In addition, the DOH inspector did not sign 39 of the 531 inspection reports, and the reviewer did not sign 31 of the 531 inspection reports.
- **Likely Advance Announcements of Inspections:** One of the most disturbing outcomes of our review of DOH’s inspection reports, and one that casts even more doubt upon their validity, is the fact that some of the former CACC employees we were able to contact during this review stated that they knew of the DOH inspections ahead of time and took special steps to prepare for them.

We were able to contact four of the former employees we identified through CACC personnel files (these people stopped working for CACC between December 2000 and June 2001) and five of the former employees who either contacted us or whom we contacted as part of the background research for this audit, to ask them whether they knew of inspections in advance. Three of these nine former employees stated that they knew when inspections were soon to occur. One stated: “When we were expecting inspectors, we stepped it up a little—did a little more than normal in terms of cleaning up the kennels, washing down the halls, disinfecting, etc. . . . The manager would make it aware to me that inspectors were coming. I would have to inform all kennel staff, and there were times when I would ask additional staff to stay on or come in.” He went on to state: “There were also surprise inspections, which we were notified about on the morning of. With these we had to run around to do everything, make calls to get additional people in, do everything in a hurry.”

The second person stated that, in addition to the fact that the shelter staff knew of and prepared for inspections ahead of time, once the inspector arrived, “He would go to the manager’s office first for an hour or so, and the foreman would go around to make sure that everything was ready.”

The third person recalled a few inspections that the shelter staff knew about beforehand. She stated that the staff were instructed to “pull it together,” and that on the day of the inspection, management scheduled more people to be at work to take care of the kennel areas.

In summary, we believe that the evidence of animal mistreatment that we found during the course of this audit supports our conclusion that inhumane conditions existed, in circumstances we describe, at CACC’s shelters. We do not believe that the evidence that DOH provided to refute our findings is credible. This audit supports its finding of inhumane treatment on real documents found at CACC itself, and cites instances of inhumane animal treatment, accidental euthanasia and substandard veterinary care based upon CACC’s own documents. We found such documents in the personnel files maintained at CACC’s administrative office and in the disciplinary action notices, notes-to-files, and managers’ logbooks kept at the shelters. As mentioned in the “Audit Limitations” section of this report, we had only limited access to these documents; therefore, it is very likely that there are more instances that we could not uncover. In its response, DOH stated that it “does not agree with the findings of inhumane treatment and substandard veterinary care,” but never addresses the hard evidence we provide in the audit.

## *Table of Contents*

INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background .....	1
Objective .....	3
Scope and Methodology.....	4
Audit Limitations .....	7
Denial of Full Access to Shelter Staff.....	7
Limitations on Access to Records.....	8
Difficulty Meeting with the Board of Directors.....	9
Agency Response .....	9
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	10
Notes Regarding Exit Conference.....	11
Animals Are Not Always Sheltered Under Humane Conditions .....	13
Observations During Site Visits.....	13
<i>Dogs Are Rarely Exercised</i> .....	15
<i>Animals Were Not Provided Constant Access to Water</i> .....	16
<i>At the Manhattan and Brooklyn Shelters,</i>	
<i>Animals' Cages Were Not Consistently Spot-Cleaned</i> .....	17
<i>Contagious Animals Were Kept</i>	
<i>In Wards with Healthy Animals</i> .....	18
<i>Other Conditions Found at the Shelters</i> .....	19
Recommendations .....	21
Agency Response .....	22
Agency Response .....	22

Auditors' Comments.....	22
Evidence of Mistreatment of Animals in CACC Shelters.....	22
<i>Evidence That Some Animals Are</i>	
<i>Subjected to Abuse and Neglect</i> .....	24
Recommendations .....	26
Auditors' Comments.....	27
<i>Evidence of Accidental Euthanasias</i> .....	27
Recommendations .....	29
Auditors' Comments.....	29
<i>Evidence of Poor Veterinary Care</i> .....	29
Agency Response .....	34
Auditors' Comments.....	34
Recommendations .....	37
Agency Response .....	37
Auditors' Comments.....	38
CACC Has Not Made Aggressive Efforts to Increase Adoptions .....	39
Recent Adoption Statistics .....	39
Agency Response .....	41
Limited Public Awareness of CACC	
and Inadequate Efforts to Increase Public Awareness.....	41
<i>Limited Outreach, Marketing, and Public Education</i> .....	42
Agency Response .....	45
Recommendations .....	45
Auditors' Comments.....	46
CACC Has Made Inadequate Use of Off-Site Adoptions.....	46
Recommendations .....	48
Auditors' Comments.....	48
Lack of a Formal Customer Service Quality Assurance	
Program May Prevent CACC From Ensuring That its	
Adoption Process Is Encouraging to All Customers.....	49

Agency Response.....	50
Recommendations .....	51
Auditors' Comments.....	51
CACC Has Discouraged Some Rescue Groups .....	51
Agency Response .....	53
Recommendations .....	53
Auditors' Comments.....	54
CACC Limits the Pool of Animals Available for Adoption.....	54
Recommendations .....	55
Auditors' Comments.....	56
CACC Does Not Consistently Use the Bronx and Queens Facilities for Adoptions .....	56
Recommendation.....	56
Auditors' Comments.....	57
Possible Causes of CACC's Shortcomings.....	58
CACC Does Not Make Sufficient Efforts to Supplement City Funds with Donations.....	58
Recommendation.....	60
Auditors' Comments.....	60
CACC Does Not Sufficiently Rely on Volunteers.....	60
Agency Response .....	63
Recommendations .....	64
Auditors' Comments.....	64
CACC's Management and Operations Are Not Focused on Achieving All Aspects of its Contract and Mission.....	64
Conclusion.....	67
Auditors' Comments.....	67
Other Issues:.....	68

CACC’s Board Violated its Bylaws.....	68
Recommendation.....	68
Auditors’ Comments.....	68
CACC’s Board Appears To Be in Violation of the Letter and Spirit of the Open Meetings Law.....	69
Recommendation.....	69
Auditors’ Comments.....	69
Inadequacies of CACC’s Contract with DOH.....	70
Recommendation.....	71
Agency Response.....	71
 Discussion of CACC’s Response.....	 73
 Overview.....	 73
Alleged Political Influence and Bias in the Audit Process.....	74
Alleged Limited Audit Scope.....	75
Animal Care Issues.....	75
Veterinary Care Issues.....	76
Issues Concerning Adoption Efforts.....	77
Issues Related to Document Access.....	79
Issues Concerning Restrictions on Staff Interviews.....	80
Issues Related to the Audit’s Adherence to Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards.....	81

APPENDIX I

Additional Information.....	83
Understaffing.....	83
Evidence of Mistreatment of Animals in CACC Shelters.....	83
<i>Evidence of Animal Abuse and Neglect</i> .....	83
<i>Evidence of Accidental Euthanasias</i> .....	84
<i>Evidence of Poor Veterinary Care</i> .....	84

Lack of a Formal Customer Service Quality Assurance  
Program May Prevent CACC From Ensuring That its  
Adoption Process Is Encouraging to All Customers..... 85  
CACC Has Discouraged Some Rescue Groups ..... 85  
CACC Limits the Pool of Animals Available for Adoption..... 86  
CACC’s Management and its Operations Are Not  
Focused on Achieving All Aspects of its Mission and Contract..... 87

APPENDIX II

Public Awareness Survey..... 88

APPENDIX III

DOH Inspection Report..... 89

ADDENDUM

*The City of New York  
Office of the Comptroller  
Bureau of Management Audit*

**Audit Report on the  
Shelter Conditions and Adoption Efforts of the  
Center for Animal Care and Control**

**ME01-109A**

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**INTRODUCTION**

**Background**

The Center for Animal Care and Control (CACC) is a not-for-profit corporation that was formed for the purpose of providing animal care and control services in the City of New York. CACC was created in 1994 to assume the responsibilities of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), after the ASPCA decided not to renew its contract to run New York City's animal shelter system. CACC entered into its own contract with the New York City Department of Health (DOH), and on January 1, 1995, followed the ASPCA as New York City's provider of animal care and control services.

CACC's contract with DOH requires that it "provide animal seizure, shelter and care services . . . and related services." In order to provide these services, CACC is to maintain an emergency telephone number for receiving complaints regarding animals, in response to which CACC is to seize "unlicensed or unleashed dogs, cats whose owners are not identified, vicious and dangerous animals, animals that have bitten, rabid or suspected rabid animals, prohibited, exotic or wild animals, and venomous reptiles and bats." CACC is also required to accept "animals which are lost, stray, homeless, unwanted or abandoned with professional caretakers," and to maintain a process by which all licensed dogs and owner-identified cats seized "may be expeditiously claimed and returned to their owners." CACC's contract further specifies that it "shall operate animal shelter facilities in the boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island . . . open to the public on a 7 day a week, 24 hours a day schedule, every day of the year excluding major holidays." The "care of animals at the shelters shall include feeding, boarding (including bedding and cleaning of cages), watering, exercising, and provision for immediate first aid as required, including but not limited to isolation of sick animals as necessary." CACC is to "operate and maintain animal receiving facilities . . . in the boroughs of the Bronx and Queens." CACC "shall provide adoption services at the shelters and receiving facilities and shall promote adoption as a means of placing animals." In addition, "for all adopted dogs and cats [CACC] shall provide, or cause to be provided, spay/neuter services and administer rabies

immunizations pursuant to the New York City Health Code.” The contract also requires that CACC “enlist the aid of volunteers and . . . conduct education and community outreach concerning animal control and public health issues related thereto.”

Aside from the general requirements listed above, and the requirements that CACC “meet all its obligations under [the contract] in a humane manner and respecting the rights of the owners of animals as required by law,” that its shelters “hold animals and care for such animals in conformity with all applicable laws,” and that it “provide a healthy environment and humane care and treatment of animals kept at the [receiving centers],” the contract includes no performance requirements. Nor are there specific terms regarding required levels of care, staffing levels, adoption rates, extent of outreach efforts, etc.

CACC’s mission statement is quoted on its website and in its *Report 1998 & 1999* as follows:

“The Center for Animal Care and Control, Inc. is dedicated to providing humane care for all New York City animals in need, while protecting the public health and safety of New Yorkers. CACC will give the most humane care possible to the hundreds of animals that are brought to our shelters each day. The CACC works together with the citizens of New York City, including area shelters and humane organizations, to reduce the number of homeless animals through increased adoption, spay/neuter programs, animal rescue services and by heightening awareness about the responsibility of having an animal companion.”

In addition, according to the description of its mission in its staff manual,

“The CACC has numerous programs and provides numerous services. These include but are not limited to sheltering animals; picking up animals that are at-large, sick, or dangerous; returning lost animals to their owners whenever possible; providing for the adoption of homeless animals to responsible persons; and, when necessary, providing a humane and painless death.”

CACC provides these services to the approximately 60,000 animals that come into its shelter system each year at five facilities—three full-service shelters in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island, and two small receiving centers in Queens and the Bronx.<sup>2</sup> The facilities are located at the following addresses: 326 East 110<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan; 2336 Linden Boulevard in Brooklyn; 3139 Veterans Road West in Staten Island; 92-29 Queens Boulevard in Queens; and 464 East Fordham Road in the Bronx. The full-service shelters hold animals; employ veterinary professionals to care for the animals; are open to receive animals from the public 24 hours a day, seven days a week (excluding major holidays); and provide adoption services for periods of from five to nine hours between 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., depending upon the shelter and the day of the week.<sup>3</sup> The receiving centers are open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Tuesday

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<sup>2</sup> The Manhattan, Brooklyn and Staten Island facilities are owned by the City, and the Queens and Bronx facilities are leased by the City. All facilities are operated and maintained by CACC.

<sup>3</sup> The Staten Island shelter became a full-service shelter on February 15, 2001. Before that, it was open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

through Saturday to receive animals from the public, and provide adoption services from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The receiving centers do not house animals overnight, but transfer them to one of the full-service shelters within a few hours after their arrival. The vast majority of the animals that come into CACC's shelters are cats and dogs. The Manhattan shelter can house approximately 500 cats and dogs; the Brooklyn shelter, approximately 400; the Staten Island shelter, 150-200; and the Queens and Bronx receiving centers, 19 and 50, respectively.

CACC also has a Field Operations Division, which responds to calls from the public and government agencies, using a fleet of 15 rescue vans to pick up stray or homeless animals, animals that threaten public safety, and sick, injured or dangerous wildlife.

According to CACC's Monthly Animal Activity Reports, during calendar year 2000 a total of 60,877 animals came into its shelters—55,376 cats and dogs, and 5,501 other animals. Of these 60,877 animals, 14,270 were adopted, 677 were returned to their owners, and 41,203 were euthanized.<sup>4</sup>

During calendar year 2000, CACC had a total budget from DOH of approximately \$8.3 million. (DOH provided approximately \$8 million, and the remaining \$300,000 was funded from CACC's shelter revenues.) In addition to its five animal facilities, CACC has an administrative office in downtown Manhattan. During calendar year 2000, CACC employed approximately 170 people in its shelter, administrative, and executive functions.

## **Objective**

The objective of this audit was to evaluate the following two aspects of CACC's services:

- the conditions under which animals are sheltered in CACC's facilities; and
- the level and success of CACC's efforts to promote the adoption of animals from its shelters.

These two aspects of CACC's services are addressed in both CACC's contract and its mission statement. Specifically, CACC's contract with DOH states that CACC "shall meet all its obligations under [the contract] in a humane manner . . ." and that CACC "shall provide adoption services at the shelters and receiving facilities and shall promote adoption as a means of placing animals." CACC's mission statement states that CACC "is dedicated to providing humane care for all New York City animals in need . . . [and] the most humane care possible to the hundreds of animals that are brought to our shelters each day" and "works . . . to reduce the number of homeless animals through increased adoption, spay/neuter programs, animal rescue services and by heightening awareness."

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<sup>4</sup> The remaining 4,727 of the total animals that came to CACC shelters include smaller categories, such as: animals released to freedom (e.g., pigeons), animals dead-on-arrival, and animals still remaining in the shelters at the end of the year.

Other areas of CACC’s services that were not covered by the objectives of this audit include: picking up stray animals, accepting surrendered or lost animals, returning lost animals to their owners, spaying/neutering animals prior to placing them for adoption as a means of controlling the animal over-population problem, and, when necessary, providing a humane and painless death to animals. The table below summarizes CACC’s major functions and shows which ones were covered by this audit:

**Outline of CACC’s Major Functions**

<b>Function</b>	<b>Function Related to Contract Requirement, Mission Statement, or Both</b>	<b>Covered by This Audit or Not Covered by This Audit</b>
Sheltering animals in a humane manner	Both	Covered by this audit
Reducing the number of homeless animals through adoption (includes providing adoption services, and promoting adoptions)	Both	Covered by this audit
Conducting public education and outreach, heightening awareness about the responsibilities of animal ownership	Both	Covered by this audit
Working with the citizens of NYC, including area shelters and humane organizations, to reduce the number of homeless animals	Mission Statement	Covered by this audit
Picking up animals that are at-large, sick, or dangerous	Both	Not covered by this audit
Accepting surrendered, lost, and stray animals	Both	Not covered by this audit
Returning lost animals to their owners	Contract Requirement	Not covered by this audit
Spaying/Neutering animals prior to placing them for adoption as a means of controlling the animal over-population problem in NYC	Both	Not covered by this audit
Providing a humane and painless death	Contract Requirement	Not covered by this audit

**Scope and Methodology**

The scope of this audit was CACC’s shelter conditions and adoption efforts between January 1, 1999, and June 30, 2001.

To obtain an overview of CACC’s structure, services, operations, policies, and procedures, we interviewed all members of CACC’s executive and managerial staff, including:

the executive director; deputy executive director/general counsel; controller; director of information technology; director of shelter operations; director of adoptions and volunteer services; director of facilities maintenance; director of human resources; director of field operations; director of external affairs; and all shelter managers and assistant shelter managers. We also interviewed two members of CACC's board of directors. We reviewed CACC's written policies and procedures, the Monthly Animal Activity Reports that CACC is required to submit to DOH, CACC's staff manual, CACC's 2000 Certified Public Accountant (CPA) report, and minutes for meetings of CACC's board of directors from January 1999 through June 2001. We also attended the board of directors' meetings held on January 4, March 15, and June 11, 2001. During the course of the audit, we reviewed CACC's personnel, disciplinary, financial, and marketing files, as well as data in the CACC shelter management computer system, known as "Chameleon."

To determine whether CACC is sheltering animals under humane conditions in compliance with its contract, we visited CACC's five facilities (the three full-service shelters and the two receiving centers) a total of 15 times between February and April 2001.

To evaluate the success of CACC's adoption efforts, we analyzed the data in the CACC Monthly Animal Activity Reports submitted to DOH for January 1999 through June 2001. To assess the level of CACC's efforts to promote adoption as a means for placing animals, we interviewed executive and managerial staff regarding adoption programs and marketing efforts, reviewed CACC's files on special events, off-site adoptions and advertising, and reviewed the CACC website.

To evaluate CACC's use of volunteers to help improve shelter conditions and increase animal adoptions, we interviewed executive and managerial staff and reviewed CACC's files on volunteer activities.

To determine how CACC's shelter operations, adoption efforts, reliance upon volunteers, and fundraising compare to those of other shelters across the country, we conducted a telephone survey of 13 municipal animal care and control centers in other major cities throughout the country. The following is a list of the organizations surveyed: Berkeley Animal Services, Berkeley, California; Humane Society of Boulder Valley, Boulder, Colorado; Chicago Animal Care and Control, Chicago, Illinois; Dallas Animal Control Shelter, Dallas, Texas; DC Animal Control, Washington, DC; Denver Animal Control and Shelter, Denver, Colorado; Dewey Animal Care Center, Las Vegas, Nevada; Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care (BARC), Houston, Texas; Maricopa County Animal Care and Control Services, Phoenix, Arizona; Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; San Francisco Animal Care and Control, San Francisco, California; Michigan Humane Society, Detroit, Michigan; and LA City Department of Animal Services, Los Angeles, California.

We also gathered information on several New York City area shelters to determine how CACC compares to them in terms of staffing levels, adoption efforts, reliance upon volunteers, and fundraising. Specifically, we made phone calls to and reviewed the websites maintained by: the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), which has an animal shelter in Manhattan; Bide-A-Wee, which has a shelter in Manhattan in addition to its two shelters on Long Island; the Brooklyn Animal Resource Coalition (B.A.R.C.), in Williamsburg

Brooklyn; and North Shore Animal League, on Long Island. We also reviewed these organizations' IRS Form 990s for 2000.

To determine the general public's level of awareness of CACC and its services, we conducted a telephone survey of New York City residents between March and June 2001. We surveyed a sample of 254 residents randomly selected from the White Pages telephone directories for all five boroughs of New York City. This sample of 254 residents included: 51 Bronx residents, 50 Brooklyn residents, 51 Manhattan residents, 51 Queens residents, and 51 Staten Island residents.

To determine the level of user satisfaction with CACC's adoption and shelter services, we conducted telephone surveys of CACC customers and rescue groups. We attempted to survey a random sample of 61 customers who had adopted or reclaimed an animal from CACC between January and March 2001, and were able to contact 33 of them. We were able to contact and survey 59 of 265 rescue groups that worked with CACC during calendar year 2000.<sup>5</sup>

Since we were unable to speak to current shelter staff without a supervisor being present (this is discussed in detail in the "Audit Limitations" section below), we interviewed former CACC employees in order to obtain information on CACC's actual practices. We were able to contact and survey eight of the 22 people we had identified through CACC's documents as being former employees who had stopped working for CACC between December 2000 and June 2001. These eight individuals had been employed in various positions at CACC, such as kennel attendant, service representative, and adoptions counselor. Two of the eight former employees had resigned from CACC, and six had been terminated.

To determine the merit of allegations of animal mistreatment at CACC made by former employees and rescuers, we attempted to review the personnel files maintained at CACC's administrative office, and the disciplinary action notices, notes-to-file, and managers' logbooks kept at each of the three shelters. (Disciplinary action notices and notes-to-file are similar to each other, with disciplinary action notices used for union employees, and notes-to-file for non-union employees.)

To determine whether DOH's funding level and CACC's budget were sufficient to allow CACC to properly care for and effectively promote the adoption of the animals in its shelters, we compared DOH's funding level of CACC and the CACC calendar year 2000 budget to the standards of the Humane Society of the United States.

This audit was conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS), and included tests of the records and other auditing procedures considered necessary. This audit was performed in accordance with the City Comptroller's audit responsibilities as set forth in Chapter 5, § 93, of the New York City Charter.

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<sup>5</sup> Rescue groups "adopt" animals by taking them from the CACC shelter and caring for them while attempting to place them in permanent adoptive homes. Adoptions by rescue groups are termed "special adoptions" in CACC's records.

## **Audit Limitations**

Throughout the audit, CACC imposed obstacles that prevented us from conducting audit tests as we deemed necessary. CACC prevented us from obtaining a complete and accurate view of its operations and from obtaining all of the information necessary to develop a full set of constructive recommendations to help improve its operations. In short, CACC imposed limitations upon our audit methodology, necessitating a qualification of the findings in this report.

The limitations imposed by CACC included its refusal to allow us to interview staff members without a supervisor being present, its refusal to allow us access to certain documents, and its delays in the production of some other records—causing us to question the validity and/or completeness of the records that were ultimately provided. In addition, it was very difficult to arrange a meeting with the board of directors, and only two members of the board eventually met with us. Each of these audit limitations is described in the sections below.

### **Denial of Full Access to Shelter Staff**

CACC's official position regarding our interviews with shelter staff members was that, with the exception of shelter managers and assistant shelter managers, we would not be permitted to interview any shelter staff members without a supervisory staff member being present. As a result, we were not able to independently interview any employees, such as kennel attendants, veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and adoption counselors, who would have been able to give us direct, first-person observations of CACC's actual daily operations, as opposed to its official policies. CACC imposed this denial of full access despite our repeated explanations that we needed the views of staff members from all levels within the organization in order to form a complete and accurate picture of the organization's operations. Our repeated assurances that we would ask for the executives' explanations for any conflicting information provided by staff members had no effect on CACC's stance.

Sometimes, employees do not feel that they can speak freely with a supervisor standing next to them. After learning of this limitation, we requested few interviews with kennel staff, since we did not feel that we could rely on their supervised statements. We did interview some staff members with their supervisors present, and in those instances, it appeared that the answers of the staff members were constrained. In some cases, the supervisor present answered questions that had been addressed to the staff member, obviously making it difficult for the staff member to contradict the supervisor. Even when we interviewed members of the senior management staff, a supervisor was nearly always present. Usually this supervisor was the deputy executive director/general counsel of the organization, and he took detailed notes on what we asked and what the staff member said. These circumstances were not conducive to honest discussions of CACC's operations and of any problems that CACC might be facing.

Based upon CACC's refusal to permit us to interview staff under circumstances that would allow them to speak freely, we could not obtain a full account of management problems,

inaccuracies in the organization's records, or possible misstatements of the organization's policies and practices.

### **Limitations on Access to Records**

CACC denied us access to certain records and, on a number of occasions, delayed our access to other records, leading us to suspect that we were intentionally prevented from viewing potentially adverse information regarding the conditions at CACC shelters and the treatment of the animals kept there.

The records which we were unable to review include the managers' logbooks and the notes-to-file at the Manhattan and Staten Island shelters. (We were specifically denied access to the managers' logbooks at both of these shelters and to the notes-to-file at the Manhattan shelter; we were told that there were no notes-to-file at the Staten Island shelter.) These documents contain written accounts of incidents that occur in the shelters, for example, when an employee abuses or mistreats an animal, when an owned animal is euthanized in error, or when an employee fails to perform his or her job properly. We can only reasonably assume that we were denied access to these records because CACC's executive management did not want us to review any potentially adverse information they contained. This assumption is supported by the fact that we did find adverse information in the manager's logbook and notes-to-file that we viewed at the Brooklyn shelter, and by the fact that CACC officials and employees attempted to mislead us—before denying us access altogether—by falsely claiming that some of these documents either did not exist or were kept elsewhere.

In addition to the denial of access to the managers' logbooks and the notes-to-file for the Manhattan and Staten Island shelters, we were also prevented from conducting a full review of CACC's personnel files. At the time when the executive director of CACC denied us access to the documents at the shelters, she also denied us any further access to all CACC documents. On September 10, 2001, we had begun an in-depth review of the personnel files at the CACC administrative offices that was interrupted by the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center. We had intended to return to the administrative offices to complete our in-depth review, but the executive director's denial prevented the completion of that review. Some of the personnel files that we had reviewed before the interruption contained evidence of employee neglect or abuse of animals. Again, we believe that CACC's actions prevented us from obtaining further evidence of serious problems at its shelters.

In addition to denying us access to certain records, CACC delayed our access to other records. Specifically, CACC delayed our access to the disciplinary action notices at the three full-service shelters and those personnel files that we were able to review before September 11, 2001. We requested access to and reviewed these documents before the executive director's denial of further access to CACC records. However, the delays between our request for and access to these documents ranged from one week to one month. We cannot be certain that the records to which we eventually gained access constitute a complete and unaltered set of the records requested. CACC officials often had explanations for the delays, such as that they were occupied with other work or that they had to check with the general counsel before handing over

the documents. However, all of the requests for access to records were made as part of our ongoing audit, after we had informed CACC management that we would need such access and that management should inform CACC staff to cooperate with our requests. Delays such as we encountered were far more frequent and disruptive to the audit than we customarily encounter while auditing City agencies or organizations with City contracts. The delays were part of an overall pattern of uncooperative behavior by CACC.

Some of the instances in which CACC denied or delayed our access to records are described in further detail in the relevant sections of this report.

### **Difficulty Meeting with the Board of Directors**

In addition to the limitations imposed by CACC's executive management, we had difficulty arranging a meeting with the members of CACC's board of directors. It took two months to arrange a meeting with the board. After failing to return many of our phone calls, board members apparently asked the general counsel to have his secretary set up a meeting with all of the board members at once. The board members did not inform us directly of this decision. When the meeting finally took place—two months after we had begun making phone calls to arrange it—only two of the six current board members were present. (CACC's general counsel was also present at the meeting, at the request of the board members.)

Therefore, we did not obtain all of the board members' opinions regarding CACC's management and operations. This is a serious limitation, since it is the board members who are ultimately responsible for overseeing the organization's operations.

### **Agency Response**

See audit summary, pages ES-11 to ES-16, for discussion of agency response.

**OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER  
NEW YORK CITY**

**DATE FILED: June 6, 2002**

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

CACC does not provide humane conditions for all of the animals in its shelters and has not made aggressive efforts to increase adoptions of homeless animals. This report describes our findings in three main sections.

The first section, “Animals Are Not Always Sheltered under Humane Conditions,” discusses the inadequacies discovered during our visits to the shelters; evidence that animals in CACC shelters are sometimes subjected to abuse and neglect; the fact that some animals have been accidentally euthanized; and evidence of poor veterinary care in CACC shelters.

The second section, “CACC has Not Made Aggressive Efforts to Increase Adoptions,” presents recent CACC adoption statistics and discusses some of the likely reasons that adoption levels are low and have not improved over the last three years. These reasons include: limited public awareness of CACC and its adoption services and a lack of aggressive efforts by CACC to improve public awareness; inadequate use of off-site adoptions; inadequate efforts to ensure that the adoption process is encouraging to all potential adopters; CACC’s discouragement of some rescue groups that take animals from its shelters; the apparent inappropriate limitation of the pool of animals available for adoption; and a lack of adoption services at CACC’s Queens and Bronx facilities.

The third section of the report, “Possible Causes of CACC’s Shortcomings,” discusses the fact that CACC compounds the problem of under-funding by failing to aggressively raise funds on its own and by failing to take sufficient advantage of volunteers. It also discusses a problem evidenced by CACC leadership apparently interpreting the organization’s mission more narrowly than it was originally conceptualized and failing to aggressively pursue some of the goals outlined in its mission statement, such as, “providing humane care for all New York City animals in need” and “reducing the number of homeless animals through increased adoption.”

Lastly, under “Other Issues,” we discuss the facts that: CACC’s board violated its bylaws by meeting and voting on certain items without the required quorum present; CACC’s board appears to have violated the letter and spirit of the Open Meetings Law by speaking in a manner that prevented attendees from hearing their discussions; and CACC’s contract with DOH does not include specific and measurable performance requirements or standards.

Many of the findings in this report are supported by the results of our surveys of individuals acquainted with CACC’s operations (former employees, customers, and individuals from rescue groups who work with CACC) in addition to our document reviews, observations, and interviews with CACC management. (As discussed above, our ability to rely solely on CACC’s documents and the statements of its current staff members was limited by the organization’s uncooperative behavior.) In total, six of eight former employees, 36 of 59 rescuers, and 14 of 33 customers we surveyed criticized aspects of CACC’s operations and

management.<sup>6</sup> Their allegations and the results of our testing painted a similar picture—that of a shelter system in which: inadequate resources and staffing levels prevent the provision of some of the basic necessities for humane animal care; the frustrations of over-worked or unqualified employees are sometimes taken out on the animals; opportunities to help animals and increase adoptions are squandered; and, perhaps most notably, the status quo is perpetuated by a management that is not truly committed to all aspects of the organization’s contract and mission, namely, to provide high quality, humane, animal care and place as many animals as possible in adoptive homes. We realize that some of CACC’s former employees may not be entirely objective, but their statements, when considered along with the statements of the rescuers and customers we surveyed, as well as with our own observations, present compelling evidence of the conclusions described above.

### **Notes Regarding Exit Conference**

As stated earlier, an exit conference with DOH and CACC officials was held on March 4, 2002. Three issues raised during this meeting should be mentioned here.

First, DOH noted an inconsistency between our finding that animals in CACC’s care are not always sheltered under humane conditions, and the results of its own inspections of CACC facilities. To illustrate this point, DOH provided us with reports of 531 inspections of CACC facilities that were conducted by DOH veterinarians and public health sanitarians between January 1, 1999 and June 30, 2001. As DOH stated, those inspection reports did not reveal any cases of poor veterinary care or inhumane treatment. However, we do not believe that this is necessarily inconsistent with the findings in our report, because DOH veterinarians and public health sanitarians evaluate conditions in the shelters and the quality of care differently than we did. During their inspections, DOH veterinarians and health sanitarians look at 13 different areas, including floors, washrooms, wards, and infirmaries (many of which were not covered by our audit.) However, just as we did not cover in our audit all the areas that they cover in their inspections, they do not evaluate all of the conditions that we did (for example, how many animals had access to water at the time of the inspection). In addition, their inspections evaluate conditions more generally than we did, resulting in “yes” or “no” answers for conditions such as, “cages washable and clean,” and “separate, adequate, clean area provided for sick animals”; in contrast, we counted the number of cages that were soiled, and the number of wards in which healthy and contagious animals were housed together. Lastly, DOH inspections cover a specific point in time, and therefore could not have identified the instances of poor veterinary care, accidental euthanasia, and abuse and neglect that we uncovered through our review of CACC’s records and our surveys of past employees, rescuers and customers. Thus, while DOH’s inspection reports show that DOH has monitored CACC facilities through frequent on-site

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<sup>6</sup> In addition to the individuals who were part of our surveys, we spoke to six former employees, five rescuers, and three customers who either contacted us after learning of the audit, or whom we contacted as part of our background research for the audit. Since these individuals had not been selected for our surveys through our sampling methodology, we did not present information from our conversations with them in the body of the report. However, since most of them (six of six former employees, three of five rescuers, and three of three customers) also criticized aspects of CACC’s operations and management, and their statements lent further support to many of the findings in this report, we included information from our conversations with these individuals in an appendix to the report.

inspections, they are not comparable to the type of review that we conducted and therefore neither contradict nor are inconsistent with the findings in this report. (In response to this audit, DOH officials used the above-mentioned inspection reports to formally disagree with our finding regarding inhumane conditions. We therefore conducted a more thorough analysis of DOH's inspection process and reports, and the results of that analysis, which concluded that the process and reports are flawed, are described starting on page 34 of this report).

The other two issues worth discussing were raised by CACC. First, CACC's executive director repeated a prior claim that the mission statement quoted in this report is not CACC's mission statement. In response, we pointed out that we quoted CACC's mission statement exactly as it appears on the organization's website and in its *Report 1998 & 1999*.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the mission statement as cited in this report was quoted directly from CACC's own description of its mission statement. Shortly after the exit conference, CACC's mission statement was removed from its website.

Second, CACC's executive director claimed that CACC could not use volunteers more than it does because of prohibitions imposed by the employees' union. She stated that she would provide us with correspondence between CACC and the union documenting this fact, as well as with a copy of the union contract. The correspondence she described was never provided, and after reviewing the union contract, our attorneys concluded that the contract is very clear regarding this issue and directly contradicts the executive director's claim that CACC is limited in its use of volunteers. Specifically, the contract gives CACC the unlimited right to utilize volunteers as it sees fit, as long as the use of volunteers does not cause the layoff of any regular employee or prevent the replacement of a regular employee who leaves or is terminated.

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<sup>7</sup> Although the sources of the mission statement are specified in this final report and in the draft report, they had not been specified in the preliminary draft report.

## **Animals Are Not Always Sheltered Under Humane Conditions**

### **Observations During Site Visits**

CACC does not always provide adequate conditions for the animals in its facilities. During our site visits to the five CACC facilities, we found that at the three full-service shelters, where animals spend most of their stay, dogs are rarely, if ever, exercised, animals were not provided constant access to water, and contagious animals were sometimes kept in the same wards as non-contagious animals. In the two larger shelters, Manhattan and Brooklyn, animals' cages were not consistently spot-cleaned, and as a result, animals were sometimes left in soiled cages. These conditions violate the provision in CACC's contract with DOH, that requires that it "meet all its obligations under [the contract] in a humane manner." Moreover, these conditions cause animals to become sick or dirty, and as a result, not only less appealing to potential adopters but also more likely to be euthanized.

According to CACC's contract with DOH:

"Care of animals at the shelters shall include feeding, boarding (including bedding and cleaning of cages), watering, exercising, and provision for immediate first aid as required, including but not limited to isolation of sick animals as necessary."

The contract also states that CACC must perform the following cleaning duties:

- "Daily cleaning and sanitization once per day of bathrooms, public areas, offices, kitchen, lounge, and animal areas.
- "Cleaning of all kennel areas, water bowls, hallways, floors and cleaning equipment.
- "Collection and proper disposal of animal waste throughout the day."

CACC's *Shelter Operation Executive Directives and Procedure Manual* further specifies that all animals must be provided "a constant supply of fresh water," that "water should be available at all times," and that shelter management is responsible for "maintaining the highest standards of sanitation and care of animals entrusted to their care."

Since CACC's contract does not include standards for animal care, we looked to the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) for additional objective criteria against which to evaluate the conditions in CACC's shelters. According to the HSUS *Guidelines for the Operation of an Animal Shelter*:

"Stress reduction and disease control are your goals when determining how to separate animals. Separate animals as follows: dogs from cats, sick or injured animals from healthy animals, puppies and kittens from adult animals (unless the puppies and kittens are nursing), . . . nursing mothers and their young from all others. . . . Dogs confined in cages should be exercised in runs at least 4 feet by 10 feet twice daily or walked on a leash for at least 20 minutes twice daily. . . . [For both dogs and cats] water must be available at all times."

Most of the work involved in caring for the animals in CACC's shelters is performed by kennel attendants. According to CACC's job description and duty checklists for kennel attendants, they are responsible for providing the animals with food and water; performing a thorough cleaning of each assigned animal area once daily (including cleaning the floors and walls of the rooms, cleaning and sanitizing all of the animal cages and the animals' food and water bowls); maintaining and sanitizing all equipment used; handling and transporting animals to assigned areas; and continually spot-checking the cages, cleaning dirty cages, filling empty water bowls, and providing shredded paper for the animal cages when appropriate. The kennel attendants are also responsible for checking their assigned areas for sick or injured animals, broken or missing equipment, broken cages, missing animals, missing identification collars, and missing identifying cage cards, and reporting any such problems to the supervisor. According to CACC officials, during the day and up to midnight, the Manhattan shelter usually has between five and nine kennel attendants on duty to perform these tasks in caring for up to 500 cats and dogs; the Brooklyn shelter usually has between five and seven kennel attendants for up to 400 cats and dogs; and the Staten Island shelter usually has between one and four kennel attendants for up to 200 cats and dogs. There are fewer kennel attendants on duty during overnight shifts (one in Manhattan, three in Brooklyn, and two in Staten Island), but at the Manhattan and Brooklyn shelters, the thorough cleaning of all the wards and all the cages is not performed during these shifts. The Bronx and Queens receiving centers usually have between one and three kennel attendants on duty to care for the animals received at those facilities during the course of each day.

We conducted a total of 15 visits to the five CACC facilities. During these visits, we conducted 11 thorough walk-throughs, during which we reviewed and documented the conditions in every cage in each of the observable wards and animal areas,<sup>8</sup> and four quick walk-throughs, during which we observed the overall conditions in the shelters.<sup>9</sup> During each visit to a given facility, we did not always observe the same number of wards and animal areas since we were unable to observe some wards while they were undergoing a thorough cleaning.<sup>10</sup> (For the remainder of this report, we will refer to wards and animal areas as "wards.")

The shortcomings we observed during our visits to the five CACC facilities are detailed in the sections below.

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<sup>8</sup> A ward is a closed room usually containing approximately 20 to 40 cat cages or 20 to 30 dog cages or runs. (There are also a few smaller wards in the Brooklyn and Manhattan shelters, such as the ward for exotic animals.) In addition, some animal cages in the Manhattan shelter are located in hallways—we refer to these as animal areas.

<sup>9</sup> Specifically, we conducted the following thorough walk-throughs: two at the Brooklyn shelter, three at the Manhattan shelter, three at the Staten Island shelter, two at the Bronx receiving center, and one at the Queens receiving center. We conducted the following quick walk-throughs: two at the Brooklyn shelter, one at the Manhattan shelter, and one at the Staten Island shelter.

<sup>10</sup> This was a practical limitation, not one imposed by CACC.

### *Dogs Are Rarely Exercised*

We found that the dogs in CACC shelters are not exercised regularly, if at all.<sup>11</sup> CACC's contract does not specify how frequently the animals must be exercised; however, according to the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), dogs confined in cages should be exercised twice daily.

According to the director of shelter operations, dogs are exercised by being "walked on the dog runs." Our observations and interviews with shelter management revealed that this does not occur on a consistent basis.

We made three visits to the Manhattan shelter during which we viewed the dog runs, and found each time that there were no dogs in the 17 dog runs. We also observed, during our February 20, 2001 visit, a sign posted near the door leading to the dog runs that stated, "No dogs allowed in the outside runs until further notice."

We made three visits to the Brooklyn shelter during which we viewed the dog runs. During two of our visits, there were no dogs in the five dog runs, and during one of our visits, the five runs were being used to hold five dogs that had just been brought into the shelter (there was no other space for them).

We made four visits to the Staten Island shelter during which we viewed the dog runs. There were no dogs in the five dog runs during two of our visits, there were two dogs in the five dog runs during one of our visits, and there were three dogs in the five dog runs during the last visit.

According to CACC officials, all of the dogs in the Staten Island shelter are brought outside daily, but in the much larger Manhattan and Brooklyn shelters, it is more difficult to get all the dogs outside, and they have to "pick and choose" which dogs get to go in the runs.

CACC officials explained that the dogs are seldom exercised because of the lack of adequate staff. At one shelter, the shelter manager stated that there is "no staffing for exercise." Another official at this shelter stated that the only dogs that use the runs for exercise are those coming out of anesthesia after a spay or neutering operation. At another shelter, according to the shelter manager's description, the policy is to place 62 dogs in the outdoor runs in the course of each 24-hour day. However, another official at this same shelter informed us that the shelter is very short-staffed so the dogs are exercised only when the staff has some "down-time" available, or if the one CACC volunteer who walks dogs is there.

However, CACC generally does not use volunteers to supplement their staff in exercising dogs. According to CACC officials, during the time period that we conducted our audit tests, there was only one volunteer who walked dogs for the organization. This volunteer walked some of the dogs designated for adoption at the Brooklyn shelter on Saturdays, from 8:00 to 9:30 a.m.

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<sup>11</sup> As the Bronx and Queens facilities are receiving centers where the animals remain only for several hours before being transported to one of the shelters, it was not appropriate to test whether animals are exercised at these facilities.

According to one official, another reason that dogs are not exercised at one of the shelters is that CACC is afraid of legal liability—and therefore does not allow staff to take dogs off the premises.

As stated earlier, CACC’s contract with DOH does not specify how frequently the dogs should be exercised. Without a clear performance requirement, DOH has no standard by which to evaluate CACC’s performance and ensure that it exercises dogs frequently enough. Moreover, without a specific performance requirement, it is difficult to calculate the money and staff needed to ensure that CACC can exercise the dogs properly, and therefore difficult to ensure that these needs are appropriately funded in the CACC contract budget.

As we observed, most dogs are kept in cages too small for them to walk around in. Keeping dogs in these cages for the duration of their stay in the shelter, without removing them to provide regular exercise, is inconsistent with CACC’s contractual obligation to DOH to “meet all its obligations under [the contract] in a humane manner.”

### **Animals Were Not Provided Constant Access to Water**

We found during our site visits that the animals in the Manhattan and Brooklyn shelters were not provided constant access to water.

According to both CACC’s *Shelter Operation Executive Directives and Procedure Manual*, and the HSUS *Guidelines for the Operation of an Animal Shelter*, water should be “available at all times.”

At CACC’s shelters, the provision of constant access to water is supposed to be ensured by continual spot-checking throughout the day. According to CACC’s job description and duty checklists for kennel attendants, in addition to performing a thorough cleaning of each animal area once daily (during which water bowls are to be cleaned and refilled), the kennel attendants are responsible for spot-checking the cages and ensuring that water bowls are filled at all times.

Based upon our observations during our site visits, it is evident that spot-checking and refilling of empty water bowls was not occurring on a consistent basis. Although in many of the wards all of the animals had access to water, in many of the other wards, many animals did not have access to water. (In most of the cases where animals did not have access to water, the animals’ water bowls were empty; in some of the cases, the water bowls had been overturned.)

During our three thorough walk-throughs at the Manhattan shelter, we found the following. During the first walk-through, animals in three of 19 wards lacked access to water. In those three wards, the total number of occupied cages without water was five of 48 (10%), ranging from one of 18 (6%) to three of 19 (16%) in each ward. During the second walk-through, animals in 17 of 20 wards lacked access to water. In those 17 wards, the total number of occupied cages without water was 145 of 294 (49%), ranging from two of 16 (13%) to six of six (100%) in each ward. During the third walk-through, animals in two of 21 wards lacked

access to water. In those two wards, the total number of occupied cages without water was 11 of 27 (41%), ranging from six of 22 (27%) to five of five (100%) in each ward.

We observed similar conditions during our two thorough walk-throughs at the Brooklyn shelter. During the first walk-through, animals in six of 14 wards lacked access to water. In those six wards, the total number of occupied cages without water was 13 of 118 (11%), ranging from two of 38 (5%) to two of five (40%) in each ward. During the second walk-through, animals in nine of 16 wards lacked access to water. In those nine wards, the total number of occupied cages without water was 86 of 251 (34%), ranging from one of 21 (5%) to 22 of 22 (100%) in each ward.

Since there was such a disparity between the conditions in the various wards—in some wards, all animals had access to water at the time of our observations, while in others none of the animals had access to water—we concluded that they were not being consistently spot-checked for empty water bowls.

Providing the animals with constant access to water seemed to be less of a problem at the Staten Island shelter. During the first of our three thorough walk-throughs there, in one of the four wards, one occupied cage lacked water; during the second walk-through, animals in six of 11 (55%) of the occupied cages in one ward lacked water; and during the third walk-through, all animals had access to water.

Providing water for the animals did not appear to be a problem at the Bronx and Queens receiving centers, probably because these small facilities have much higher staff-to-animal ratios.

**At the Manhattan and Brooklyn Shelters,  
Animals' Cages Were Not Consistently Spot-Cleaned**

During our site visits to the Manhattan and Brooklyn shelters, we found that the animals' cages were not consistently spot-cleaned, and as a result, animals were sometimes kept in soiled cages.<sup>12</sup>

According to CACC's *Shelter Operation Executive Directives and Procedure Manual*, shelter management is responsible for "maintaining the highest standards of sanitation." CACC's job description and duty checklists for kennel attendants describe how the animals' cages are to be kept clean. The kennel attendants are to perform a thorough cleaning of each animal area once daily (including cleaning the floors and walls of the rooms, cleaning and sanitizing all of the animal cages and the animals' food and water bowls), and throughout the rest of the day, are to spot-check and clean dirty cages.

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<sup>12</sup> The cages were most frequently soiled with urine or feces; during one of the walk-throughs at the Manhattan shelter, a few of the cages were soiled with smeared soft food.

At the time of our site visits, however, it was evident that consistent spot-checking and cleaning was not going on in the Manhattan and Brooklyn shelters. Although many of the wards contained only clean cages, many others contained a significant number of soiled cages, indicating that they were not being continually spot-cleaned. In fact, some of the cages had obviously not been cleaned for quite some time, as they contained, for example, multiple piles of feces, partially dried-up feces, or the remaining stains from dried-up puddles of urine or diarrhea.

The following is a summary of our observations during our thorough walk-throughs at the Manhattan and Brooklyn shelters.

During the first of our three walk-throughs at the Manhattan shelter, six of 19 wards contained soiled cages. In those six wards, the total number of occupied cages that were soiled was 21 of 144 (15%), ranging from one of 37 (3%) to three of seven (43%) in each ward. During the second walk-through, 14 of 20 wards contained soiled cages. In those 14 wards, the total number of occupied cages that were soiled was 79 of 238 (33%), ranging from one of 22 (5%) to 31 of 32 (97%) in each ward. During the third walk-through, 10 of 21 wards contained soiled cages. In those 10 wards, the total number of occupied cages that were soiled was 27 of 172 (16%), ranging from one of 23 (4%) to five of five (100%) in each ward.

During the first of our two walk-throughs at the Brooklyn shelter, four of 14 wards contained soiled cages. In those four wards, the total number of occupied cages that were soiled was 12 of 46 (26%), ranging from two of 14 (14%) to two of five (40%) in each ward. During the second walk-through, nine of 16 wards contained soiled cages. In those nine wards, the total number of occupied cages that were soiled was 36 of 231 (16%), ranging from one of 20 (5%) to four of eight (50%) in each ward.

Since there was such a disparity between the conditions in the various wards—some were completely clean and some had a large number of soiled cages—we concluded that, while wards were being periodically cleaned, they were not being consistently spot-cleaned. Aside from the fact that some of the cages had obviously not been cleaned for quite some time, the fact that in some of the wards, as many as five out of five, seven out of 22, or 31 out of 32 cages were soiled (it is extremely unlikely that all of these animals soiled their cages at approximately the same time) makes it clear that continual spot-cleaning was not being performed.

Although keeping the animals' cages clean was a problem at the Brooklyn and Manhattan shelters, the cages at the Staten Island shelter were generally clean during our three thorough walk-throughs and our quick walk-through. Once again, this was also not a problem for the Bronx and Queens facilities, probably because they have higher staff-to-animal ratios.

### ***Contagious Animals Were Kept In Wards with Healthy Animals***

During our site visits, we found that contagious animals were kept in the same wards as healthy animals in all three full-service shelters. Although the Manhattan and Brooklyn shelters have separate wards for contagious cats and dogs, we saw animals that were designated on their cage cards as contagious being sheltered in wards with other, healthy animals. The Staten Island

shelter does not even have a separate ward for contagious animals; all animals are kept in either the adoption wards or the stray wards. These conditions violate both CACC's contract with DOH, which states that "care of animals shall include . . . isolation of sick animals as necessary," and the HSUS *Guidelines for the Operation of an Animal Shelter*, which states that "sick or injured animals [should be separated] from healthy animals."

At the Manhattan and Brooklyn shelters we observed contagious animals mixed in with healthy animals during each of the three visits on which we tested for this condition. (During the first thorough walk-through at each facility, we did not note whether a contagious designation appeared on animals' cage cards, since we were not yet fully familiar with the cage card coding system.) Specifically, during one walk-through at the Manhattan shelter, seven of 20 wards contained contagious animals mixed in with healthy ones; during a second walk-through, five of 21 wards contained contagious animals mixed in with healthy ones. During a walk-through at the Brooklyn shelter, seven of 16 wards contained contagious animals mixed in with healthy ones.

As mentioned above, the Staten Island shelter does not have a ward for contagious animals separate from the adoption and stray animal wards. The shelter manager and the assistant shelter manager stated that when an animal is found to have a contagious infection, the procedure followed depends upon the condition and its severity. Animals with upper respiratory conditions are kept in the bottom cages only and treated with penicillin. Animals infected with Parvovirus are euthanized so that they do not infect the other animals.<sup>13</sup> The shelter manager and the assistant shelter manager, as well as two other Staten Island shelter workers, stated that these procedures were necessary since the Staten Island shelter does not have a separate ward for contagious animals.

Officials at the Staten Island shelter stated that CACC is working on converting the unused staff lounge into a medical suite, which will include a contagious animals ward.

Keeping contagious animals together with healthy ones is a violation of CACC's contract and HSUS guidelines. It obviously increases the likelihood that healthy animals will become sick and possibly be euthanized as a result.

### **Other Conditions Found at the Shelters**

In addition to the conditions discussed above, we found the following problems at the CACC shelters:

- During one thorough walk-through at the Manhattan shelter, we noticed that all of the dogs in two wards were wet. In fact, the cages were wet. The wards had just been cleaned, and apparently the cages were not dried before the animals were returned to their cages. This is inconsistent with CACC's Cage Cleaning Procedures. Moreover,

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<sup>13</sup> Canine Parvovirus is a highly contagious viral disease that attacks the intestinal track, white blood cells, and in some cases, the heart muscle.

allowing animals to sit in wet cages increases their discomfort and the chance that they will become sick.

- During three thorough walk-throughs at the Manhattan shelter, two thorough walk-throughs at the Brooklyn shelter, and two quick walk-throughs at the Brooklyn shelter, we observed wards with cats and dogs in the same room, which increases the stress on the animals and is contrary to the HSUS *Guidelines for the Operation of an Animal Shelter*.
- We observed that in all three shelters there are no separate wards for nursing mother animals and their young, which is also contrary to the HSUS *Guidelines for the Operation of an Animal Shelter*.
- During our three thorough walk-throughs at the Manhattan shelter, we observed that there were some animals kept in the hallways instead of in wards. During the first walk-through, 44 dogs and 27 cats were in cages in hallways; during the second walk-through, 29 dogs and 28 cats were in hallway cages; and during the third walk-through, 20 dogs and 22 cats were in hallway cages. Hallway locations, because of their higher levels of traffic and noise, may be more stressful for animals.
- During one visit to the Manhattan shelter, we observed unidentified debris being blown out of the ventilation system. This indicates a possible problem with the ventilation system. We are uncertain about the implications of this condition for disease transmission to animals and humans.

In addition to our observations, interviews with former employees confirmed that shelter conditions need improvement. Four of the eight former employees surveyed criticized the conditions in CACC's shelters, citing unclean conditions and broken animal cages.

One of the reasons for the problems in the shelters seems to be inadequate staffing levels. Five current members of CACC shelter management and five former CACC employees made statements to us regarding the lack of adequate staffing at the shelters. Their statements linked low staffing levels to the inability to properly care for the animals, to keep the animals clean, and to exercise dogs.

A comparison of CACC kennel staff levels to those of some other area shelters shows, in fact, that CACC has a higher ratio of animals to staff. CACC employs 59 kennel staff at its five facilities to take care of the approximately 60,000 animals that come into its shelters each year—a ratio of 1,017 animals per kennel staff member.<sup>14</sup> In comparison, the ASPCA's shelter, which has an average annual intake of 2,000 animals, employs 20 animal care technicians—a ratio of 100 animals per animal care technician; the B.A.R.C., which has an average annual intake of

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<sup>14</sup> The number of kennel staff employed by CACC was obtained from CACC's staffing status report as of December 4, 2000. We counted each of the four part-time positions as ".5." The number for kennel staff, 59, includes six full-time and one part-time positions that were vacant at the time. We did this to ensure the fairest comparison with other shelters, since it is possible that, during our interviews, the other area shelters may have reported total positions, instead of total filled positions (employees on staff at the time.)

1,200 to 2,000 animals, employs 11 kennel attendants—a ratio of 109 to 182 animals per kennel attendant; and Bide-A-Wee’s Manhattan location, which has an average annual intake of 1,500 animals, employs 12 full-time and three part-time staff members who handle customer service and medicating animals in addition to handling animals and performing kennel work—a ratio of 111 animals per staff member.<sup>15</sup>

The problem of inadequate staffing is exacerbated by the fact that CACC does not heavily recruit or rely on volunteers to supplement staff in caring for the animals in its shelters. As is discussed in a subsequent section of this report, many other shelters rely on volunteers much more heavily than does CACC.

The conditions described above indicate that CACC is not always providing humane care for the animals in its shelters, as required by its mission and its contract. Moreover, in addition to causing discomfort to the animals, a lack of water, soiled cages, lack of exercise, and exposure to contagious animals increase the chances that animals will become sick, and as a result not only be less appealing candidates for adoption, but also be more likely to be euthanized. Thus, these conditions hinder CACC in achieving one of its stated major goals, and the other main aspect of its mission—securing caring homes for animals.

## **Recommendations**

1. While additional funding will most likely be impossible to obtain in the near future, given New York City’s financial situation after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on the World Trade Center, we recommend that, if it ever becomes possible, DOH consider amending CACC’s contract to fund the hiring of additional kennel attendants. (The need to increase veterinary staff is addressed in Recommendation 13.) DOH and CACC should consult other shelters and organizations such as the Humane Society of the United States to determine appropriate staffing levels at CACC shelters. Required staffing levels should then be specified in the terms of CACC’s contract and provided for in the contract budget.

**Note:** As discussed later in this report, increasing staff through additional City funding is not the only way CACC can improve its services. For example, CACC should recruit and use many more volunteers to supplement staff in providing animal care and should conduct fundraising to raise money to hire additional staff. These issues are discussed in detail later in the report.

**Agency Response:** “DOH agrees with the recommendations to consider hiring additional kennel attendants and veterinary staff if additional funding becomes available. However,

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<sup>15</sup> The number of kennel staff employed by the ASPCA’s shelter, B.A.R.C., and Bide-A-Wee’s Manhattan shelter were obtained through telephone interviews with officials at each of these shelters. We were unable to obtain staffing numbers from the fourth area shelter contacted—North Shore Animal League. The ratio of animals per staff member at Bide-A-Wee’s Manhattan location was calculated based on a total number of 13.5 staff members—each part-time staff member was counted as .5 staff members.

DOH and CACC are focusing on ways to improve services without additional DOH funding, i.e. developing a closer working relationship with the animal care community and developing strategies to better utilize current resources and increase funds raised from private entities. With increased funding from private sources, one of the potential uses will be to hire additional kennel staff for improved animal care services.”

2. We recommend that DOH amend CACC’s contract to include a specific requirement regarding how frequently dogs should be walked.

***Agency Response:*** “The Department is currently renegotiating its contract with CACC to begin July 2002 and will include specific performance measures within the contract to enable DOH to better monitor contract compliance.”

We recommend that CACC:

3. Ensure that: dogs are walked; all animals have constant access to water; animals’ cages are kept clean; animals are put only into dry cages; and cats, dogs, contagious, and nursing animals are kept in separate areas.
4. Enforce the policy of separating contagious and non-contagious animals at all the shelters. At the Staten Island shelter, CACC should implement its plans to convert the unused staff lounge as soon as possible and set up a separate ward for the contagious animals.
5. Investigate the possibility of obtaining additional interns through area colleges to supplement staff in providing animal care.

***Auditors’ Comments:*** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC’s Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC’s response to each of this audit’s recommendations.

### **Evidence of Mistreatment of Animals in CACC Shelters**

Former employees and rescuers with whom we spoke reported that animals at CACC shelters, in addition to suffering under inadequate conditions, are sometimes mistreated. They recounted incidents in which animals were neglected or abused; were caused to suffer because of poor veterinary care; and were accidentally euthanized, even though they were owned or had been claimed for adoption. We attempted to determine the extent of these problems by reviewing, for the period January 1999 through April 2001, the personnel files in CACC’s administrative office and the disciplinary action notices, notes-to-file, and managers’ logbooks maintained at the shelters. However, CACC officials prevented us from conducting a full review of all of these documents.

We were able to review the disciplinary action notices maintained at all three full-service shelters and the notes-to-file at the Brooklyn shelter.<sup>16</sup> In addition, we were able to review the shelter manager's logbook at the Brooklyn shelter, when, in the absence of the shelter manager, we were—we believe mistakenly—given full access to all of the documents on the bookshelf in the shelter manager's office. We were also able to review the personnel files for 120 of the 312 employees who were employed at CACC at any time between January 1999 and April 2001. However, we were unable to review the notes-to-file and the shelter managers' logbooks at the Manhattan and Staten Island shelters, and the personnel files for 192 (62%) of the 312 employees. During our initial visits to review documents at the Manhattan and Staten Island shelters we were not shown the notes-to-file and the shelter managers' logbooks even though we had requested any documents related to employee disciplinary issues or incidents that occurred at the shelters. When we later returned to the Manhattan and Staten Island shelters and specifically requested access to those documents, the executive director denied us access to those and any other CACC documents. As a result of this denial of further access to any CACC documents, we were also unable to complete our review of the personnel files.

It should also be noted that CACC delayed our access to all the documents that we were able to review. (The time between our request for and actual access to each of these sets of documents ranged from one week to one month.) Therefore, we cannot be sure that even the documents we gained constitute a complete and unaltered set of the requested records.

In addition, not all the sets of documents that we obtained covered the full period that we had intended to review. The disciplinary action notices from the Brooklyn and Manhattan shelters, the notes-to-file from the Brooklyn shelter, and the personnel files we reviewed did cover the full period—January 1999 through April 2001. However, the disciplinary action notices and notes-to-file from the Staten Island shelter included records from only May 2000 through April 2001, and the Brooklyn shelter manager's logbook covered only March 2000 through April 2001.

As described below, during our review of the limited sample of documents that we had obtained access to, we came across a number of recorded instances of mistreatment of animals in CACC shelters. These preliminary findings, coupled with CACC's lack of cooperation during this audit, give rise to a serious concern that additional instances of mistreatment may not have been detected by our audit. In addition to refusing to allow us to review all of the relevant documents, CACC officials repeatedly attempted to mislead us by claiming that certain documents either did not exist or were kept elsewhere. For example, during our first attempt to review records at the Manhattan shelter, we were told that notes-to-file were not kept at the shelter—that they were kept only at the administrative office. However, during our second attempt to review records at this shelter, a non-managerial employee showed us the notes-to-file binder (before the CACC legal counsel and executive director became involved in the situation and denied our access to all documents). During this second attempt, we were also told that there was no manager's logbook, since all CACC managers had discontinued the practice of recording managers' notes on paper in 1999 when they began recording them only in the

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<sup>16</sup> We limited our review of documents to the three full-service shelters, since these are the facilities where animals spend most of their stay—animals are only kept for a few hours at the Bronx and Queens receiving centers.

computer system. However, we know that this is not the case, since we had already reviewed the Brooklyn shelter manager's logbook through April 2001.

The following three sections present the evidence of animal mistreatment that we obtained through our limited review of the relevant documents, as well as through our conversations with rescuers, former employees, and customers. Of the 42 employees at the Brooklyn shelter for whom we were able to review all relevant sets of documents (personnel files, shelter manager's logbook, and disciplinary action notices or notes-to-file), eight (19%) were cited between January 1999 and April 2001 for animal mistreatment—animal abuse or neglect, accidental euthanasias, or poor veterinary care.<sup>17</sup> When reviewing the incomplete array of documents—to which we had gained access—that were relevant to the remaining shelter employees, we found evidence that 21 additional employees were cited for these issues. In addition, of the eight former employees interviewed, four informed us of animal abuse and neglect cases, accidental euthanasias, or poor veterinary care; of the 59 rescuers surveyed, 17 made allegations about these three types of animal mistreatment; and of the 33 customers we surveyed, five complained about poor veterinary care.

For the reasons outlined above, we believe that the extent of the problem is even greater than we were able to determine through our review of CACC's documents. This belief was confirmed when we found, in documents CACC provided to us after the exit conference, three additional cases of animal abuse, five additional errors of the type that can lead to the accidental or inappropriate euthanasia of animals, and one additional instance of poor veterinary care practices—all of which occurred during our audit period and would have been included in our document review had we been given those documents. Clearly, we have no way of knowing how many more incidents may have occurred that we did not discover through our document review.

### **Evidence That Some Animals Are Subjected to Abuse and Neglect**

We found evidence of animal abuse and neglect during our document review, as well as during our interviews with rescuers and former employees. Of the 42 employees at the Brooklyn shelter for whom we were able to review all relevant sets of documents (personnel files, disciplinary action notices, notes-to-file, and shelter manager's logbook), two (5%) were cited for animal abuse or neglect between January 1999 and April 2001. When reviewing the incomplete array of documents—to which we had gained access—that were relevant to the remaining shelter employees, we found evidence that 10 additional employees at the Manhattan and Brooklyn shelters were cited for animal abuse or neglect. In addition, three of the eight former employees interviewed informed us of animal abuse or neglect at the shelters, and eight of the 59 rescuers surveyed reported cases of animal abuse or neglect.

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<sup>17</sup> These 42 Brooklyn shelter employees are the only employees for whom we were able to review all relevant sets of documents. Even for these employees, however, our document review was not complete, since the Brooklyn shelter manager's logbook did not include the period January 1999 through February 2000.

We found 13 instances of animal abuse or neglect involving 12 employees, during our document review. Six of these incidents occurred at the Brooklyn shelter, and seven occurred at the Manhattan shelter between January 1999 through April 2001. These incidents included, but were not limited to, an employee turning a water hose on an animal in its cage; an employee washing cages while the animals were still in them; an employee dragging a dog with a rope around its neck and mouth; and an employee hanging a cat by its foot using a “snappy snare” and, on another occasion, slapping a kitten.

According to CACC’s *Shelter Operation Executive Directives and Procedure Manual*, “physical cruelty to animals” is one of the actions that “will result in discharge or such other disciplinary action as [CACC] may determine.” In addition, the assistant manager at the Manhattan shelter informed us that a staff member who abuses an animal is immediately dismissed. However, though they were documented, not all of these animal abuse or neglect cases resulted in the dismissal of the responsible party. According to the disciplinary write-ups we reviewed, some of the employees cited for animal abuse or neglect were merely suspended for one day—including an employee who had used a cat-grabbing device without permission, resulting in the death of the cat. The employee mentioned earlier, who hanged a cat by its foot and slapped a kitten, received only a note-to-file. In fact, of the seven write-ups we saw documenting obvious physical abuse, only two resulted in immediate terminations, and four of the seven employees known to have been involved were still employed at CACC at the time of our review, as much as 23 months after being cited for animal abuse.<sup>18</sup>

Since we were unable to review many of the relevant documents, we do not believe that we saw records of all the instances of animal abuse and neglect that occurred at the shelters between January 1999 and April 2001. Even for those employees at the Brooklyn shelter for whom we were able to review all relevant sets of documents, we cannot be sure that we saw all of the recorded instances of abuse and neglect, since the delays imposed by CACC would have allowed for the alteration or removal of individual documents.

In fact, as was described above, after the exit conference, CACC provided us with documentation of three additional cases of animal abuse—documentation that we had never seen before, although all three cases were covered by the scope of our document review. The documentation provided by CACC confirmed two cases of animal abuse that had been described to us by former employees who had either contacted us or whom we contacted as part of our background research for this audit, and one case that we were not previously aware of.<sup>19</sup> In one of these cases, an employee allowed a pitbull that he was holding by a leash to lunge and attack a caged cat. This employee was fired. In another case, someone hit a dog twice and sprayed a toxin in the dog’s eye; the dog’s cornea was reportedly “gone” as a result. Despite CACC’s efforts, the perpetrator of this act was never identified. In the third case, an employee was suspended for one day for cleaning a dog’s cage while the dog was still in the cage.

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<sup>18</sup> One of the write-ups did not include the name of the employee involved and was not included in any of the personnel files that we were able to review.

<sup>19</sup> Since we had not seen evidence in CACC’s documents of the two cases of animal abuse that had been described to us by former employees who contacted us or whom we contacted as part of our research, we did not include them in the body of the preliminary draft report—they are included in an Appendix to the report.

We were also told of instances of animal abuse and neglect during our surveys of rescue groups and former employees of CACC.

Of the 59 rescue groups, eight reported cases of some form of animal abuse or neglect. One rescuer spoke of an incident in which she went to adopt a dog that, according to the CACC employee who had called her, had been in the Brooklyn shelter for three weeks. When she went to pick up the dog, it had a smashed femur and injured genitals. The dog had not received medical treatment for these injuries during its three-week stay at CACC. Another rescuer stated that she picked up a cat at the Manhattan shelter with lesions on its face and paws. This cat's intake card did not indicate that the cat was injured when it arrived at the shelter. The rescuer's veterinarian stated that the cat may have been doused with a chemical. Another rescuer stated that he was aware of an incident when an employee put a pitbull on a leash and had it attack a cat. (This was the same incident described by the former employee). Yet another rescuer spoke of an incident when a girl's dog was hit by a car: the girl found her dog at CACC, but upon realizing that CACC was not providing any care or treatment to the injured dog, she reclaimed the dog and removed it from the shelter. Another rescuer stated that the animals are not treated well in CACC shelters, saying, for example, that he had picked up a dog that was covered in feces. Three other rescuers also spoke about the general neglect of the animals at CACC, stating that animals are not very clean, are not taken care of, and sometimes do not even have water.

Of the eight former employees, three made allegations regarding animal abuse or neglect. One stated that he witnessed an animal handler abusing an anesthetized animal. Another stated that dogs did not get exercised and were not consistently given water or food. The third stated that animals cannot be cleaned (for example, of fleas and ticks) due to the lack of staffing.

One factor contributing to some employees' abusive or neglectful behavior towards the animals may be the fact that shelter staff are overworked. Our review of the disciplinary action notices and notes-to-file revealed that shelter staff are often forced to work double shifts. The inevitably tired, stressed kennel staff may take out their frustrations on the animals.

CACC should immediately terminate employees who physically abuse animals and take strict disciplinary action against employees who neglect animals. By keeping abusive or neglectful staff in its employ, CACC exposes other animals to similar treatment and also exposes itself to legal liability. By terminating an employee who abuses animals immediately, CACC would send a message to other employees, as well as to the community, that CACC has no tolerance for the mistreatment of the animals in its care.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that CACC:

6. Immediately terminate any employee who physically abuses any animal.
7. Provide more supervision of CACC employees, particularly the kennel attendants, who are directly responsible for the care of the animals.

8. Provide employee support services to help employees deal with their frustrations and to prevent them from releasing their frustrations on the animals.
9. Reconsider its forced overtime policy, possibly offering incentives for staff members to come in and work shifts for which they are not scheduled, rather than forcing employees to work two shifts in a row. Possible incentives could include: the option of swapping shifts with other employees, “merit raises” for outstanding job performance, and additional employee recognition awards.
10. Explore ways to recruit more qualified, dedicated staff, such as increasing reliance on recruiting part-time employees from animal science-related programs at area colleges.

***Auditors’ Comments:*** See the report section entitled Discussion of CACC’s Response, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC’s response to each of this audit’s recommendations.

### **Evidence of Accidental Euthanasias**

Some animals have been accidentally euthanized at CACC shelters. We found evidence of accidental euthanasias during our document review, as well as during our interviews with former employees and rescuers. Of the 42 employees at the Brooklyn shelter for whom we were able to review all relevant sets of documents, four (10%) were cited for actions that resulted in the euthanasia of owned or claimed animals between January 1999 and April 2001. When reviewing the incomplete array of documents—to which we had gained access—that were relevant to the remaining shelter employees, we found evidence that six additional employees at the Brooklyn and Manhattan shelters were cited for such actions. In addition, two of the eight former employees and two of the 59 rescuers spoke about the problem of accidental or inappropriate euthanasias. There was a total of 13 specific incidents of accidental euthanasias recorded in the documents reviewed or described by former employees. As a result of these incidents, at least five pets whose owners had already claimed ownership were euthanized before their owners were able to pick them up, and at least four animals that had been claimed by rescue groups were euthanized before the rescuers could take them out of the shelters.

CACC’s contract with DOH, states,

“[CACC] shall make every reasonable effort to place animals for adoption and shall euthanize animals only when required as a last resort.”

According to CACC’s written policies, an animal may have a Hold placed upon it, prohibiting anyone from euthanizing or adopting it for a specified period of time. For instance, if an animal has some form of identification, such as a traceable tag, a microchip, or a tattoo, then CACC is required to hold it for a 10-day period. If a pet owner is arrested, hospitalized, or has died, then CACC is required to hold the animal for a five-day period. Once a Hold is placed on an animal (the Hold must be indicated in CACC’s Chameleon computer system and on the

animal's kennel card), a letter is to be prepared immediately and mailed to the owner's address. The holding period starts the day after a notification letter is sent to the owner, thus allowing two days for mail delivery.

If an animal does not have some form of identification, CACC is supposed to create a Found Report in Chameleon, which should include all the information about the animal (e.g., sex, breed, color, and any distinguishing marks). This Found Report is supposed to be cross-checked against any Lost Animal Reports (which are created whenever a person informs CACC that they have lost an animal) to determine whether there are any possible matches.

When the holding period ends, if there has been no contact from the owner, then the shelter manager or assistant shelter manager may remove the Hold, releasing the animal to the shelter for adoption or euthanasia. If there has been some contact with the owner, then the owner must be given a final notice regarding the latest date and time by which he or she may come into the shelter to reclaim the animal. Once the final notice time has expired, the shelter manager or assistant shelter manager may remove the Hold.

According to CACC's policies, no Hold animal may be euthanized, even if it is included in a pre-euthanasia report (the list of animals to be euthanized, prepared before each half-day shift).

However, animals at CACC shelters are being accidentally and needlessly euthanized. During our document review, we found reports of ten accidental euthanasias between January 1999 and April 2001. Six of these incidents occurred at the Brooklyn shelter and four at the Manhattan shelter. Six of these accidental euthanasias occurred when a staff member failed to place a Hold or a memo into the Chameleon system to indicate that an animal would be reclaimed by its owner or had been chosen by a rescue group for adoption; four animals were euthanized even though a Hold had been placed on each.

Again, we must state that our delayed access to the records we reviewed, the fact that we could not review the shelter managers' logbooks or notes-to-file at the Manhattan and Staten Island shelters, and our inability to speak independently to current staff prevented us from knowing whether we viewed records of all accidental euthanasias that occurred between January 1999 and April 2001, and from understanding the true extent of the problem.

Two of the eight former CACC staff members surveyed spoke about the problem of accidental or inappropriate euthanasias. One former staff member spoke of how an employee's failure to follow-up on a rescuer's interest in an animal resulted in the euthanasia of this animal. Another former staff member spoke of a case in which he told CACC he would be willing to adopt a certain dog if no one else was willing to take it, but despite his request, CACC euthanized the dog a few days later. This former staff member also described a case in which an employee neglected to enter a memo into Chameleon and, as a result, a dog was put down two hours before the rescuer who had claimed the dog for adoption came for it. He stated that the employee who had neglected to enter a memo into Chameleon "never puts memos into Chameleon."

In addition, two of the 59 rescuers we interviewed made allegations regarding accidental or inappropriate euthanasias. One rescuer stated that CACC staff overlook Hold memos and put animals down. This rescuer described an incident when she had asked CACC to place a Hold on a dog that she was going to claim once it had been neutered, but instead, the dog was put down. This rescuer claimed that such incidents—when CACC euthanizes animals that have Holds placed on them—have occurred numerous times. Another rescuer stated that there were “tons of times” when rescuers were scheduled to pick up animals, but the animals were put down instead.

In fact, we found documentation of 34 instances in which employees made the types of mistakes that could lead to the accidental or inappropriate euthanasia of animals (the two most common mistakes were failing to enter a Hold memo into Chameleon and failing to enter correct or complete information on the animal into Chameleon). This indicates the potential for even greater numbers of accidental euthanasias.

Again confirming our belief that our document review did not reveal the full extent of the problems at CACC, documentation that CACC provided to us after the exit conference revealed an additional five instances in which employees made the types of mistakes that could lead to the accidental or inappropriate euthanasia of animals.

In conclusion, it appears that staff’s failures to enter Hold memos into Chameleon, inadequate oversight of the Hold status of animals, and poor record keeping have all contributed to the accidental euthanasia of animals. These actions undermine CACC’s goal of securing caring homes for animals.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that CACC:

11. Provide staff with continuous training concerning the use of the Chameleon system and the importance of entering the various types of information.
12. Provide additional training on and increased supervision of the euthanasia process to ensure that all control procedures are followed.

**Auditors’ Comments:** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC’s Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC’s response to each of this audit’s recommendations.

## **Evidence of Poor Veterinary Care**

We found evidence of poor veterinary care during our document review and our interviews with former employees, rescuers and customers. Of the seven veterinary staff members at the Brooklyn shelter for whom we were able to review all relevant sets of documents (personnel files, disciplinary action notices, notes-to-file, and shelter manager’s logbook), three

(43%) were cited for instances of poor veterinary care between January 1999 and April 2001. When reviewing the incomplete array of documents—to which we had gained access—that were relevant to the remaining shelter employees, we found evidence that five additional veterinary staff members at the Manhattan shelter were cited for poor veterinary care. In addition, one of eight former employees, 10 of 59 rescuers, and five of 33 customers criticized CACC’s veterinary care. (Again, we must qualify our finding by stating that we may not have seen all the records of reported incidents of poor veterinary care from the period January 1999 through April 2001, and we were unable to speak to current shelter staff independently regarding veterinary practices.)

According to the New York Education Law, Article 135, § 6701, the practice of the profession of veterinary medicine is defined as,

“diagnosing, treating, operating, or prescribing for any animal disease, pain, injury, deformity or physical condition, or the subcutaneous insertion of a microchip intended to be used to identify an animal.” [sic]

CACC’s job description for staff veterinarians states that,

“The Staff Veterinarian is responsible, in cooperation with the Kennel Coordinator, for the overall health and care of all CACC animals. Rounds shall be conducted and **completed** each morning by the Staff Veterinarian **before 9 a.m.**, beginning first with the Adoption wards, and any animal scheduled for surgery, to include visual observation of all animals in the CACC facility. At that time, individual health issues will be addressed by the Staff Veterinarian and either appropriate actions taken or directed to appropriate staff. . . . The Staff Veterinarian will be responsible for ensuring that all Shelter Medical procedures are adhered to and that treatments, euthanasia, and hold procedures are carried out professionally and in accordance with CACC policies. . . . The Staff Veterinarian will direct and assist Veterinary Technicians . . .with the examination and statusing of arriving animals. . . . The Staff Veterinarian will be responsible for the direct supervision and training of all . . . veterinary technicians.” [Emphasis in original.]

However, CACC has sometimes provided sub-standard care to animals. Our document review revealed various reports of poor veterinary care administered by one veterinarian and seven veterinary technicians. The following are some examples of the reports we reviewed.

A veterinarian was cited for instances of neglect dating back at least to March 1999. For example, this veterinarian was cited for approving an Owner’s Request for Euthanasia of a five-year-old poodle without examining the dog. (This is a violation of CACC’s written procedures.) Another time, this veterinarian refused to do rounds for a certain area; therefore, the veterinarian did not examine all the animals identified as requiring examination. In another incident, this veterinarian failed to see a dog that came in with severe bite marks and open wounds, leaving the animal to suffer needlessly. Despite repeated cases of neglect and outright refusal to carry out

certain responsibilities, this veterinarian continued in her position until her resignation in April 2001.

One veterinary technician was cited eight times between January 1999 and April 2001 for poor animal care practice. One report cites the veterinary technician for inappropriately classifying the status of a cat and thus failing to recommend the necessary euthanasia to relieve its obvious pain and suffering. (The cat had a large infected wound on its neck that was infested with maggots.) Another report stated that when examining a dog, the veterinary technician failed to notice that the dog's collar was too tight and injuring the dog's neck. Another report cited the veterinary technician for failing to examine tranquilized animals thoroughly. Despite these and other incidents, this veterinary technician still remains on the job.

Another veterinary technician was cited for poor animal care practices seven times between February 1999 and June 2000, including two times for leaving her shift before tending to animals. (On one of these occasions she left six animals unexamined and 17 animals not euthanized, and on the other occasion she left two injured animals unexamined.) In another instance, the veterinary technician entered a classification of "euthanized" into the Chameleon computer system for a cat that was later found alive in a cabinet of the euthanasia room. In yet another incident, this veterinary technician failed to follow proper procedures regarding an animal with a DOH Hold placed on it. In addition, documentation that CACC provided to us after the exit conference included one other incident in which this veterinary technician left at the end of her shift, even though she had been told that an injured animal was being brought in by the rescue department. Although these written citations date back to at least as early as February 1999, this veterinary technician remains on the job at CACC.

Another veterinary technician was cited for failure to work though an assigned shift, and failure to administer morning treatments to animals requiring medication. Yet another veterinary technician was cited for failing to properly examine an already neutered dog and therefore sending it to be neutered again. (The write-up stated that this was the second incident of this nature.)

In addition to the incidents of poor veterinary care cited in the documents reviewed, other incidents were revealed during our surveys of rescue groups, customers, and former employees. Because some veterinary procedures (spaying and neutering procedures and some emergency procedures) may be performed either at CACC facilities or at outside veterinary clinics,<sup>20</sup> in some cases, it was not clear whether the complaints referred to CACC personnel or to personnel at facilities under contract with CACC.

Ten of the 59 rescuers we spoke to complained about the quality of CACC's veterinary care, and six gave specific examples of poor care. One rescuer stated that an animal he adopted

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<sup>20</sup> Spay/neuter procedures may be performed by outside veterinary clinics under contract with CACC. CACC entered into agreements with veterinary clinics to perform spay/neuter surgeries in order to ensure its ability to comply with the spay/neuter law that went into effect in November 2000—the law requires that all animals leaving New York City shelters be altered prior to leaving (unless a medical waiver is given or breeding documents are presented).

Emergency procedures may be performed at outside veterinary clinics that are not under contract with CACC.

had only one testicle removed during its neutering. In another case, this same rescuer took a dog from CACC and noticed that it was bleeding and unable to sit. When an outside veterinarian performed exploratory surgery on the dog, he found that the person who had performed the dog's alteration had left two gauze pads inside the dog and had attached one stitch to the bladder. Another rescuer mentioned two incidents—one in which a dog developed an infection from undissolved stitches and another in which a dog's dislocated hip went undetected by CACC's veterinary staff. One rescuer spoke of a case in which CACC had spayed a kitten that he said was too young to be altered. The kitten had cuts from the razor used to shave the area and got an infection from the procedure. This rescuer also stated that most of the female animals that he gets from CACC have infections on their abdomens, and most of the males have infections on their scrotums. Another rescuer spoke of a spayed cat she had taken from CACC; because the veterinarian had left an ovary in place, the cat went into heat and had to be re-spayed. Still another rescuer spoke of a four-month-old puppy with a broken leg that she adopted from CACC. Before she could take the puppy, CACC sent it to an outside veterinarian for care but it was apparently left without care for three days. When the rescuer went to pick up the puppy from the veterinarian, its leg was not splinted. This rescuer also stated that in her experience, the surgeries performed on CACC animals were "very sloppy." Still another rescuer stated that a kitten she was fostering developed a hemorrhage as a result of a badly performed spaying, as confirmed by her own veterinarian. (This spaying had been performed by one of CACC's contracted veterinarians.) The four other rescuers who criticized CACC's veterinary care complained about the fact that veterinarians commonly give wrong diagnoses and that CACC does not have adequate facilities or personnel to properly carry out the requirements of the new spay/neuter law, among other things.

In addition to these complaints, five rescuers stated that CACC's veterinary staff often misevaluate animals and frequently provide incorrect information on the animals' sex and age.

Our survey of 33 CACC customers revealed a few more incidents of poor veterinary care. Five of the 33 customers voiced complaints about CACC's veterinary care. One customer felt that the CACC-contracted veterinarian from whom he picked up his cats was not truthful when he released cats to him without informing him that they were infected with fleas and upper respiratory conditions. Another customer who re-claimed his lost dog from CACC was angry at CACC for not permitting him to take his dog out of the shelter before neutering it, despite the fact that he had produced special breeding documents for the dog. According to this customer, under the law, the documents should have exempted the dog from being altered and would have allowed him to use the dog for breeding purposes, as he had planned. Two customers made complaints regarding their animals' alterations. One stated that her cat's incision did not look as if it had been performed well and the other customer said that the area above her animal's scar had been infected by the stitches. Another customer complained about the lack of veterinary services at the Brooklyn shelter. Also, two customers complained that their dogs had been misevaluated.

One of the eight former CACC employees we surveyed criticized CACC's veterinary care. This former employee stated that since the veterinarian was not always present at the shelter, veterinary technicians performed many of the procedures.

Understaffing is one possible reason for the veterinary care problems described above. A comparison of CACC veterinary staffing levels to those of other area shelters shows that CACC's veterinary staff are responsible for far greater numbers of animals. According to the CACC employee list dated June 2001, CACC employs six veterinarians, 21 veterinary technicians, three of whom are part-time, and two veterinary technician interns (27.5 total veterinary staff) to provide medical care for the approximately 60,000 animals that come into its shelters each year.<sup>21</sup> This is a ratio of approximately 10,000 animals per veterinarian and 2,181 animals per veterinary staff member. In contrast, the ASPCA's shelter, which has an average annual intake of 2,000 animals, employs two full-time veterinarians—a ratio of 1,000 animals per veterinarian/veterinary staff member. Moreover, ASPCA's shelter veterinarians are not responsible for performing spay/neuter procedures, as are CACC's veterinarians; all spaying/neutering for adoptions is performed at ASPCA's full-service animal hospital. B.A.R.C., which has an average annual intake of 1,200 to 2,000 animals, employs one full-time veterinarian, one full-time veterinary technician, and four part-time veterinary technicians (4 total veterinary staff)—a ratio of 1,200 to 2,000 animals per veterinarian and 300 to 500 animals per veterinary staff member. Bide-A-Wee's Manhattan location, which has an average annual intake of 1,500 animals, employs one full-time veterinarian and one full-time veterinary technician—a ratio of 1,500 animals per veterinarian, and 750 animals per veterinary staff member, overall.<sup>22</sup>

Another cause of some of the problems with veterinary care may be the fact that CACC relies primarily upon its 21 veterinary technicians (13 (62%) of whom are not licensed), rather than veterinarians, to perform many of the examinations and treatments. Other possible causes include poor supervision of veterinary staff and the retention of poor-performing veterinary staff.

In addition, regarding the contracted veterinary clinics, CACC's executive director stated that there is no formal process in place to monitor and evaluate their performance.

Since the health and condition of animals influence their potential adoptability, it is important that all incoming animals be evaluated, examined, and treated as soon as possible after intake and receive high quality veterinary care while they remain at CACC. However, this has not been the case for all of the animals in CACC's shelters. As a result, CACC cannot ensure that all animals are treated as humanely as possible while in the shelters, and given the best chance for adoption.

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<sup>21</sup> We used the employee list for June 2001, rather than the December 4, 2000, staffing status report (which we used to calculate the total number of kennel attendants) because an increase in CACC's contract budget to support the spay/neuter program seems to have allowed CACC to hire additional veterinary staff since December 2000. The figures of six veterinarians and 27.5 veterinary staff members may be an over-estimate—there were four veterinarians, eight veterinary technicians, and two veterinary technician interns who were hired after the issuance of the December 4, 2000, staffing status report, and we could not determine whether they were full-time or part-time employees.

<sup>22</sup> We obtained the numbers of veterinary staff employed by the ASPCA's shelter, B.A.R.C., and Bide-A-Wee's Manhattan shelter through telephone interviews with officials at each of these shelters. For the purpose of these calculations, part-time staff members at all the shelters were counted as .5 staff members.

**Agency Response:** In response to the related findings, DOH stated: “The Department disagrees with the report’s main findings: that animals are not sheltered under humane conditions and often receive poor veterinary care. These findings are contrary to observations by DOH Veterinarians and Sanitarians. DOH has been closely monitoring the operations of CACC, the contractor that provides services to the City under contract, since its inception, January 1, 1995. From that date through April 2002, DOH has closely monitored CACC’s contract performance and conducted over 1,200 inspections of CACC facilities. During these inspections, DOH did not observe evidence of inhumane treatment or substandard veterinary care cited in your audit. Although the audit notes on pages [11] and [12] that differences in review methodologies may have yielded different results, the training and experience of the DOH staff who conducted these inspections provide us with a high degree of assurance that the animals in CACC’s charge are appropriately cared for. While DOH did not see evidence of such deficiencies, the Department is nonetheless concerned by the audit’s findings.”

DOH argued further that:

“During the audit period from January 1, 1999 through June 30, 2001, DOH conducted over 531 inspections of CACC facilities. Copies of these inspection reports were provided to the Comptroller’s Office at the March 4, 2002 meeting. . . . These inspections included frequent unannounced visits that investigated the physical plant, ward conditions, humane treatment, rabies observation of biting animals, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, record keeping and other activities that affect shelter operations. During site visits, DOH Veterinarians inspected all caged animals and reviewed medical records.

“Based on the observations by DOH Veterinarians and Sanitarians during these inspections, we disagree with the findings of poor veterinary care and inhumane treatment reported in the audit. Specifically, DOH did not observe any cases of poor veterinary care, contagious animals being caged in general wards with healthy animals or inhumane treatment during 531 inspections conducted by DOH Veterinarians and other staff during the audit period. The auditors may have drawn other conclusions about the handling of contagious animals based on a misunderstanding of how cage cards are used by CACC. In addition, we also monitor animal bite cases and found no instances where these animals were accidentally euthanized.”

**Auditors’ Comments:** The intent of this audit was to review CACC’s compliance with its contract’s requirements, not DOH’s monitoring of CACC. That is why only a cursory review was made of the 531 inspection reports that DOH provided, and why that review concluded (as stated in the “Notes to Exit Conference” section of this report) that there was no apparent inconsistency between DOH’s inspection results and ours, mostly because of apparent differences in the inspection methodology. However, in its response, DOH uses those reports as the foundation for its disagreement with our findings regarding inhumane conditions, and we therefore conducted a more thorough analysis of those DOH reports in order to evaluate the validity of DOH’s argument. The results of our analysis lead us to conclude that if those inspection reports are truly reflective of

DOH's monitoring of CACC, then DOH's monitoring process has significant weaknesses as discussed further below.

- **No Criteria For Inspection Ratings:** When DOH officials first argued at the audit exit conference that its own inspection reports showed a different picture of shelter conditions than ours, we asked them what criteria their staff use when they conduct inspections and enter “yes” or “no” ratings on the inspection sheets. DOH officials could not provide any specifics on what would lead their staff to answer “yes” or “no” to each of the questions on the inspection reports, and stated that they do not have written criteria or standards for use by the DOH Veterinarians and Sanitarians when they perform such inspections. It is therefore clear that the DOH inspection reports must be subjective in nature and may not be a reliable source to illustrate shelter conditions. (See Appendix III for a sample inspection report.)
- **Inspection Reports Indicate Near Perfect Performance:** Each of the 531 inspection sheets that DOH gave us contains 13 rating categories (e.g., “Floors,” “Washrooms,” “Wards,” and “Infirmary”) and those categories include a total of 37 “yes/no” questions (e.g., “Cages washable and clean” in the “Wards” category), for a total of 19,647 questions on the 531 reports. Of those 19,647 total questions, 18,216 had an accompanying “yes/no” entry (some were left blank), and of those 18,216 with an entry, 17,855, i.e., 98 percent, were answered “yes,” indicating a near perfect performance.

Of even greater interest were the answers to the seven questions in the “Wards” category and the two questions in the “Operations” category, questions that most are similar to the areas tested by the auditors. These questions included: “Cages not overcrowded”; “Cages washable and clean”; “Cages intact”; “Animals in appropriate cages”; “Clean, appropriately filled cat litter pans provided”; “Temperature appropriate”; “Ventilation adequate”; “Veterinary protocols adhered to”; “Food protocols adhered to.” Of the 3,717 questions in the “Wards” category, 3,536 had an accompanying “yes/no” entry, and of those 3,536 with an entry, 3,528, i.e., 99.8 percent, were answered “yes,” indicating a close-to-perfect rating. Equally astonishing is that 100 percent of the 907 questions with entries in the “Operations” category were all answered with a “yes”, indicating a perfect rating.

What makes such inspection report results even more dubious, however, is the context in which they were derived. On the one hand, the audit determined that CACC's performance was deficient in many areas, and DOH agreed, stating that “DOH monitoring has found deficiencies in CACC's adoption process, customer service, volunteer program and education and outreach efforts.” On the other hand, DOH argues that such an organization, that is widely known to be under-funded and under-staffed, that does poorly in terms of recruiting volunteers, that needs to improve customer relations and fund raising, and whose adoption efforts need improvement, otherwise performs perfectly in terms of treating animals humanely and providing appropriate veterinary care. We are not convinced.

- **Other Obvious Flaws in the Inspection Reports:** When reviewing the 531 reports provided by DOH, we noted that 932 of the 19,647 questions were not answered at all and were left blank: specifically, in the “Wards” category, 181 questions were not answered, and in the “Operations” category, 121 questions were not answered. This indicates that these areas were not evaluated during the inspections. In addition, the DOH inspector did not sign 39 of the 531 inspection reports, and the reviewer did not sign 31 of the 531 inspection reports.
- **Likely Advance Announcements of Inspections:** One of the most disturbing outcomes of our review of DOH’s inspection reports, and one that casts even more doubt upon their validity, is the fact that some of the former CACC employees we were able to contact during this review stated that they knew of the DOH inspections ahead of time and took special steps to prepare for them.

We were able to contact four of the former employees we identified through CACC personnel files (these people stopped working for CACC between December 2000 and June 2001) and five of the former employees who either contacted us or whom we contacted as part of the background research for this audit, to ask them whether they knew of inspections in advance. Three of these nine former employees stated that they knew when inspections were soon to occur. One stated: “When we were expecting inspectors, we stepped it up a little—did a little more than normal in terms of cleaning up the kennels, washing down the halls, disinfecting, etc. . . . The manager would make it aware to me that inspectors were coming. I would have to inform all kennel staff, and there were times when I would ask additional staff to stay on or come in.” He went on to state: “There were also surprise inspections, which we were notified about on the morning of. With these we had to run around to do everything, make calls to get additional people in, do everything in a hurry.”

The second person stated that, in addition to the fact that the shelter staff knew of and prepared for inspections ahead of time, once the inspector arrived, “He would go to the manager’s office first for an hour or so, and the foreman would go around to make sure that everything was ready.”

The third person recalled a few inspections that the shelter staff knew about beforehand. She stated that the staff were instructed to “pull it together,” and that on the day of the inspection, management scheduled more people to be at work to take care of the kennel areas.

In summary, we believe that the evidence of animal mistreatment that we found during the course of this audit supports our conclusion that inhumane conditions existed, in circumstances we describe, at CACC’s shelters. We do not believe that the evidence that DOH provided to refute our findings is credible. This audit supports its finding of inhumane treatment on real documents found at CACC itself, and cites instances of inhumane animal treatment, accidental euthanasia and substandard veterinary care based upon CACC’s own documents. We found such documents in the personnel files maintained at CACC’s administrative office and in the disciplinary action notices, notes-to-files, and managers’ logbooks kept at the shelters. As

mentioned in the “Audit Limitations” section of this report, we had only limited access to these documents; therefore, it is very likely that there are more instances that we could not uncover. In its response, DOH stated that it “does not agree with the findings of inhumane treatment and substandard veterinary care,” but never addresses the hard evidence we provide in the audit.

## **Recommendations**

13. While additional funding will most likely be impossible to obtain in the near future, given New York City’s financial situation after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on the World Trade Center, we recommend that, if it ever becomes possible, DOH consider amending CACC’s contract to fund the hiring of additional veterinarians and veterinary technicians. (The need to increase kennel staff was addressed in Recommendation 1.) DOH and CACC should consult other shelters and organizations such as the Humane Society of the United States, to determine appropriate veterinary staffing levels at CACC shelters. Required veterinary staffing levels should then be specified in the terms of CACC’s contract and provided for in the contract budget.

**Note:** As discussed later in this report, increasing staff through additional City funding is not the only way CACC can improve its services. For example, CACC should conduct fundraising to raise money to hire additional veterinary staff. This issue is discussed in detail later in the report.

**Agency Response:** “DOH agrees with the recommendations to consider hiring additional kennel attendants and veterinary staff if additional funding becomes available. However, DOH and CACC are focusing on ways to improve services without additional DOH funding, i.e. developing a closer working relationship with the animal care community and developing strategies to better utilize current resources and increase funds raised from private entities. With increased funding from private sources, one of the potential uses will be to hire additional kennel staff for improved animal care services.”

We recommend that CACC:

14. Ensure that staff veterinarians provide adequate supervision of veterinary technicians.
15. Ensure that there is an adequate number of medical staff at all times to address the medical needs of animals.
16. Quickly terminate any veterinary staff members who are found to be unqualified or who consistently provide poor care.
17. Investigate ways to attract more qualified veterinarians and veterinary technicians.

18. Evaluate the performance of all veterinary technicians and determine whether there is an advantage to employing licensed technicians (e.g., to perform more of the necessary medical functions and generally provide better care). If there seems to be an advantage, CACC should consider hiring only licensed veterinary technicians in the future.
19. Implement a process to monitor and evaluate the performance of contracted veterinary clinics.

***Auditors' Comments:*** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC's Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC's response to each of this audit's recommendations.

## **CACC Has Not Made Aggressive Efforts to Increase Adoptions**

Less than one quarter of the animals that come into CACC shelters are adopted, and over the last few years, CACC has done little to improve the adoption rate. Some of the reasons for the low percentage of adoptions are: limited public awareness of CACC and its adoption services and the lack of aggressive efforts by CACC to increase public awareness; the inadequate use of off-site adoptions; inadequate efforts to ensure that the adoption process is encouraging to all customers; CACC's discouragement of some of the rescue groups that take animals from its shelters; the apparent inappropriate limitation of the pool of animals available for adoption; and a lack of adoption services at CACC's Queens and Bronx facilities. The following sections describe these findings in greater detail.

### **Recent Adoption Statistics**

According to CACC's Monthly Animal Activity Reports, during calendar year 2000, 14,270 (23.4%) of the 60,877 animals that came into CACC shelters were adopted.<sup>23</sup> Of those 14,270, 5,276 (8.7% of total intake) were adopted directly by customers, and 8,994 (14.8% of total intake) were taken by rescue groups. Of the remaining 46,607, 41,203 (67.7% of total intake) were euthanized, 677 (1.1% of total intake) were owned animals reclaimed by their owners, and 722 (1.2% of total intake) were still in the shelters at the end of the year.<sup>24</sup> (Note: We did not test these numbers as part of this audit.)

A review of recent CACC animal statistics shows that CACC has made no improvement in increasing the number of homeless animals that are adopted. The following two tables compare data from CACC's Monthly Animal Activity Reports: Table I compares data for calendar years 1999 and 2000, and Table II compares data for the first six months of 1999, 2000, and 2001.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> CACC is required by its contract to submit Monthly Animal Activity Reports to the Department of Health.

<sup>24</sup> The remaining 4,005 animals include categories such as: animals released to freedom (e.g., pigeons) and animals dead-on-arrival.

<sup>25</sup> The earliest year for which we have comparable data is 1999, because CACC modified the format of its Monthly Animal Activity Reports as of January 1999, and data in the Chameleon system dates back only to January 1999. The number of animals adopted and euthanized do not add up to total intake, as there are several other possible outcomes for animals including: returned to owner, released to freedom, and still remaining in shelter at the end of the year.

**TABLE I**  
**CACC Animal Statistics—Calendar Years 1999 and 2000**

	<b>Calendar Year 1999</b>	<b>Calendar Year 2000</b>
<b>Total Intake</b>	61,665	60,877
<b>Direct Adoptions- #</b> (% of total intake)	5,411 (8.8%)	5,276 (8.7%)
<b>Rescue Adoptions- #</b> (% of total intake)	8,643 (14%)	8,994 (14.8%)
<b>Total Adoptions- #</b> (% of total intake)	14,054 (22.8%)	14,270 (23.4%)
<b>Euthanasias- #</b> (% of total intake)	39,810 (64.6%)	41,203 (67.7%)

**TABLE II**  
**CACC Animal Statistics—First Six Months 1999, 2000, and 2001**

	<b>Jan-Jun 1999</b>	<b>Jan-Jun 2000</b>	<b>Jan-Jun 2001</b>
<b>Total Intake</b>	25,079	30,903	28,673
<b>Direct Adoptions- #</b> (% of total intake)	2,630 (10.5%)	2,544 (8.2%)	2,878 (10%)
<b>Rescue Adoptions- #</b> (% of total intake)	3,436 (13.7%)	5,575 (18%)	3,697 (12.9%)
<b>Total Adoptions- #</b> (% of total intake)	6,066 (24.2%)	8,119 (26.3%)	6,575 (22.9%)
<b>Euthanasias- #</b> (% of total intake)	14,693 (58.6%)	19,543 (63.2%)	19,286 (67.3%)

As the tables above show, over the past three years, the number of animals leaving the shelters through adoptions has remained fairly constant, at a level representing approximately one quarter of total intake. Although the number of animals taken out by rescue groups increased during the first six months of 2000, it seems to have dropped back down after that. (Possible reasons for decreased adoptions by rescue groups are discussed in a subsequent section of the report.)

Just as the total adoption numbers have not improved, the number of animals being euthanized has remained relatively constant. Given the low adoption numbers, CACC inevitably has to euthanize many animals simply due to a lack of space. According to CACC's written procedures, each shelter must ensure that, at the beginning of each day, a specific number of cages are empty and available for arriving animals. Apparently these capacity requirements

necessitate the continuous emptying of occupied cages, and lists of animals to be euthanized are prepared once or twice daily.

Obviously, CACC should seek to increase adoptions, both in order to achieve that aspect of its mission, and to reduce the number of animals that are euthanized. Some of the likely reasons for the currently low level of adoptions and the lack of improvement in adoption numbers are discussed below, along with recommendations for increasing adoptions.

***Agency Response:*** “The Department generally agrees with the report’s finding that CACC has not been as successful as hoped in the area of increasing adoptions. DOH is working with the CACC to streamline and improve adoption procedures and has begun discussions with the animal care community, of which CACC is a part, to explore potential partnerships that will maximize animal care efforts and reduce demand for animal control services.”

### **Limited Public Awareness of CACC and Inadequate Efforts to Increase Public Awareness**

The public is generally not aware of CACC and what it does. We conducted a telephone survey of 254 randomly selected residents from all five boroughs of New York City, to see how many were aware of CACC’s existence and its services. (See Appendix II for the survey form we used.) We found that few residents were aware of CACC’s existence, and even fewer know it is a place from which to adopt animals.

We asked the 254 residents in our survey whether they had ever heard of the Center for Animal Care and Control. Of the 254 people surveyed, 70 (28%) answered “yes,” and 180 (71%) answered “no”; four people (2%) did not respond to the question. Moreover, of the 70 people who answered that they had heard of CACC, only 15 (6% of the 254 surveyed) were able to identify the location of a CACC shelter.<sup>26</sup> Forty-six were not able to identify a shelter location or gave a non-existent location, and nine did not respond to this question.

The residents we surveyed were also asked to name three places where they could adopt a dog or cat. (They were asked this question before they were asked whether they had heard of the Center for Animal Care and Control.) Of the 254 residents, 142 (56%) were able to name at least one place. The most commonly named places were: the ASPCA, mentioned by 90 (35%) of those surveyed; North Shore Animal League, mentioned by 77 (30%) of those surveyed; and Bide-A-Wee, mentioned by 40 (16%) of the respondents. Only five (2%) of the residents surveyed mentioned CACC. Just two of these five people actually gave the name, “Center for Animal Care and Control”; the other three people were able only to identify CACC as the “shelter on . . .” and named the street where the local CACC facility is located.

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<sup>26</sup> Of the 15 people who identified the location of a CACC shelter, four correctly named the street the shelter is on, one described the general area, and 10 simply stated that they were aware of a CACC shelter in a particular borough.

Our survey identified 61 potential adopters—people who answered “yes” to the question, “Have you ever considered adopting a/another dog or cat?” When we asked these 61 potential adopters, “Where would you go if you wanted to adopt a/another dog or cat?” not one of them named CACC. Similarly, of the 72 pet owners identified by our survey, only one named CACC in response to this question. (There is some overlap between the populations of pet owners and potential adopters.)

In addition, of the 72 pet owners identified, only three named CACC when asked, “If you lost a dog or cat, where would you go?”

Our survey results indicate that very few New Yorkers are aware of CACC and the services it provides, and even fewer see CACC as a place to go to adopt a pet.

### **Limited Outreach, Marketing, and Public Education**

The public’s limited awareness of CACC is caused at least in part by the fact that CACC does not conduct sufficient outreach, marketing, and public education. This is evident from a review of CACC’s efforts and a comparison to other shelters’ efforts in these areas.

CACC’s contract with DOH states that,

“[CACC] shall promote adoption as a means of placing animals,” and that,

“[CACC] shall conduct education and community outreach concerning animal control and public health issues related thereto.”

Furthermore, the HSUS states in its *Management Information Service Report*, in an article entitled “Local Animal Control Management,” that one of the criteria for operating an effective animal care and control program is having an

“effective public education program . . . . The success of every other aspect of animal control—from licensing to leash laws to sterilization programs—depends on the cooperation of an informed public.”

Obviously, CACC needs public education and outreach programs, both to provide the educational services required by its contract and simultaneously to increase the public’s awareness of its adoption and other services. CACC also should specifically market its adoption services if the organization is to increase adoptions. As is evidenced by the results of our survey, CACC’s public education, outreach, and marketing efforts need improvement, since the organization currently does not do enough to make New Yorkers aware of its services or the fact that CACC is a source of adoptable animals.

The following is a summary of the efforts that CACC does make in the areas of outreach, public education, and marketing for adoptions.

CACC conducts community outreach, public education, and marketing of its adoption services through special events. In 1999, CACC either sponsored or participated in 15 special events, five of which featured adoptions (four were off-site adoption events, and one was an on-site “Adopt-a-Thon”). In 2000, CACC sponsored or participated in a total of 23 special events, four of which featured off-site adoptions. CACC's special events have included: one-day clinics offering free microchipping of New Yorkers’ pets;<sup>27</sup> participation in dog walks (one of which was sponsored by the American Cancer Society); participation in fairs and parades at which CACC has handed out literature; participation in off-site adoption events hosted by other organizations; and CACC off-site adoption events.

CACC advertises its adoption services on WLNY-TV (Channel 55), and on a Staten Island public television station; and, a Staten Island cable television station airs a weekly feature showing adoptable animals at the Staten Island shelter. CACC runs a classified advertisement under “pet adoptions” in *The New York Times*, and its animals are periodically featured on the pet pages of the *Daily News*, *New York Post*, and the *Staten Island Advance*. In addition, CACC ran a slideshow advertisement in six movie theatres during two months of calendar year 2000.

CACC also launched a new website in March 2001 ([www.nycacc.org](http://www.nycacc.org)). This website contains information on CACC’s shelters and services, as well as some educational information—information on New York City’s new Animal Shelters and Sterilization Act (spay/neuter law), microchipping and licensing animals, and safety precautions for pets. CACC’s website contains a link to the website, Petfinder (a nationwide, searchable database of pets), which includes listings of some of CACC’s adoptable animals. This is potentially a very useful tool for both enhancing CACC’s image and encouraging people to come to its shelters to adopt animals. However, as is shown below, CACC is not realizing the opportunities offered by these websites.

We linked to Petfinder (through CACC’s website) on five different days during July and August, 2001, and found that an average of 38 percent of the listings did not include photographs of the animals. The pictures that were shown on Petfinder were of low quality, and it was very difficult to see what the animals looked like—in a couple of cases it was impossible even to tell whether the animal pictured was a cat or a dog. The photographs were too dark or blurry, the animals were too far from the lens (appeared very small), the animals were not facing the camera, etc. Many of the photographs of cats were taken of the cats sitting in cages. In addition, the only information included with the listings was: animal type (dog or cat); sex; breed; age (baby or adult); a brief description of the animal’s appearance; and the fact that the animal was up-to-date with its shots.

In contrast, most other New York State shelters with listings on Petfinder included higher quality photographs for virtually all of their animals. The other shelters’ pictures were much clearer, and were mostly close-ups; it was quite easy to tell what the animals looked like. The other shelters’ listings also usually included at least a short description of the animal’s

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<sup>27</sup> Microchipping involves the injection of a tiny microchip containing an identifying code under an animal’s skin at the scruff of the neck.

temperament or history, or a “statement” from the animal. Some of the listings included a lengthy description of the animal, its history, and the type of adoptive home that would be appropriate.

By not including descriptions and attractive pictures of its animals on Petfinder, CACC is losing out on an opportunity to persuade potential adopters to visit its shelters. In fact, when viewed together with other shelters’ listings, CACC’s listings may produce a negative perception of CACC and its animals and may actually encourage people to go elsewhere to adopt a pet.

A review of the outreach, public education, and marketing efforts made by other shelters across the country also shows that CACC could be more proactive in educating the public, informing the public of its services, and promoting the adoption of animals from its shelters. We conducted a telephone survey of 13 animal shelters throughout the country—eight of which are municipal shelters and five of which operate under city contracts. As part of this survey, we inquired about the shelters’ outreach, public education, and marketing efforts. While a few shelters do not surpass CACC’s efforts, most of the shelters we surveyed are far more active and innovative than CACC and employ methods that CACC should emulate.

Most of the shelters surveyed conduct outreach and public education through presentations at schools, health fairs, nursing homes, camps, public meetings, community groups, or at other venues. For example, BARC, the animal shelter in Houston, Texas, is very involved in community education and has two staff members dedicated to that purpose. BARC gives presentations at schools and health fairs, meets with civic groups, offers education programs for other agencies, and provides training programs for animal control officers. The Michigan Humane Society has a humane educator on staff who visits 450 schools every year to make presentations. In addition, the Michigan Humane Society holds presentations at its shelter for Girl Scouts, and at day care centers, civic organizations, senior centers, and other organized groups. Chicago Animal Care and Control is getting the word out in schools in another way: it recently initiated a letter-writing campaign to art teachers, asking students to draw pictures of dogs and cats to be displayed at its shelter.

Many of the shelters surveyed also advertise their adoption services more aggressively than does CACC. For example, the Michigan Humane Society has developed good working relationships with several Southeast Michigan newspapers, radio stations, and TV stations, and depends greatly upon the free advertising and publicity it receives from them. It also markets itself through press releases, public service announcements, and special events. Furthermore, it receives media attention for its investigations of cruelty to animals and its rescue department, and is often called by the media for information regarding animal news stories. To promote its animals for adoption, the Michigan Humane Society runs photographs and biographies of approximately 15 pets per week in eight area publications. In addition, it holds an annual five-hour telethon.

The Humane Society of Boulder Valley finds that the most effective marketing tool is its website, where it posts pictures of adoptable animals. In addition to the website, the society markets itself and its animals by taking adoptable animals to local businesses in its mobile adoption vehicle five days a week. It participates in an adoption program that features its

animals at a local store, and distributes posters picturing animals up for adoption for display in local stores. It also brings adoptable dogs to local fairs and farmer's markets. When it takes its dogs for day-long hikes through the parks, the dogs wear coats that identify them as available for adoption at the Humane Society of Boulder Valley.

In addition to advertising on the local television station and in the local newspaper, Berkeley Animal Services posts an advertisement as a screen saver in local theatres, and the Los Angeles City Department of Animal Services features its animals on TV shows, including the game show, "The Price Is Right."

While CACC does make some efforts at outreach, public education, and marketing similar to those of the other shelters in our survey, most of the efforts described above represent either additional tools or more aggressive approaches CACC could use to promote adoptions from its shelters. Some of them require additional funding. However some, such as free advertising and publicity from local media outlets, and cooperation with local businesses to promote adoptions, simply require more aggressive efforts on the part of CACC staff and a more open relationship between CACC, the public, and the local media.

The fact that CACC does not conduct adequate public outreach and education, or market its adoption services aggressively, prevents it from achieving one of its major goals, "securing caring homes for animals." If people are unaware of CACC and its services, CACC's adoption rates will never increase, its shelters will continue to be overcrowded, and it will, inevitably, continue to use euthanasia as an animal population control tool.

**Agency Response:** "With the contract period beginning July 1, 2001, DOH expanded its on-site monitoring to include a comprehensive review of all contractual requirements. DOH monitoring has found deficiencies in CACC's adoption process, customer service, volunteer program and education and outreach efforts. . . . DOH has met with CACC to begin implementation of a corrective action plan for the deficiencies found during the site visits . . .

"Effective September 2000, CACC began reporting its public education field staff activities to DOH in a monthly activity report. During the period between September 2000 and June 2001, CACC field services staff conducted 4,624 public education contacts. We are working with CACC to develop partnerships with other city agencies as well as private entities with an interest in animal care issues to increase educational and outreach opportunities."

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that CACC:

20. Ensure that the photographs posted by CACC on Petfinder are clear and attractive.

21. Increase CACC's outreach, public education, and advertising efforts. CACC should speak to other shelters to obtain ideas, and pursue relationships with local media outlets and enter into partnerships with private companies willing to sponsor special events or advertising campaigns.
22. Interact with local animal welfare organizations and enlist their aid in promoting CACC and its adoption services.

**Auditors' Comments:** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC's Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC's response to each of this audit's recommendations.

### **CACC Has Made Inadequate Use of Off-Site Adoptions**

CACC has failed to aggressively promote animal adoptions through adoption events and the use of off-site adoption locations. Since few New Yorkers are aware of CACC, and the shelters are located in areas that do not attract much foot traffic, adoption events and off-site adoption locations should be more effectively used to increase adoptions of the animals in CACC shelters.

CACC's contract with DOH states that CACC:

“shall provide adoption services at the shelters and receiving facilities and shall promote adoption as a means of placing animals . . . [CACC] shall make every reasonable effort to place animals for adoption and shall euthanize animals only when required as a last resort.”

However, CACC has participated in only a small number of off-site adoption events. According to CACC officials, the organization participated in four off-site adoption events during each of 1999 and 2000. Events included Adopt-a-Rama (an adoption event held at Madison Square Garden), Cat Show (a two-day event also held at Madison Square Garden), Broadway Barks (a benefit supporting New York shelters), and off-site adoptions at a Manhattan boutique.

So far this year (as of December 2001) CACC has participated in only one off-site adoption event. In addition, although CACC did participate in Broadway Barks again this year, CACC officials stated that they decided not to bring any adoptable animals to the event this year and instead, to promote their website.

CACC also has a very limited off-site adoption program. CACC animals are shown for adoption at only two off-site locations—two veterinary offices. There were a total of 125 animals adopted from these locations between January and June 2001, indicating the potential benefits of expanding the off-site adoptions program.

Some other area animal shelter organizations use off-site adoptions to a much greater extent, demonstrating that it is a viable option for CACC. Currently, North Shore Animal League offers off-site adoptions virtually every day at various locations, including many New York City locations, such as, Petland Discounts, Petsmart and Petco stores throughout the City; the Queens Center Mall; South Street Seaport; and Chelsea Piers. Mighty Mutts, a New York City animal rescue group shows its animals for adoption every weekend in Union Square in Manhattan.

CACC's lack of commitment to capitalizing upon these kinds of opportunities is shown not only by the small number of adoption events and off-site adoption locations, but also by the fact that it does not consistently and accurately track the success of the adoption events in which it does participate.

CACC was unable to provide complete data for its off-site adoption events. It is impossible to produce a report from the Chameleon system that summarizes the results of past adoption events, since animals adopted at off-site events are not specifically designated as such in Chameleon. Even the director of adoptions and volunteer services does not have all of the off-site adoption data. Although she informed us that she prepares memos that include the number of animals adopted at each off-site event, when we met with her, she was unable to produce memos for any of the four off-site adoption events that took place during 1999. In fact, she stated that she would try to obtain the numbers of animals adopted at one of the events from FIDONYC, the non-profit organization that sponsored that event.

In addition, discrepancies in CACC's records call into question the accuracy of the numbers in the memos that were prepared. For two of the four off-site adoption events that took place during 2000, there are discrepancies between the memos and the "Offsite Adoptions Daily Sheets" prepared by the volunteers working at the events. The discrepancies are as follows. According to the memo prepared for an event called Adopt-a-Rama, 14 animals were adopted and 14 animals were rescued at the event; however, according to the Offsite Adoptions Daily Sheet, 14 animals were adopted and four animals were rescued. According to the memo prepared for a two-day cat show, four animals were adopted and four animals were rescued on the second day of the show; however, according to the Offsite Adoptions Daily Sheet for the second day of the event, four animals were adopted and three animals were rescued.

CACC has also failed to consistently and accurately record the number of hours that its volunteers work at adoption events, further hampering its ability to plan future events. Based on year-end memos prepared by the director of adoptions and volunteer services and sent to the CACC controller, there appears to have been a decrease between 1999 and 2000 in the number of hours that volunteers worked at adoption events—from 2,781 to 2,071 hours. However, in a March 12, 2001, memo to the controller regarding volunteer hours for calendar year 2000, the director of adoptions and volunteers stated,

"I don't feel this is a true representation of the volunteer hours since I believe strongly that the volunteer activity picked up at the shelters in 2000 however I believe the record keeping was not as strong." [sic]

CACC management could increase adoptions both by coming up with innovative ideas and by taking full advantage of existing opportunities. As part of an effort to increase adoptions, it should thoroughly oversee its off-site adoption events. This would include keeping track of the number of animals adopted at each off-site event to determine which events are most successful and which should be repeated or expanded. Since even the individual at CACC with primary responsibility for increasing adoptions does not maintain consistent and reliable records of adoption events and the extent to which volunteers contribute to their success, it is clear that CACC is not using this information to plan and take full advantage of off-site adoption events in the future.

CACC should make a stronger commitment to using off-site adoption events and off-site adoption locations. Off-site adoptions can increase adoption rates directly by making animals readily available to the public, and can increase adoptions indirectly by increasing a shelter's exposure and enhancing its image.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that CACC:

23. Increase participation in adoption events.
24. Expand its off-site adoption program. CACC should consider showing animals for adoption at additional veterinary clinics and in pet supply stores, among other locations. CACC should also consider working with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to create pet adoption spaces where CACC animals can be shown at suitable times, such as spring, summer and fall weekends.
25. Improve its controls over record keeping for adoption events to ensure the accurate documentation of the animals adopted at each event and the number of hours that volunteers worked at each event. CACC should use this information in planning future adoption events.
26. Specifically designate those animals adopted at adoption events in the Chameleon system.

**Auditors' Comments:** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC's Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC's response to each of this audit's recommendations.

**Lack of a Formal Customer Service  
Quality Assurance Program May Prevent  
CACC From Ensuring That its Adoption Process  
Is Encouraging to All Customers**

CACC can improve upon its efforts to ensure that its adoption process is encouraging to all potential adopters. This is evidenced by the mixed results from our customer survey, and by the fact that CACC has not developed a customer service quality assurance program, as required by its contract with DOH.

It is important that CACC make the adoption process easy and pleasant in order to ensure that potential adopters who come to the shelters and who meet the minimum criteria to adopt do so, and that these people recommend adopting from CACC to others. However, we found that although 50 percent of the customers who adopted animals from CACC made positive comments about CACC's services, 43 percent of the adopters complained about CACC's services, indicating that CACC has not done enough to ensure that the experience of adopting a pet from CACC is a positive one.<sup>28</sup>

Of the 28 adopters included in our customer survey, 14 (50%) made positive comments about CACC, most of which commended CACC staff for being polite, courteous, pleasant, helpful and professional.<sup>29</sup> Twenty-one (75%) of the 28 adopters stated that if they wanted another pet, they would choose to adopt from CACC, and another two (7%) stated that they would "probably" adopt from CACC. Twenty-seven (96%) of the 28 adopters stated that they would recommend CACC to a friend, with three confirming that they had already done so. The 28 adopters gave CACC an average rating of 8.0 out of 10 for overall service provided. These results point out that a significant number of people have been happy with CACC's adoption services and may help increase awareness of CACC's adoption and other services through word of mouth. However, as the findings below demonstrate, CACC should do more to ensure that all potential adopters have positive experiences.

Of the 28 adopters we interviewed, 12 (43%) had complaints about CACC. Eight (29%) complained about the way in which they were treated by CACC staff; the gist of their complaints was that staff were unpleasant, nasty, unprofessional, or simply unhelpful while the customers were attempting to adopt animals. One person even stated that she had ended up adopting her second dog from a different shelter because CACC staff was so unpleasant to deal with—and that she would recommend that shelter to others. Five (18%) of the adopters complained about animal related services. Specifically, three (11%) criticized the quality of CACC's veterinary care; one complained about the lack of veterinary services at the Brooklyn shelter; and two stated that their dogs had been misevaluated. One person stated that his dog's paperwork indicated that

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<sup>28</sup> There is some overlap between the group of adopters who made positive comments about CACC and the group who made complaints—8 adopters made only positive comments, six adopters made only complaints, and six made both. (Eight adopters made neither noteworthy positive comments nor complaints.)

<sup>29</sup> As described earlier, we conducted a telephone survey of 33 customers who dealt with CACC between January and March 2001. Of these 33 customers, 28 adopted animals from CACC. The other five reclaimed animals from CACC.

it was a male puppy, but when he got home, he noticed that it was a female. The other person stated that CACC officials told her that her dog was a pitbull, but when her veterinarian examined the dog, she was told that her dog was actually half Labrador and half retriever. In addition, one (4%) of the adopters complained that CACC does not obtain enough background information on the animals.

It is likely that one of the reasons CACC is having difficulty ensuring a consistently high level of customer service is that the organization has not developed a customer service quality assurance program, as required by its contract with DOH, which states,

“[CACC] shall develop, with the approval of [DOH], a customer service quality assurance program which monitors customer satisfaction with services provided by [CACC] and the quality of these services.”

CACC needs to develop such a program in order to identify areas of customer service that need improvement, to ensure that customer service is consistently professional and courteous, and to ensure that the adoption application process does not discourage potential adopters. These are critical first steps in improving CACC’s public image and increasing adoptions.

**Agency Response:** “The Department generally agrees with the report’s finding that CACC has not been as successful as hoped in the area of increasing adoptions. DOH is working with the CACC to streamline and improve adoption procedures and has begun discussions with the animal care community, of which CACC is a part, to explore potential partnerships that will maximize animal care efforts and reduce demand for animal control services.

“With the contract period beginning July 1, 2001, DOH expanded its on-site monitoring to include a comprehensive review of all contractual requirements. DOH monitoring has found deficiencies in CACC’s adoption process, customer service, volunteer program and education and outreach efforts. . . . DOH has met with CACC to begin implementation of a corrective action plan for the deficiencies found during the site visits . . .

“As a result of deficiencies in CACC’s customer service program observed during our contract monitoring process, DOH has worked with the CACC over the past several months to improve its customer service program. CACC currently makes random telephone calls to field and shelter customers to evaluate customer satisfaction. Recently they have developed a post card survey that will be mailed to customers to follow-up on their experiences with CACC services. In addition, CACC is training shelter managers and other staff in improved customer service skills. This training is ongoing and will be part of new CACC staff orientation.”

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that CACC:

27. Develop a formal customer service quality assurance program as required by the contract with DOH.
28. Provide service representatives with additional, and continuous, training in customer service.

**Auditors' Comments:** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC's Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC's response to each of this audit's recommendations.

## **CACC Has Discouraged Some Rescue Groups**

Rescue groups are the lifeline for most of the animals at CACC, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of CACC's animal adoptions are actually transfers to rescue groups. According to CACC reports, in the year 2000, these "Special Adoptions" represented 63 percent (8,994) of CACC's total adoptions. If it were not for the role of these rescue groups, many more animals would be euthanized at CACC. However, our survey of 59 rescuers revealed that many of them have been discouraged by their interactions with CACC, and some even indicated that CACC's actions have limited their ability to take animals out of the shelters. Again, this provides evidence that CACC is not fully utilizing all of the resources available to it to increase adoptions and decrease euthanasia of the animals in its shelters.

Although 20 (34%) of the 59 rescuers surveyed made positive comments regarding CACC, 36 (61%) complained about some aspect of the services provided by CACC. (Nine of the rescuers surveyed made neither noteworthy complaints nor positive comments regarding CACC's services.)<sup>30</sup> The 54 rescuers who rated CACC gave CACC an average rating of 6.8 out of 10 for service provided. The positive comments made by 20 rescuers were mainly centered on the helpfulness, professionalism, or dedication of the staff, or the fact that the animals seemed well cared for. The complaints made by 36 rescuers were centered on such topics as, poor customer service, poor treatment of animals, misvaluation of animals, poor job performance, unqualified staff, and management's lack of commitment to increasing adoptions.

Sixteen (27%) of the rescuers complained about poor customer service. Many of the rescuers cited the long wait for service, either when they are physically at the shelters or when they are telephoning to learn which animals are available for rescue. A common complaint was that CACC's representatives do not return phone calls. Rescuers stated that most of the times they have called they have received CACC's voice mail. Some stated that when they are eventually able to speak with someone, the CACC service representatives are rude, discourteous,

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<sup>30</sup> The numbers of rescuers who made complaints, positive comments, or neither add up to greater than the total number of rescuers surveyed because there is some overlap between the groups—six of the rescuers who made positive comments about CACC also voiced complaints.

and discourage people from adopting and rescuing animals. One rescuer stated that animals that could have been taken out of the shelters have been left there because of CACC staff's rude and unprofessional behavior.

Fourteen (24%) of the rescuers complained about unqualified staff or staff's poor job performance. Several rescuers complained that staff record inaccurate or incomplete information on the animals. Another common complaint was that CACC's staff are inexperienced or undertrained. One rescuer complained that the staff do not seem to be very knowledgeable about animal health and care, while another rescuer stated that the person who evaluates animals for temperament does not have enough experience.

Seventeen (29%) of the rescuers complained about animal mistreatment in the shelters (these complaints were described in earlier sections of the report), and five (8%) of the rescuers complained that CACC miscalculates animals.

In addition, four rescuers complained about CACC's new Placement Extension Team (PET) program. According to CACC officials, the purpose of the PET program is to ensure that all the rescue groups with which CACC works have the capabilities to properly care for the animals they take from CACC and to place them in good adoptive homes. In addition, through the PET program, CACC will learn enough about the groups and their capabilities to ensure that they are taking out the appropriate types of animals. To gather information about the rescue groups, the PET program requires that each group fill out a 12-page application and submit various documents if they are to continue taking animals from CACC.

The program is being implemented incrementally. In November 2000, CACC officials stated that they were beginning implementation of the program and would be mailing out applications to some of the rescue groups that they had worked with in the past. In July 2001, CACC officials stated that they had so far mailed out 55 applications, in two batches—a first batch of 30 applications, and a second batch of 25.<sup>31</sup> They said that they had completed their review of only three or four applications, as it is a very time intensive process, requiring telephone calls back and forth and repeated follow-up requests for information. CACC officials stated that they had not rejected any rescue groups to date and had not disturbed CACC's relationship with any of the rescue groups that had not yet received applications. They also stated that they plan to eventually send applications to every rescue group they work with.

However, some rescue groups have found the PET program discouraging. Two rescuers indicated that the PET program has made it more difficult for them to rescue animals, and one of these rescuers stated that she was no longer adopting from CACC because of the new program's application process. Two other rescue groups that requested PET applications had not received them yet (one was told that CACC is first sending applications to places that take a large number of animals.) These two rescue groups were apparently not informed of CACC's plans to eventually send applications to all rescue groups that have worked with CACC, and were upset that they might be excluded in the future.

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<sup>31</sup> According to CACC's documents, the organization worked with 265 rescue groups during calendar year 2000.

As described above, most rescue groups have not yet received the PET application. We do not know how many of the rescue groups in our survey received the application or are even aware of the program. Since we could not identify the population of rescue groups who are aware of the PET program, it was impossible to calculate the percentage of rescuers who have found the program discouraging.

In addition to the rescuers' complaints, it seems clear that the 12-page application and accompanying document request is both onerous and discouraging. As stated above, CACC officials admitted that the program involves a very lengthy application process. It certainly seems possible that, as the PET program is expanded, additional rescuers may raise complaints similar to those above, and may be discouraged from continuing to work with CACC.

Since rescue groups can and do save such a large number of animals, CACC should do everything it can to work cooperatively with these groups. Instead, CACC seems to be discouraging some rescuers through poor treatment and a new, onerous application process. In addition, there are some indications that CACC is not reaching out to some rescue groups as it has in the past. By not taking full advantage of the safety net that rescue groups offer, CACC may be causing some animals that could be placed in homes through rescue groups to be euthanized instead.

**Agency Response:** "The Department generally agrees with the report's finding that CACC has not been as successful as hoped in the area of increasing adoptions. DOH is working with the CACC to streamline and improve adoption procedures and has begun discussions with the animal care community, of which CACC is a part, to explore potential partnerships that will maximize animal care efforts and reduce demand for animal control services."

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that CACC:

29. Work more cooperatively with rescue groups interested in helping CACC place animals. CACC should ensure that all employees understand the importance of maintaining good working relationships with these groups, that they treat rescuers professionally and courteously, and that they return calls from rescuers in a timely fashion.
30. Make the PET application process less cumbersome and less paper intensive.
31. Inform rescue groups by letter that: CACC is implementing the PET program incrementally; it plans to eventually provide PET applications to all rescue groups; and, it will not stop working with those rescue groups that have not yet received PET applications.

**Auditors' Comments:** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC's Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC's response to each of this audit's recommendations.

### **CACC Limits the Pool of Animals Available for Adoption**

In addition to discouraging some rescue groups and members of the public from taking animals out of its shelters, CACC seems to have inappropriately limited the pool of animals that are eligible for adoption, thereby guaranteeing the euthanasia of certain animals with potential for adoption by the general public or rescuers.

CACC employs a status system to designate the potential adoptability of each animal it takes in. According to CACC officials, each animal is evaluated by a veterinarian or veterinary technician as soon as possible after the animal enters a CACC shelter. The veterinarian or veterinary technician assigns the animal a number that reflects the status of the animal's health and potential adoptability. The animals also receive letter designations—"C" if the animal has a contagious medical condition, "NC" if the animal has a non-contagious medical condition, "G" if the animal is pregnant, "T" if the animal has temperament considerations, and "P" if it is a pitbull. The following are the five status levels:

- Status 1—The animal is in good health, has no apparent behavioral problems, and can be adopted.
- Status 2—The animal is almost a Status 1 (i.e., healthy), but has an easily correctable health problem, minor congenital defect, or scar; the animal will also be designated as either "C" or "NC." In addition, the animal does not have any apparent temperament considerations. (According to CACC officials, with the correction of any health problems, the animal can be adopted.)
- Status 3—The animal has a long-term health problem and requires special veterinary care. The animal will also receive either a "C" or "NC" designation. All potentially adoptable Status 3 animals that have temperament considerations will be designated a "T."
- Status 4—The animal has a transitional status due to temperament considerations. At the time of examination, the animal shows temperament problems that appear to make it unadoptable, but there is still a reasonable possibility that after a 24-hour acclimation period and a reevaluation, the animal will be found to be adoptable. According to CACC officials, a Status 4 animal cannot be moved up to an adoptable status without a reevaluation.
- Status 5—The animal is not adoptable because of its temperament or for medical reasons.

Since the status of the animals determines whether they are made available for adoption or euthanized, it is important not only to examine and treat animals as soon as possible after

intake, but also to evaluate and assign their status appropriately. In addition, since many animals may be nervous upon their arrival in a shelter, it is important to reevaluate any animals that have been given an initial Status of 4.

However, CACC's own policies show that CACC does not always reevaluate Status 4 animals. CACC's written status guidelines state that "reevaluation of these animals is limited by staff and space availability and a reevaluation cannot be guaranteed for all such animals." Given the staffing shortages discussed throughout this report, it seems unlikely that most Status 4 animals are reevaluated. In fact, CACC's executive director stated that not all are reevaluated.

By not upgrading animals' status despite improvements in their behavior CACC is depriving these animals of a potential chance of getting a home and may, instead, lead to needless euthanasia.

Several rescuers indicated that CACC may be further limiting the pool of adoptable animals by failing to assign an accurate status to animals. Five of the 59 rescuers surveyed complained about the misevaluation of animals—two of the five specifically stated that CACC's staff had evaluated friendly animals as aggressive in assigning their status.

One rescuer and one former employee indicated that CACC is limiting the pool of adoptable animals by prohibiting the release of older animals. The rescuer stated that CACC operates under the rule that no dogs over eight years of age are allowed to leave the shelters—even if rescue groups want them. According to the former employee, older animals are euthanized instead of being offered for adoption; he stated that he was told by the shelter's assistant manager that they have no place in the shelter for older cats.

Based upon the evidence described above, it seems that CACC's practices may inappropriately make many animals unavailable for adoption, even by rescue groups, many of which are specifically dedicated to helping those animals that need special care or are not considered highly "adoptable."

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that CACC:

32. Ensure that all animals initially given a "4" status are re-evaluated for temperament.
33. Cease the practice of limiting the adoption of older animals. CACC should work cooperatively with customers so they may adopt the animals most suited to their individual situations, and with rescue groups so that they can take as many animals as possible out of the shelters to be placed in adoptive homes.

**Auditors' Comments:** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC's Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC's response to each of this audit's recommendations.

### **CACC Does Not Consistently Use the Bronx and Queens Facilities for Adoptions**

During our visits to the Bronx and Queens receiving centers, we found that CACC does not consistently offer animals for adoption at these facilities. Given the need for CACC to increase adoptions and the low level of public awareness of CACC, it is important that CACC show and offer animals for adoption in as many locations as possible, including all of its own facilities.

According to its contract with DOH, CACC is to "provide adoption services at the shelters and receiving facilities."

However, during our three visits to the Bronx receiving center, and our two visits to the Queens receiving center, we only saw one dog that was offered for adoption. On one visit, a CACC official stated that no animals had been shown for adoption at these centers during the previous month.

According to CACC officials, because of short staffing, there has been a problem with transporting animals from the shelters to be shown for adoption in the receiving centers.

An official stated that the provision of adoption services at the Bronx and Queens facilities is impeded by the shelters' hours of operation. He explained that these receiving centers close at 4:00 p.m. People come to the centers after work, but they find that the office is closed.

Eventually, these problems will be rectified when CACC builds full-service shelters in the Bronx and Queens to comply with the new spay/neuter law. In the meantime, however, the fact that the centers are closed after 4:00 p.m., only offer adoption services from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and do not consistently show animals for adoption, decreases CACC's chances of drawing people in to adopt animals from its shelters.<sup>32</sup>

### **Recommendation**

We recommend that CACC:

34. Use its Bronx and Queens receiving centers to show adoptable animals until the opening of the planned full-service shelters in the Bronx and Queens.

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<sup>32</sup> As of April 16, 2002, there are no animal adoption services in the Bronx and Queens. The Bronx and Queens facilities were closed from mid-September, 2001 through April 2, 2002. On April 2, 2002, they opened to receive animals only two days a week.

**Auditors' Comments:** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC's Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC's response to each of this audit's recommendations.

## **Possible Causes of CACC's Shortcomings**

As discussed in the “Audit Limitations” section, we were not able to conduct as thorough an audit as we intended and were not able to determine definitively the causes of the various problems cited in this report. However, based upon the information we did gather, we were able to identify several probable sources of CACC’s major problems, as follows. CACC compounds any problems caused by under-funding by failing to aggressively raise funds on its own, and by failing to recruit and use sufficient numbers of volunteers. In addition, CACC’s leadership seems to have interpreted its mission in a fashion that is inconsistent with the organization’s mission statement and its contract with DOH.

### **CACC Does Not Make Sufficient Efforts to Supplement City Funds with Donations**

Because it relies almost entirely on City funding and raises very little money on its own, CACC may not have sufficient funds to obtain the staffing levels and other resources necessary to fully and properly carry out its responsibilities. Nearly the entire CACC budget is supplied by the City. This budget may not provide sufficient funds to operate an effective animal shelter system, but whether it does or not, CACC certainly has not supplemented its contract funds with any significant amounts of money from fundraising.

In 2000, New York City spent approximately \$1 per resident on animal control services.<sup>33</sup> This is an increase over the per capita spending of \$0.66 cited in the 1997 City Council report on CACC’s performance (*Dying for Homes: Animal Care and Control in New York City*), but is still below the recommendation of HSUS, which states that an “effective community animal control program costs at least \$3 per person per year.”

The City did recently provide CACC with additional funding, included as part of the fourth amendment to its contract with CACC. However, that additional money was to enable CACC to comply with the new spay/neuter law that went in effect in November 2000, which required CACC to spay or neuter all animals before releasing them. Thus, the money is to fund additional needed services.

Although CACC has stated that one cause of its problems is that the City does not provide sufficient funding to enable it to properly take care of the numerous animals that it receives daily, CACC has not exercised its own powers to redress underfunding. CACC’s Certificate of Incorporation gives it the power to conduct fundraising by soliciting “grants and contributions from the public or from other sources.” However, despite its need for money to supplement its City contract funds, and despite a specific recommendation from the City Council in its 1997 report that “CACC should design and implement a plan to raise funds from donors interested in improving the welfare of animals,” CACC has still accomplished little in the way of fundraising.

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<sup>33</sup> This calculation is based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s estimated New York City population (as of April 1, 2000) of 8,008,278 residents, and CACC’s contract budget of \$8,270,973 for January 1 – December 31, 2000.

According to CACC's CPA report, during calendar year 2000, CACC received \$206,117 in donations, the vast majority of which came from donations made by customers at the shelters (e.g., when adopters allow CACC to keep as a donation the \$25 spay/neuter deposit they pay when they adopt an animal too young or sick to be spayed or neutered at that time.) CACC has done very little to bring in additional donations. During our interviews, members of executive management acknowledged that little fundraising is being conducted. In fact, CACC's general counsel/deputy executive director stated that CACC has never held an event exclusively for fundraising and that the most it has done has been to place collection boxes on tables at events. He stated that this has so far brought in less than \$50.

CACC's director of external affairs stated that her primary role at CACC is currently to get private donations through direct mailings and through grant proposals to private companies and corporations. However, as of April of 2001, the director of external affairs stated that she had received no responses from the numerous corporations and companies she contacted. According to CACC's controller, the organization received \$11,065 in direct mail donations during 2000.

In contrast to the \$206,117 CACC raised during 2000, other shelters in the New York City area have raised significantly more. For example, during the same time period, North Shore Animal League received \$25,857,975 in donations, and Bide-A-Wee received \$4,173,749. (The ASPCA can not be directly compared to CACC, since it is a national humane organization with other functions in addition to running its shelter in New York City. However, since it is headquartered in New York City, and operates its only shelter here, it is worth noting that the ASPCA raised \$24,844,032 in donations during 2000.)<sup>34</sup>

Some of the shelters in other major cities across the country also raised significantly more in donations than CACC. For example, during 2000, the Pennsylvania SPCA raised \$2,223,940, the Michigan Humane Society raised \$5,147,052, and the Humane Society of Boulder Valley raised \$2,548,967.<sup>35</sup> (Like CACC, these three shelters operate under contracts with municipalities.)

The low level of private donations is probably due both to a lack of aggressive fundraising efforts on CACC's part and the lack of public awareness of CACC.

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<sup>34</sup> The amount of money these organizations received in donations was obtained by reviewing their IRS Form 990s for 2000. We were unable to obtain a copy of the Form 990 for the fourth area shelter—B.A.R.C.

<sup>35</sup> Of the 13 shelters we surveyed, eight provided us with any information on their 2000 fundraising. Three of these shelters are mentioned above; of the remaining five, four are municipal shelters, and one is a for-profit organization. According to officials at the three municipal shelters, Chicago Animal Care and Control is prohibited from soliciting donations and any donations received go to the city's Department of Revenue; Denver Municipal Animal Shelter also can not keep donations it receives—the donations go directly into the City's general fund; Berkeley Animal Services did not receive any donations during 2000; and the Los Angeles Department of Animal Services received \$31,824 in donations during 2000. The for-profit shelter, Dewey Animal Care Center, does not rely on donations.

Insufficient funds affect all CACC services. For instance, there are not enough veterinarians to care for the animals properly. There is not enough staff to keep the shelters clean and provide the animals with their basic needs, such as constant access to water and exercise. Employees are forced to work double-shifts when others are absent. The high animal-to-staff ratio, coupled with staff frequently working double-shifts, leads to tired workers, poor performance, and potential danger for workers when they are not alert and for animals that may be subject to worker frustration. In addition, the executive director admitted that CACC's low rate of pay (e.g., kennel staff start at \$8.50 an hour) prevents CACC from attracting the most qualified staff—undoubtedly a major contributor to the inadequate animal care described in this report.

CACC's senior managers have been less than energetic in pursuing new means of raising funding for CACC. Since it is uncertain whether the City will consider providing more funding for animal care and control in the future, CACC has a responsibility and should demonstrate its commitment to providing the best animal care possible by actively raising its own funds.

### **Recommendation**

35. We recommend that CACC plan and implement additional fundraising efforts. CACC should contact other non-profit animal shelters to obtain ideas regarding effective fundraising methods.

**Auditors' Comments:** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC's Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC's response to each of this audit's recommendations.

### **CACC Does Not Sufficiently Rely on Volunteers**

CACC currently has few volunteers and uses very few of the volunteers it does have to supplement its staff in ensuring adequate conditions for the animals in its shelters. Since CACC is understaffed, it needs volunteers to assist the employees in direct animal care activities, such as cleaning cages, walking dogs, and grooming dogs and cats. However, the positions for which volunteers are recruited—photography, data entry, and public outreach—have only an indirect connection to the actual care of the animals. A comparison of CACC to other shelters shows that CACC makes fewer efforts to recruit volunteers, uses significantly fewer volunteers, and places volunteers in fewer types of positions than many other shelters.

CACC's contract with DOH states that “[CACC] shall enlist the aid of volunteers.” In addition, CACC's Certificate of Incorporation states that one of its objectives is to “recruit and organize volunteers to assist in the implementation of [CACC's] programs and services.”

In March 2001, CACC had 41 active volunteers. Towards the end of our audit, in July 2001, CACC officials told us that they had “doubled” their volunteer ranks and that they now have approximately 65 volunteers. However, when we reviewed CACC's records, we found that

the number of volunteers had actually increased by only 12—to 53. These 53 volunteers are assigned as follows: 23 to photograph animals to be shown on Petfinder; 15 to help out at special events; three to participate in the Cage Comforter program (they work from home making comforters for cat cages and small dog cages); three to perform administrative duties; five to help out with animal adoptions; and four to perform “kennel” duties, including, grooming animals, and handling and socializing kittens.

We concluded that CACC could easily increase its volunteer ranks by making more aggressive efforts to recruit volunteers and by using more of the people who express an interest in volunteering. In response to our questions, CACC officials could not provide any evidence of recruitment efforts, stating simply that when people approach CACC to volunteer, CACC asks them to come in and fill out an application at CACC’s administrative office. CACC officials also said they place only approximately one third of the people who apply to volunteer.

Moreover, the types of assignment offered to volunteers may discourage potential volunteers. According to CACC officials and the cover letter for CACC’s volunteer application, the only positions currently available to volunteers are: photography (for Petfinder), data entry, public outreach, and the Cage Comforter program. The lack of assignments involving animals very likely discourages many of the people who inquire about volunteering at CACC, as most are probably interested in direct animal care. In fact, according to its director of adoptions and volunteers, CACC receives approximately ten telephone inquiries a week from people interested in volunteering, most of them interested in walking dogs. CACC does not maintain records adequate for us to determine what percentage of the people who make these inquiries end up volunteering at the shelters performing other than dog-walking duties. However, we do know that only 12 new volunteers began working for CACC over the four months from March to July 2001. Assuming that there are approximately ten inquiries a week, it seems obvious that most of the people who telephone to inquire about becoming volunteers at CACC never end up as such.

A comparison to other shelter organizations points out what CACC could be doing differently, as some other shelters in the New York City area and across the country have made greater efforts to recruit volunteers, use significantly greater numbers of volunteers, and use volunteers more directly to improve the conditions for animals in their shelters.

To determine how CACC’s operations and efforts compare to other animal shelters, we conducted a telephone survey of 13 animal shelters in other major cities across the country (previously discussed). Ten of the surveyed shelters have volunteer programs in place, and one shelter is just starting a volunteer program. Only two shelters—Las Vegas’s Dewey Animal Care Center and Houston’s Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care—do not have volunteer programs. The number of volunteers used by each of the shelters with volunteer programs ranges from 15 to more than 1000.

Some of the shelters that we surveyed use large numbers of volunteers. For example, the Michigan Humane Society, which takes in approximately 50,000 animals per year, has 1,085 volunteers; the LA City Department of Animal Services, which took in approximately 73,000 animals during Fiscal Year 2000, has more than 500 volunteers; and the Humane Society of

Boulder Valley, which took in 6,384 animals during Fiscal Year 2000, has 500 volunteers.<sup>36</sup> These shelters rely heavily on volunteers to carry out day-to-day operations and to assist with getting as many animals adopted as possible. According to the Humane Society of Boulder Valley, volunteers have enabled it to achieve a 100 percent placement for all adoptable animals in the past five years. The LA City Department of Animal Services is working on becoming a low-kill shelter and depends on volunteers to help it get as many animals placed as possible. The Michigan Humane Society stated that, without volunteers, it would be unable to effectively manage its day to day operations, programs, and events.

While the other surveyed shelters do not use as many volunteers, several stated that the extra help provided by the volunteers is very useful. For example, Maricopa County Animal Care and Control Services, which took in 61,025 animals during calendar year 2000 and uses more than 100 volunteers, stated that it does not have enough staff to provide additional comfort measures beyond basic cleaning, feeding, and watering, so it depends on volunteers to provide the extra care. San Francisco Animal Care and Control, which took in 13,712 animals during Fiscal Year 2000, also uses over 100 volunteers, and stated that volunteers are a very important part of operations; among other functions, they conduct outreach to the community, show animals, exercise or walk animals, groom animals, feed animals, assist with the running of special events, work on publications, and help maintain the organization's website.

Most of the surveyed shelters used volunteers in more functions than CACC does, including the direct care of animals. In fact, 10 of the 13 surveyed shelters reported that volunteers assist with the direct care of animals—socializing, feeding, dog walking, grooming, fostering, etc. Seven of the 13 shelters reported that volunteers help clean the kennels and cages.

Nine of the 13 surveyed shelters stated that volunteers help out with adoptions by providing adoption counseling, transporting animals to and from special events, helping people interact with animals, helping with off-site or mobile adoptions, and making follow-up adoption calls. The LA City Department of Animal Services stated that its mobile pet adoption unit is completely volunteer-driven. Chicago Animal Care and Control and DC Animal Control reported that their adoption rates have increased with the help of volunteers. In addition, some of the surveyed shelters would like to involve volunteers in even more areas. For example, Chicago Animal Care and Control plans to add adoption screening to the list of activities in which volunteers can assist.

Some of the surveyed shelters also make much more aggressive efforts to recruit volunteers than CACC does. For example, the Pennsylvania Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals advertises for volunteers in a newsletter 11 times a year, while the Humane Society of Boulder Valley holds an information session every six weeks. At the San Francisco Animal Care and Control shelter, the head of its outreach unit visits and posts ads at local colleges, high schools, and libraries to recruit volunteers. Other surveyed shelters, like Michigan Humane Society, DC Animal Control and Maricopa County Animal Care and Control Services, reported recruiting volunteers through their websites, advertisements in local papers, public service announcements on television, at off-site events, at mobile adoption sites, during humane

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<sup>36</sup> Intake and volunteer statistics are based upon documentation provided by shelter officials or statements made by shelter officials during our telephone interviews.

education presentations, or through word-of-mouth. The LA City Department of Animal Services does less recruitment since it does not have the budget for it, but tries to promote itself and its volunteer opportunities in publications that offer it free ad space.

Shelters in the New York City area also recruit and use volunteers to provide more direct care for their animals than CACC does. Bide-A-Wee uses approximately 30 volunteers in its Manhattan shelter, and 25 volunteers in its two Long Island shelters, to provide direct animal care such as, walking and bathing dogs, and helping with basic cat care. North Shore Animal League in Long Island, uses volunteers to walk dogs and perform other direct animal services, such as bottle-feeding motherless puppies and kittens. The ASPCA currently uses more than 240 volunteers in its shelter, performing such tasks as: socializing animals (thereby preparing them for adoption); walking dogs; interviewing potential adopters and helping them pick animals; and conducting outreach and humane education. B.A.R.C., has two full-time volunteers who work in the kennels and 20 volunteers who walk dogs on Saturdays and Sundays.<sup>37</sup> Additional volunteers are occasionally sent to B.A.R.C. by organizations such as NY Cares, Goldman Sachs, Liz Claiborne, GAP, Old Navy, Merrill Lynch, JP Morgan, Bushwick High School, and Americorps.

Because CACC does not aggressively recruit volunteers or allow volunteers to engage in many activities involving the direct care of animals, CACC currently uses relatively few volunteers. If CACC were to aggressively recruit and use volunteers fully, it would be able to supplement its funded staff by having significant numbers of volunteers assist the kennel staff and thereby improve the conditions for the animals in the shelters.

**Agency Response:** “DOH agrees with the Comptroller’s findings of inadequate use of volunteer staff and has been working with the CACC to increase the number and utilization of volunteers. Currently, CACC uses interns who are enrolled in the Veterinary Technician Program at LaGuardia College. DOH is working with CACC to identify other areas that can increase the number and improve overall utilization of volunteer services.

“With the contract period beginning July 1, 2001, DOH expanded its on-site monitoring to include a comprehensive review of all contractual requirements. DOH monitoring has found deficiencies in CACC’s adoption process, customer service, volunteer program and education and outreach efforts. . . . DOH has met with CACC to begin implementation of a corrective action plan for the deficiencies found during the site visits.”

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<sup>37</sup> Information on these shelters’ volunteer programs was obtained primarily from their websites. The numbers of volunteers working at Bide-A-Wee and B.A.R.C. were obtained through telephone interviews.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that CACC:

36. Aggressively increase its number of volunteers through a stronger recruitment effort aimed at individuals interested in the care of animals. CACC should consider enlisting the aid of rescue groups and other area animal welfare organizations in recruiting volunteers.
37. Expand duties available to volunteers to include more direct animal care, such as dog walking, cage cleaning, and cat grooming.

**Auditors' Comments:** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC's Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC's response to each of this audit's recommendations.

## **CACC's Management and Operations Are Not Focused on Achieving All Aspects of its Contract and Mission**

Based on our audit findings, we have concluded that there is a discrepancy between CACC's contract and mission, and its actual operations. As shown earlier in the report, some of the ways in which CACC has violated the requirements of its contract with DOH and/or its own mission are that it:

- did not provide humane care to all of the animals in its shelters;
- did not aggressively promote the adoption of the animals in its shelters through public awareness campaigns, off-site adoptions, and the use of all of its own facilities for adoptions;
- discouraged some of the rescue groups that take animals from CACC shelters to be placed in adoptive homes;
- limited the pool of animals available for adoption;
- did not make sufficient efforts to supplement its city contract through fund raising; and
- did not sufficiently rely on volunteers to improve the care of animals in its shelters.

All of this points to an organization which seems to focus on meeting only certain requirements of its contract and seems to view its mission much more narrowly than it was originally conceptualized. In essence, CACC seems to focus its efforts on "pushing animals through the system," i.e., taking them in and euthanizing them when they exceed capacity, without aggressively pursuing many of the other requirements of its contract and the other goals outlined in the mission statement, such as "providing humane care for all New York City animals in need" and "reduc[ing] the number of homeless animals through increased adoption."

As CACC has focused primarily on one function, it seems to have adopted an overly defensive organizational mentality, which was illustrated to us in several different ways during the course of the audit.

One piece of evidence demonstrating a troublesome aspect of CACC's organizational culture is an intra-office e-mail photocopied from the Brooklyn shelter manager's logbook. The e-mail, which is apparently an excerpt from a summary of a meeting on the Chameleon database system, states,

“ANIMAL STATUS - We will never change the status even if the status changes because our euth[anasia] reports will look better.”

Although we do not know for certain whether this statement reflects an organization-wide policy, it certainly raises a number of concerns regarding CACC's management and its disclosure philosophy. Obviously, it points out the possibility that CACC is manipulating its data to make its reports on the number of animals euthanized “look better.” We therefore question the accuracy of their reports on animal intake, numbers of animals adopted, and numbers of animal euthanized. (Note: We did not test these numbers as part of this audit.) The statement also raises concerns regarding the outcomes for many animals. It is not clear from the e-mail whether the policy is never to change the status of animals in actuality, or simply never to adjust the status of animals in a field within the database. If CACC actually never changes the status of animal, potentially adoptable animals will not be given a chance of finding homes and will be automatically designated for euthanasia based upon their initial evaluation (which CACC acknowledges may not always be accurate). Regardless of its true meaning, the statement raises obvious concerns.

Another set of events which demonstrated CACC's defensive attitude was how CACC management reacted to this audit. The obstructive tactics employed in response to this audit, most notably management's refusal to allow employees to speak to us without a supervisor present, were our first indications of management's philosophy of non-disclosure. We explained to CACC's executive management on numerous occasions that speaking openly and honestly with staff at all levels within the organization was the best way for us to obtain an accurate picture of CACC's operations, to understand the reasons for any shortcomings, and to devise constructive recommendations for improvement. However, CACC's executive management refused to change its mind on this issue, acknowledging that it would rather see a section in our audit report describing these audit limitations than allow us to speak to staff members without a supervisor present

Another illustration of the above is the fact that CACC has limited its exposure to “outsiders,” such as volunteers, who have the potential to help improve services and animal care in the shelters. For example, CACC uses few volunteers and gives most volunteers responsibilities that are away from the animals and the shelters.

Yet another illustration was the behavior of the board of directors. As described earlier in the report, board members were not cooperative with our attempts to interview them. In addition, we found that during board of directors meetings, which are open to the public, board members often deliberately spoke at such a low volume as to prevent all other attendees from hearing their discussions. (This issue is discussed further in a later section of this report.)

CACC's focus on only a narrow part of its contract and mission and its defensive attitude were also the focus of statements made to us by rescue groups and former employees. Specifically, 14 of the 59 rescuers and five of the eight former employees complained about various aspects of CACC's management. Complaints about executive management revolved around several areas: lack of concern for the animals, overemphasis on protecting CACC's image, discouragement of employees who try to help animals, and lack of advertising, education, and outreach.

For example, one rescuer specifically stated that CACC is mainly concerned about its liability and about protecting itself from criticism. Three other rescuers complained that CACC's efforts to work with them in getting animals out of the shelters have decreased recently. Their reports of decreased CACC efforts all related directly to the departure of CACC staff members. One rescuer stated that CACC had not called the rescue group since the adoption coordinator for the Manhattan shelter left. Another reported the same lack of contact dating to the departure of the Brooklyn adoption coordinator. The third rescuer similarly stated that the group had not received as many calls to rescue animals since both the adoption coordinator and the rescue coordinator at the Brooklyn shelter had left.

Two former employees complained that management discourages staff members who show a real desire to help the animals. According to the former employees, such people are quickly labeled trouble-makers (sometimes because they ask too many questions about management's decisions) and are often either fired or leave on their own after becoming frustrated in their attempts to improve things.

As discussed earlier in the report, one former employee and one rescuer complained about management's prohibition against permitting adoptions of older animals. This also evidences that CACC is not aggressively working toward one of its stated goals—finding homes for as many animals as possible. Prohibiting the release of older animals does not necessarily mean that more young animals will be adopted, as some individuals specifically wish to adopt older animals, and some rescue groups specialize in caring for and placing sick, old and less “highly adoptable” animals.

During our conversations with former employees and rescuers, comments were repeatedly made that CACC's management is secretive, defensive, and vindictive. In fact, many of the rescuers who participated in our survey were initially reluctant to speak to us, expressing their fear that if CACC management were to realize that they had been critical of the organization, management would retaliate by preventing them from taking animals from CACC in the future. In addition, one rescuer refused to participate in the survey after making some negative comments regarding CACC, indicating that she feared being cut off by CACC; and another rescuer who did participate, though critical of CACC, stated that she would not say all that she wanted to because she wanted to continue rescuing animals.

None of the types of evidence discussed above (CACC's e-mail, its behavior towards us, its behavior toward “outsiders,” the board members' behavior, or the comments made by a customer, rescuers and former employees) taken on its own would have led us to the conclusion that CACC is operating under a defensive mentality that results from its primary focus on only a

narrow aspect of its contract and its mission. However, taken together, these types of evidence form a compelling image of an organization that knows that its activities are not synchronous with its contract and its mission, and therefore can only conduct its activities in a defensive mode. This inevitably leads to missed opportunities for improvement, as opportunities to collaborate with rescue groups, volunteers and other “outsiders” are squandered, and prevents CACC from fulfilling all of the requirements of its contract and achieving its full mission.

## **Conclusion**

This last issue, regarding the discrepancy between CACC’s contract and mission and its operations is a key finding of this audit, because, unless it is addressed adequately, none of the preceding recommendations made in the report can or will be effectively implemented. Therefore, we recommend that:

38. CACC’s board of directors and executive management convene to discuss the organization’s mission, to determine whether the current mission statement accurately reflects CACC’s purposes, and to reconcile its organizational and management philosophy with its contract and stated mission. If the board and executive management determine that the current mission statement is accurate, then they must develop a plan for the organization to change direction and bring its operations in line with the pursuit of all of the goals in its mission statement. If the board and management decide that they are not interested in pursuing all of the goals in CACC’s mission statement, they should change the mission statement accordingly, and negotiate any necessary amendments to CACC’s contract with DOH.

**Auditors’ Comments:** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC’s Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC’s response to each of this audit’s recommendations.

## **Other Issues:**

### **CACC's Board Violated its Bylaws**

During one of the three board of directors meetings we attended, the board violated its bylaws by meeting and voting on certain items without the required quorum being present.

According to CACC's bylaws, § 3.5, entitled "Quorum,"

"At all meetings of the Board of Directors, except where otherwise provided by law or these By-laws, a quorum shall be required for the transaction of business and shall consist of a majority of the entire Board of Directors, provided that at least a majority of the Ex Officio Directors are present."

In addition, according to CACC's bylaws, § 3.6, entitled "Vote Required,"

"All questions, except those for which the manner of deciding is specifically prescribed by law or these By-laws, shall be determined by vote of a majority of the Directors or Committee members or their respective Alternates present at any meeting at which a quorum is present, provided that such majority vote includes the vote of all three Ex Officio Directors for any of the following actions:

- (i) appointing or removing Officers of the Corporation, and fixing such Officers' compensation;
- (ii) appointing additional Directors to the Executive Committee; and
- (iii) adding to, amending, altering or repealing these By-laws or the Certificate of Incorporation."

It appears that the June 11, 2001, board meeting should not have taken present since there was no quorum. Only one of the three ex-officio directors was present. To constitute a quorum there should have been at least two ex-officio directors present at the meeting.

Moreover, during the June 11, 2001, board meeting, the board did not have the authority to vote on revising the bylaws (it voted to change the fiscal year ending date to June 30 from December 31), since this type of action requires the vote of all three ex-officio directors, and only one ex-officio director was present at the meeting.

### **Recommendation**

39. We recommend that CACC's board of directors ensure that there is a quorum present when it holds meetings and votes on items.

**Auditors' Comments:** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC's Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC's response to each of this audit's recommendations.

## **CACC's Board Appears To Be in Violation of the Letter and Spirit of the Open Meetings Law**

During two of the three board of directors meetings that we attended, CACC board members and officers appear to have violated the letter and spirit of the Open Meetings Law by speaking at almost a whisper, thereby preventing attendees from hearing their discussions.

The New York State Open Meetings Law in its legislative declaration, requires that,

“public business be performed in an open and public manner and that the citizens of this state be fully aware of and able to observe the performance of public officials and attend and listen to the deliberations and decisions.”

CACC has stated that it complies with the Open Meetings Law. However, because the directors and officers of the board spoke so quietly throughout two of the meetings we attended, we, as well as other attendees, were unable to hear much of what went on during those meetings. It is important to note here that this conduct continued despite repeated requests from other attendees that board members speak up.

Conduct similar to that of the CACC Board has been held to be in violation of the Open Meetings Law. In Goetschius v. Board of Education of the Greenburgh Eleven Union Free School District, 721 N.Y.S.2d 386, 387 (2d Dep't 2001), the Appellate Division upheld a lower court decision that determined that the Board of Education “engaged in a persistent pattern of deliberate violation of the letter and spirit of the Open Meetings law, by, *inter alia*, improperly convening executive sessions and conducting business in a manner inaudible to the public audience.” The Appellate Division also upheld the lower court’s decision to annul certain determinations the Board of Education made when it violated the Open Meetings Law. *Id.* at 388. Similarly, it was reported to the Executive Director of the State Committee on Open Government that a Morristown School Board held several meetings in which board members spoke so softly that audience members were unable to hear their deliberations, despite repeated requests by the audience to the board members to “speak up.” In an advisory opinion, the Executive Director of the State Committee on Open Government stated that the Board “must conduct its meetings in a manner in which those in attendance can observe and hear the proceedings.” Otherwise, the conduct is “unreasonable and fail[s] to comply with a basic requirement of the Open Meetings Law.” (See Committee on Open Government Advisory Opinion, July 7, 1993.)

### **Recommendation**

40. We recommend that CACC’s board of directors comply with the Open Meetings Law and ensure that all board members, officers, and invited speakers speak audibly so that members of the public who attend the board meetings may hear what is said.

**Auditors’ Comments:** See the report section entitled *Discussion of CACC’s Response*, which begins at page 73, and the Addendum for CACC’s response to each of this audit’s recommendations.

## **Inadequacies of CACC's Contract with DOH**

CACC's contract with DOH does not include specific and measurable performance requirements or standards. This prevents DOH from holding the organization accountable for providing specified acceptable levels of service.

This audit was conducted in order to determine whether CACC is operating in accordance with two major aspects of its mission—"providing humane care for all New York City animals in need" and "[reducing] the number of homeless animals." In order to assess the level and success of CACC's efforts in these areas, we often had to search for standards against which to measure the organization. For example, in some areas, we compared CACC's efforts to those of other municipal shelters throughout the country and other shelters in the New York City area, and we compared conditions in the shelters to the standards of HSUS in addition to the requirements in CACC's contract and its procedures manual. We were unable to rely solely upon the standards to which DOH holds CACC, because DOH does not hold CACC to specific, measurable standards.

In its contract with CACC, DOH outlines various categories of services that CACC must provide. The contract, however, does not include any specific and measurable performance requirements or standards for animal care. For example, although the contract requires that CACC "operate animal shelter facilities in the boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island," and states that "animals within the possession of [CACC] shall be cared for in a humane manner in accordance with applicable law," it does not specify any standards for humane care, such as the frequency with which dogs should be exercised, the minimum amount of space each animal should be allotted, or how often and in what manner animal cages should be cleaned. The contract also requires that CACC "provide adoption services at the shelters and receiving facilities and . . . promote adoption as a means of placing animals," but does not include any requirements, targets, or goals regarding the number or percent of animals that should be placed through adoption each year or any requirements regarding the types or level of efforts CACC should make to promote adoptions. The contract requires that CACC "enlist the aid of volunteers," but does not specify how many volunteers should be recruited or how the volunteers should be used to improve services. The contract does not require that CACC conduct fundraising to supplement its contract funds, nor does it define any fundraising target.

By failing to include measurable performance requirements and standards related to many of CACC's services in the contract, DOH has failed to give CACC a clear definition of its expectations regarding the organization's performance and operations. DOH also does not have any clear criteria against which to evaluate CACC's performance. Moreover, without clearly identified minimum performance requirements, it is difficult for DOH and CACC to evaluate CACC's budgetary needs. Without knowing what the acceptable levels of service are, DOH and CACC can not determine CACC's staffing and funding requirements for achieving acceptable levels of service.

## Recommendation

41. We recommend that DOH amend CACC’s contract to include specific and measurable performance requirements and/or standards for all appropriate service-related areas. The table below lists some examples of performance requirements and standards that could be incorporated in the contract.

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Examples of Performance Requirements or Standards</b>
Humane Care of Animals in the Shelters	The amount of space each animal should be allotted, the frequency with which dogs should be walked, and the frequency with which animal cages should be cleaned.
Animal Adoptions	The number/percent of homeless animals that should be placed through adoption each year, the number/percent of animals placed through adoption that should be placed through “direct” adoptions versus those placed through rescue groups, the minimum number of off-site adoption events that CACC should hold each year, the number of animals that CACC should show for adoption at the Bronx and Queens facility each day/week/year.
Animal Seizure in Response to Complaints	The time period within which complaints must be responded to.
Use of Volunteers	The number of volunteers that should be recruited each year, and the number of volunteers that should be working for CACC in each specified service area at any given time.
Fundraising	The amount of money CACC should raise in donations each year.
Public Education Regarding Animal Control and Related Issues	The number of public education events that should be held each year, the total number of people that should be addressed at these events each year, and the topics that should be covered at these events.
Formal Customer Service Quality Assurance Program	A description of how such a program would work, and evidence of its implementation.

***Agency Response:*** “Although the City’s current contract between DOH and CACC does not include specific performance indicators, DOH does use specific guidelines to measure performance as part of our inspection process and CACC’s overall compliance with the regulations and standards appropriate to its operations. The Department is currently renegotiating its contract with CACC to begin July 2002 and will include specific

performance measures within the contract to enable DOH to better monitor contract compliance. These measures will be based on industry standards and guidelines and nationwide ‘best practices’ for animal shelter operations.”

## **Discussion of CACC's Response**

DOH chose to append a written response from CACC to its own response to the draft audit report, in which CACC disagreed with virtually every aspect of the audit's methodology and findings and alleged that the audit was not conducted in an objective fashion. As was stated earlier, during the fieldwork phase of this audit, CACC's executive management misrepresented many facts regarding the organization's operations. CACC's response to this audit is a continuation of this behavior. To present and discuss CACC's position on this audit, we now address CACC's main arguments below. (For the full text of CACC's response, see the Addendum of this report.)

### **Overview**

In an apparent effort to obscure the facts and to discredit the audit's findings, CACC chose to include in its response several misrepresentations, distortions, and personal attacks on the professionalism of the audit staff. For example, CACC attempts to dismiss the audit's findings by contesting the auditors' expertise, objectivity, and independence. CACC goes as far as accusing the auditors of not visiting the wards that were being cleaned because "[the auditors'] concern about getting wet prevented them from commenting on the cleaning procedures." (In fact, the auditors did not visit those wards as a courtesy to the CACC staff and in order to not disrupt or interfere with their cleaning of those wards. However, this is a minor point considering the magnitude of CACC's other distortions).

Based on CACC's response and its inhibiting and uncooperative actions throughout the audit, it is clear that CACC management does not understand what a performance audit is. From the outset of this audit, CACC management continually obstructed the normal audit process. Its actions included limiting and denying access to CACC documents and not allowing the auditors to interview CACC employees without management present (discussed in detail in the "Audit Limitations" section of this report). Perhaps CACC believed we would simply interview management and accept its descriptions about how CACC operates without doing any test work to determine the actual practices in the shelters.

The New York City Comptroller's Audit Bureaus have conducted thousands of audits that review a wide variety of public life, ranging from medical research conducted in City hospitals, to management of farm practices in the New York City watershed, to transitional housing for homeless people with AIDS, to mention but a few. In each and every one of these endeavors, the auditors are required to interview, observe, test, conduct themselves with due diligence, and derive an objective conclusion regarding the operations of the audited organization. Our audits have produced thousands of recommendations that have enhanced City life and City service. In at least the past eight years, we can not recall a single audit where the audited organization makes the types of accusations contained in CACC's response. We believe that our reputation and past accomplishments speak for themselves.

## **Alleged Political Influence and Bias in the Audit Process**

CACC states that this audit was “clearly motivated by the political interests of [the present Comptroller’s] predecessor.” It also states that in 1998, the Comptroller’s Office indicated to CACC that the “animal activist community in NYC was not satisfied with the results of [a] financial audit . . . and that they were pushing for a performance audit.” It further states that CACC was not contacted by the Comptroller’s Office until late 2000, when “the Comptroller’s Office indicated that the audit was, in part, the result of renewed calls from the activist community.” CACC alleges that “the areas selected for audit mirror the criticisms of [a] small, but vocal, group [of members of animal advocacy groups]” and that the audit was not objective.

The only part of all of the above that is true is that animal advocacy groups did request that an operational audit be conducted; but this was not unusual. Audits are generated based on different factors, including allegations received by the Comptroller’s Office from the public, a City Charter mandate that requires that every City agency be audited at least once every four years, and internal assessments of economic and performance “risks” at public agencies. Regardless of the source of an audit, the audit itself must be performed in an objective and independent manner. The audit process must be independent of any political influences, and must adhere to strict guidelines regarding independence and objectivity, as set forth in the second general standard for governmental auditing (GAGAS 3.11), which states:

“In all matters relating to the audit work, the audit organization and the individual auditors, whether government or public, should be free from personal and external impairments to independence, should be organizationally independent, and should maintain an independent attitude and appearance.”

Auditor independence is also a requirement of the Institute of Internal Auditors (Standard 100), as well as of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (Second General Standard - SAS No. 1, § 220).

Auditors are required to gather relevant information and to interview management and personnel who actually perform the functions being audited. They also collect information from various other sources, such as groups that may be critical of the audited organization, related newspaper articles, and private institutions. Throughout the audit process, auditors must employ objective testing methodologies to determine whether what they are told about the organization’s operations and its official policies is reflected in the actual day-to-day operations. Comprehensively gathered information and thorough testing enable the auditors to develop a full set of constructive recommendations that should help the audited organization improve its operations. This audit, like all other audits issued by this office, was conducted objectively and was independent of all outside influences.

## **Alleged Limited Audit Scope**

CACC states that “in conducting a performance audit of CACC, the Comptroller’s Office ignored CACC’s contractual obligations that protect the well being of New Yorkers, and instead, focused on those aspects of the contract that provide for the well being of the animals. In doing so, the Comptroller fails to portray the full importance of CACC.” CACC goes on to say: “the Comptroller failed to audit the success of CACC’s efforts to pick up animals . . . ; its programs for accepting . . . animals at the shelters . . . ; the improvement in returning lost animals . . . ; the implementation of [a] progressive mandatory spay/neuter law . . . ; and, finally, the level of compassion and expertise employed when providing a humane and painless death to unwanted and unadoptable animals.”

CACC either misunderstands or purposely distorts the purpose of this audit. As was clearly stated at the beginning of this report, the objective of this audit was to evaluate the conditions under which animals are sheltered in CACC’s facilities, and the level and success of CACC’s efforts to promote the adoption of animals from its shelters. The auditors also noted the many different services provided by CACC that were not covered by the objective of this audit. Though CACC provides numerous services, they do not negate CACC’s responsibilities to provide humane care and promote adoptions of animals. This report has demonstrated CACC’s shortcomings in these areas.

## **Animal Care Issues**

CACC states that it has “an aggressive and proactive approach to dealing with mistreatment of animals in our shelters. . . . CACC takes its responsibilities seriously and disciplines all such infractions up to and including termination. The evidence of animal mistreatment discovered by the audit team was found in the personnel records of CACC employees indicating that CACC not only uncovers, but also disciplines, any acts of mistreatment.”

Furthermore, CACC states that “the accountants never requested reports generated by the CACC human resources management system, ABBRA, which provide a complete accounting of all employee infractions resulting in discipline, including those that involved direct care of animals.”

Although CACC may discipline employees who commit acts of animal mistreatment, the fact is that such instances of animal mistreatment by CACC employees do occur, and that is what the audit reported. When the auditors reviewed the personnel records, CACC officials did not suggest that they should also review records maintained in ABBRA. After the exit conference, when CACC provided the auditors with individual employee print-outs from ABBRA, the auditors found that there were three additional cases of animal mistreatment (e.g., animal abuse or neglect, poor veterinary care) that they had never seen before, although all three cases were covered by the audit period of the document review. Conversely, in the auditors’ document review, they found 24 instances of animal mistreatment involving 12 employees that were not

listed in ABBRA. This raises obvious doubts that ABBRA shows a “complete accounting of all employee infractions,” as CACC claimed it does.

CACC also challenged the criterion used by the auditors as a basis for their finding that animals did not always have access to water. CACC states that the “Federal standard for humane care of animals by laboratories, dealers and transporters requires access to water for at least one hour, two times each day.” While this may be the Federal standard, CACC's own procedures require that water be “available at all times.” This CACC requirement is clearly stated as the audit criterion in the “Animals Were Not Provided Constant Access to Water” section of the report.

CACC also charges that “the auditors play loose with statistics by indicating that five of 48 animals (10%) lacked access to water during one shelter tour. In reality there were 487 animals in the building on that day.” In fact, the auditors never stated that the percentages reported were for the entire building. The audit report clearly states the number of wards in which the auditors found each condition (i.e., animals that lacked access to water, cages that were soiled) out of the total number of wards the auditors observed, and states the percentage of cages where the condition existed for those particular wards.

## **Veterinary Care Issues**

In response to the audit’s finding of poor veterinary care, CACC states that the audit’s determination was made “largely through the unsubstantiated word of unidentified, non-credentialed persons.”

In fact, as is clearly presented in this report, much of the evidence of poor veterinary care was obtained from CACC’s own documents. Specifically, evidence of poor veterinary care was discovered during the auditors’ document review (e.g., personnel files, disciplinary action notices, notes-to-file, and shelter manager’s logbook) and this condition was further substantiated by interviews with former employees, rescuers, and customers.

After the exit conference, CACC requested that the auditors provide the identities of the former employees, rescuers, and customers, or animal identification numbers, for the instances of poor veterinary care cited in the report. However, to protect the anonymity of the sources, the auditors were unable to provide this particular information. Many of the rescuers who participated in the audit survey were initially reluctant to speak and expressed fear that if CACC management were to know that they had been critical of the organization, management would retaliate by preventing them from taking animals from CACC in the future.

CACC also alleges that the auditors “failed to provide the proper context for these disciplinary actions...,” and that “providing all the facts confirms that CACC greatly values well-trained, competent and committed veterinary medical staff and effectively supervises this staff such that failure to follow procedures is caught, documented and disciplined.”

Once again, CACC attempts to rebut a finding of poor employee performance with a statement that CACC disciplines employees for their poor performance. The fact remains that instances of poor veterinary care did occur. The instances described in this report reveal that a problem exists, even if employees are disciplined, and even if CACC treats many more animals successfully than poorly.

CACC states that “there is no factual underpinning supporting [the auditors'] claim” that contagious animals were kept in wards with healthy animals, increasing the likelihood that healthy animals might become sick and possibly be euthanized as a result. On the other hand, CACC itself acknowledged, in its response to Recommendation 4, that contagious animals may be kept in a mixed ward if a veterinarian has determined that the contagious animals do not present a threat to the other animals. Nonetheless, CACC challenges the auditors' conclusions because “the accountants on the Comptroller’s staff are not qualified to render an opinion on the judgment of licensed veterinary professionals.”

The auditors never stated that they practice veterinary medicine and are qualified to determine whether an animal is contagious. The auditors merely observed and noted when there was a “contagious” designation on the cage cards. Based on this information, the auditors concluded that there were contagious animals being kept in the same wards as healthy animals in all three full-service shelters (i.e., Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island shelters).

CACC’s claim that animals designated as “contagious” were present in non-contagious wards only because a veterinarian had determined the placement to be safe for the other animals is contradicted by statements made by CACC employees during the auditors’ site visits to the shelters. CACC employees indicated to the auditors that the reason “contagious” and “non-contagious” animals were mixed in the same wards was because of the lack of adequate space, and did not indicate that this situation was determined by a veterinarian to be safe.

In addition, CACC conveniently leaves out of its response any discussion of the Staten Island shelter. As mentioned in this report, the Staten Island shelter has no area at all for contagious animals where they can be kept separately from the adoption and stray animal wards.

### **Issues Concerning Adoption Efforts**

CACC claims that the auditors’ analysis of its adoption rates had a “limited focus” because of their emphasis on adoptions rather than on the “rate of live release.” CACC further maintains that “even with their limited focus, their analysis is flawed” because “actual data provided to the auditors from the CACC Chameleon data base shows that in 2001 CACC increased its direct adoptions in each of three categories of adoptable animals: highly adoptable, adoptable and potentially adoptable.”

The data to which CACC refers was provided to the auditors after the exit conference, and does not match the data in the Monthly Animal Activity Reports that CACC provided to DOH for the same time periods. The data in the Monthly Animal Activity Reports to DOH was used to prepare Tables I and II on page 40 of the report. The data shows that between the first

six months of 2000 and the first six months of 2001, direct adoptions increased from 8.2 percent to 10 percent of intake (an increase of 1.8 percentage points), and total adoptions decreased from 26.3 percent to 22.9 percent of intake (a **decrease** of 3.4 percentage points).<sup>38</sup> In actual numbers, direct adoptions did increase by 13 percent, from 2,544 to 2,878, but total adoptions **decreased** by 19 percent, from 8,119 to 6,575. Notably, CACC left total adoption numbers out of its analysis, at the same time accusing the auditors of focusing their analysis too narrowly.

The Monthly Animal Activity Reports do not contain a breakdown of adoptions by animals' designated adoption status (e.g., highly adoptable, adoptable, etc.), so it is not possible to address CACC's claims regarding the increases in adoption rates of the animals with higher statuses. However, the auditors believe that the most objective method for measuring the trend in CACC's adoption rates is to compare the total number and percentage of animals adopted in each time period—not the number and percentage from particular status groups. This is the only method that avoids the influence of any possible subjectivity in the process of conferring an adoption status on animals.

CACC states that its reliance on rescue groups “to place more than 6500 animals in 2001 belies the allegation that ‘CACC has discouraged some rescue groups.’” In fact, some rescuers indicated to the auditors that, in spite of their having been discouraged by CACC or prevented from taking out as many animals as they wished, they continue to take animals from CACC because of their desire to help the animals. Moreover, the decrease by 1,878 (34%) in the number of animals CACC placed with rescue groups between the first six months of 2000 and the first six months of 2001 supports some rescuers' claims that CACC had made it more difficult for them to take animals.

CACC asserts that “the auditors wrongfully conclude that ‘CACC limits the pool of animals available for adoption,’” arguing that “CACC considers far more animals as adoptable than most open admission humane organizations.” CACC, however, has never provided any evidence to back up this claim. Furthermore, the report makes it clear that there is evidence to support the finding that CACC seems to have inappropriately limited the pool of animals available for adoption.

CACC also argues that the auditors did not understand “the implications of Status 4 (aggressive) designation,” and that Status 4 animals “represent a public safety risk if released without a complete temperament evaluation to assess the level of risk.”

In fact, the auditors did understand CACC's definition of Status 4, which states:

“Status 4 animals have temperament issues which make the animal unadoptable at this time, but for which there is a reasonable probability that a 24 hour period of acclimation and temperament reevaluation by a qualified adoption or medical personnel may result in the animal later becoming a candidate for adoption or rescue. Reevaluation of these animals is limited by staff availability and reevaluation cannot be guaranteed for all such animals.”

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<sup>38</sup> In the Monthly Activity Reports, animals adopted directly by customers are reported as “direct adoptions” and animals taken by rescuers are reported as “rescue adoptions.”

Since, according to CACC, not all Status 4 animals are reevaluated, clearly some animals that may in fact have been found to be adoptable are not given a chance at adoption.

CACC states that organizations such as the ASPCA, Bide-A-Wee, and the B.A.R.C. “do not represent valid comparisons to CACC in either the number of adoptions, the cost per animal adopted, or the scope of the functions performed as each is a limited admissions shelters, while CACC is an open admission organization,” implying that the auditors used faulty methodology to arrive at their conclusions. However, CACC’s comparison is disingenuous, because the auditors never compared CACC to these other shelters in terms of adoption rates, the cost per animal adopted, or the full scope of functions performed. The auditors simply used the practices of those shelters to illustrate some methods CACC could use to increase adoptions.

CACC also states that “the Comptroller appears to disagree with [CACC's] prudent resource choice” that it “defer to [other shelter groups] those services they provide well—humane education and community outreach—and to concentrate our limited resources on the tasks they will not perform—namely animal control and care for animals who are not easily placed.” Although we agree that CACC should be prudent with its limited resources, it does not negate the contract requirement that CACC “conduct education and community outreach concerning animal control and public health issues.” The contract requirement notwithstanding, more important to CACC and the animal population are the benefits derived from a public that is informed about animal care, pet owners who are knowledgeable about their responsibilities, and finally, a public that is increasingly aware of CACC itself and the services it offers.

### **Issues Related to Document Access**

CACC attempts to discredit the auditors' findings by discrediting the documents the auditors used to develop those findings. CACC states that the “files, log books and notes to file” that the auditors examined during their document review are “unofficial documents that are not permitted now that their existence has been brought to the attention of CACC management.”

This is a ludicrous statement that reflects either executive management’s disingenuousness or its ignorance of its own organization’s practices. The documents the auditors reviewed were maintained by shelter management. As described to the audit team by shelter management, when an incident occurs, a disciplinary action notice is filed if it involves a union employee, and a note-to-file is filed if it involves a non-union employee. These reports are then forwarded to CACC’s administrative office.

CACC denies that it did not provide access to all personnel records. CACC states that, when asked for documents or reports, it nearly always provided them “the same day or within a few days when [they were] not readily available.” CACC claims that “although CACC never denied access to personnel files for the purpose of review, when the Comptroller asked for approval to copy personnel files, CACC requested assurances that the personal identifying information would be kept confidential . . . . This request by CACC was originally made in April 2001, was eventually elevated to the level of the Comptroller’s Counsel and upon receipt in

May 2001 of this written assurance of privacy protection, access to copy the personnel files was provided. The auditors fail to acknowledge the reason for this delay in the report.”

The most critical examples of CACC’s delays in providing access to documents are described in some detail in the body of this report, so it is unnecessary to repeat here the fallacy of CACC’s claim that nearly all documents and reports were provided “the same day or within a few days.” However, we will address CACC’s implication that the auditors were not permitted full access to personnel files for legitimate reasons. The fact is that the auditors did assure CACC that all personal identifying information would be kept confidential when they requested full access to the personnel files (including the right to copy them).

In addition, as stated earlier in the report section entitled “Limitations on Access to Records,” besides the personnel files, CACC denied the auditors access or delayed their access to other records, such as the records maintained at the shelters.

CACC further states that “The auditors were again reviewing records in the central office on September 10<sup>th</sup> 2001, despite having been given access in April 2001. . . . No further requests were made by the Comptroller to return to examine our documents further. . . . it is not proper to blame us for their failure to follow up on the data gathering.”

Since the Comptroller’s Office knew that CACC’s administrative office was located within the restricted area around the World Trade Center site, we are not blaming CACC for preventing the auditors from reviewing the personnel files for reasons attributable to September 11<sup>th</sup>. However, since the shelters were not in the restricted area of Lower Manhattan, the auditors requested access to the records maintained at the shelters (e.g., managers’ logbooks, notes-to-files, etc.). As stated earlier in the report, this is when CACC’s executive director denied auditors access to the documents at the shelters, as well as further access to all CACC documents, including the personnel files. Therefore, even after access to CACC’s central office was restored, the auditors were still unable to review any documents because of the executive director’s order denying further access to CACC records.

### **Issues Concerning Restrictions on Staff Interviews**

CACC states that it “advised the audit team that we would permit all staff to be interviewed at the auditors’ convenience, but, as had been our practice during the financial audit previously conducted by the Comptroller, all interviews would be conducted in the presence of a member of CACC Counsel’s office.”

In fact, during that financial audit, the auditors interviewed staff in the general counsel’s presence only for the initial meetings. After those meetings, the auditors were able to interview staff without the general counsel’s presence. Obviously, CACC changed its policy between the financial audit and this operational audit.

CACC also argues that “it is difficult to believe that the official position of the Comptroller’s Office is that a not-for-profit must subject its employees to interrogation by the City without the presence of a lawyer.”

It is common audit practice for auditors to interview—certainly not to interrogate—all staff who actually perform the functions being audited. Common sense dictates that employees might not always feel that they can speak freely with a supervisor or a lawyer sitting next to them and monitoring everything they say. These circumstances are not conducive to honest discussions. Under the limitation imposed by CACC, the auditors believed that they would not be given free and unfettered descriptions of CACC’s actual daily operations by CACC employees, but would, instead, hear descriptions that mirrored management’s policies.

Based upon CACC’s refusal to permit the auditors to interview staff under circumstances that would allow them to speak freely, the auditors could not obtain a full account of management problems, inaccuracies in the organization’s records, or possible misstatements of the organization’s policies and practices.

### **Issues Related to the Audit’s Adherence to Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards**

CACC claims that this audit failed to adhere to Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards regarding the use of reasonable criteria for performance evaluation, the skills and knowledge of the auditors assigned, audit planning, the sufficiency and competency of evidence, and objective reporting.

The New York City Charter requires that the audits conducted by the Comptroller’s Office comply with GAGAS. GAGAS require that organizations conducting audits in accordance with these federal standards undergo an external quality control review at least once every three years. The external quality control review, which is to be conducted by an independent organization (e.g., an independent CPA firm or independent audit organization), should determine whether the reviewed organization’s internal quality control system is in place and operating effectively to provide reasonable assurance that established policies and procedures and applicable auditing standards are being followed.

The Comptroller’s Audit Bureaus have undergone external quality control reviews since 1992. These reviews have been conducted every three years, in accordance with GAGAS. The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) conducted the most recent review in November 2001.

IIA concluded that the Bureaus of Audit of the Comptroller’s Office generally conform to the Government Auditing Standards. In its report, IIA noted that:

- The Bureaus’ working paper documentation was excellent.
- The Bureaus used innovative, extended audit steps to determine whether fraud existed in audits of the City.
- The Bureaus hire only qualified college graduates as auditors.

- The Quality Control program is well managed and provides summary information on areas that can guide the staff to perform even better audits.

The Comptroller's Office considers the external review to be an extremely important independent check on the quality of its audit work. The IIA review refutes CACC's claim that this audit did not adhere to GAGAS.

## **Additional Information**

Many of the findings in this report were further supported by other rescuers, former employees and customers who were not included in our surveys, but with whom we spoke during the course of the audit. Specifically, we spoke to six former employees, five rescuers, and three customers who either contacted us after learning of the audit, or whom we contacted as part of our background research for the audit. Since these individuals had not been selected for our surveys through our sampling methodology, we did not present information from our conversations with them in the body of the report. However, we are presenting this information here, because their statements lend further support to many of the audit's findings. Even though three of the additional former employees we spoke to have not worked at CACC since before 1999, their statements, as well as those of the more recent former employees, the rescuers and the customers all seem to point to the same problems cited throughout the audit report, indicating both the pervasiveness and enduring nature of these problems. In total, all six of these former employees, three of five of these rescuers and all three of these customers criticized aspects of CACC's operations and management. The following is a summary of these individuals' statements as related to the findings in the report.

### **Understaffing**

Three of the six additional former employees we spoke with made statements to us regarding the lack of adequate staffing at the shelters. Like the former employees in our survey, these former employees also linked low staffing levels to the inability to properly care for, clean, or groom the animals.

### **Evidence of Mistreatment of Animals in CACC Shelters**

Five of the six additional employees, two of the five additional rescuers and one of the three additional customers reported incidents of animal mistreatment in CACC shelters. Specifically, three former employees informed us of animal abuse or neglect cases; two former employees and two rescuers spoke of the problem of accidental euthanasias; and two former employees and one customer complained about poor veterinary care at the shelters.

#### ***Evidence of Animal Abuse and Neglect***

Of the six additional former employees we spoke to, three informed us of animal abuse and neglect cases. For example, one former employee recounted an incident in which some employees injured a dog using bleach because of personal issues related to another employee. One former employee had a major concern that the dogs in CACC shelters never had enough water. This former employee also reported quitting after witnessing another employee setting a dog to attack a cat. Another former employee witnessed an employee hitting a dog with the metal clip of a rope

used to restrain animals.<sup>39</sup> This former employee also stated that he tried to rescue a puppy that required leg surgery, but CACC denied the animal rescue placement. These alleged incidents of animal cruelty and neglect occurred at CACC's full service shelters in Brooklyn and Manhattan. (Note: The first two incidents of abuse recounted by these former employees was substantiated by documents CACC provided to us after the exit conference.)

### *Evidence of Accidental Euthanasias*

Of the six additional former employees we spoke to, two spoke about the problem of accidental or inappropriate euthanasias. One former staff member stated that there were many incidents in which people's pets were put to sleep by accident. Another stated that "there were a lot of stupid mistakes made, such as euthanizing the wrong animals."

Of the five additional rescuers we spoke with, two described cases of accidental euthanasia. One rescuer reported that two dogs that she was going to rescue were accidentally euthanized, even though she had asked CACC to place a Hold on both of them. According to the rescuer, CACC had told her that one of the two dogs was accidentally euthanized because its tag fell down to another cage and was mixed up with another animal's tag. As for the second dog, CACC stated only that it was euthanized because it was not adoptable, without giving the rescuer any further explanations. Another rescuer with whom we spoke stated that she had placed a cat on Hold at the Brooklyn shelter and even confirmed the hold status with the shelter manager. However, CACC later called her to report that the cat had been mistakenly put to sleep.

### *Evidence of Poor Veterinary Care*

Of the six additional former employees we spoke with, two criticized the quality of CACC's veterinary care. One former employee complained that CACC puts people without animal expertise in managerial positions, and that these individuals then inappropriately control veterinary practice at the shelters, "practically making diagnoses" and selecting certain animals for euthanasia. The other former employee stated that the veterinarians on staff at CACC are unqualified.

One of the three additional customers we spoke with complained about poor veterinary care. This customer spoke to us regarding a dog he had adopted through a rescue group in December 2000. The rescue group had taken the dog from CACC the day before this customer adopted it. The customer complained that his dog had been subjected to an inappropriate surgery performed by a CACC-contracted veterinarian. The veterinarian had received the dog from CACC already neutered (there was a scar from the earlier neutering) but had performed exploratory surgery on the dog to confirm the earlier neutering. According to this customer's own veterinarian, as well as another veterinarian we contacted, this invasive procedure was unnecessary and inappropriate. This customer also stated that when he visited his veterinarian shortly after adopting the dog, his veterinarian told him that the dog was malnourished.

In addition to these complaints, one of the five additional rescuers complained about the

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<sup>39</sup> The employee who hit the dog with the metal clip was fired.

misvaluation of animals, specifically stating that the age and sex of the animals have been wrong many times, and that there is no rhyme or reason for the status levels that they give the animals.

### **Lack of a Formal Customer Service Quality Assurance Program May Prevent CACC From Ensuring That its Adoption Process Is Encouraging to All Customers**

Two of the three additional customers we spoke with complained about CACC's adoption process. One stated that while she was in the waiting room of one of the shelters, she saw at least three people who were waiting to adopt animals leave because they got fed up with waiting for so long. She also stated that CACC's pre-adoption questionnaire and interview include many more questions than those of other rescue groups she has dealt with. Another customer stated that she was very unhappy with the process she was forced to go through in her attempt to adopt a cat. She said that she and her husband were made to sit through a half-hour interview during which they were asked many questions that she thought were overly intrusive, such as their income, hours they work, and the colors of the rooms in their house. The reasons for the questions were not given. At the end of the interview, she was told, without any explanation, that she could not adopt a cat that day and would have to come back Saturday. Overall, this customer thought that the adoption process was very discouraging and stated that she may not go back to CACC to adopt a cat (although she was ready to adopt the day she went). In fact, this customer eventually adopted an animal from North Shore Animal League. These complaints indicate that an even greater portion of potential adopters may have negative experiences at CACC than was reflected in our survey (which included only customers who were successful at adopting from CACC—not those who left after being forced to wait for too long, or those who were discouraged by the application process.)

### **CACC Has Discouraged Some Rescue Groups**

Three of the five additional rescuers complained about poor customer service. One rescuer stated that CACC staff do not have office decorum, are crude, vulgar, and condescending. She described an incident when she went to look for a dog that had just been brought to the shelter by the police. Without checking the Chameleon system, CACC staff told the rescuer that they did not have the dog she described. The rescuer had to keep badgering one of the service representatives before she would look for the dog in Chameleon—when the service representative finally looked in Chameleon she found that the dog was, in fact, at CACC. This rescuer claimed that CACC staff did not want to take the time to search the Chameleon system, and that this has happened to her twice. She also stated that some of the staff at CACC lack any understanding of the needs of the animals.

Another rescuer stated that CACC service representatives are rude, uncaring, lackadaisical, and have a “just-another-paycheck” attitude. She described a situation in which a placement specialist for rescue groups forced her to wait for a half-hour before helping her (when she arrived at the shelter the placement specialist for rescue groups was smoking a

cigarette outside and asked her to go inside and wait), despite the fact that she had called ahead to make arrangements to pick up 15 cats, and had informed the service representative that a pet taxi would be waiting for her so that she could get the cats to her veterinarian before he closed for the day. This rescuer also stated that while she was at the shelter, she overheard one staff member informing another that a mother and child had been waiting to be helped for approximately three hours.

Still, a third rescuer expressed how frustrating it was to try to reach someone at the shelter; specifically she stated that no one picked up the phone, no one returned calls, and sometimes she got disconnected.

### **CACC Limits the Pool of Animals Available for Adoption**

One additional former employee and one additional rescuer we spoke with indicated that CACC is limiting the pool of adoptable animals by prohibiting the release of older animals. The former employee with whom we spoke stated that while she was working at CACC, the executive director instituted a rule that prohibited employees from permitting the adoption of any animals more than five or seven years old (she couldn't remember the exact age). CACC's policy regarding older animals was confirmed by a rescuer who tried to take an older dog from CACC, but was told by a CACC official that the dog was 13 years old, and too old to be adopted; the official stated that it was CACC's policy not to adopt-out older dogs and cats. Unwilling to accept this, the rescuer asked the director of the rescue group to inquire about the dog during her visit to the shelter that same afternoon. Despite a second request for the dog, the director was told that it was not available for adoption, that there were "other dogs" they could choose from.

One of the three additional customers we spoke to also complained that CACC unduly restricts animals that are allowed to leave the shelters. This customer said she brought to CACC an abandoned cat she knew to be friendly. She told CACC that after CACC checked the cat out, spayed or neutered it, etc., she would like to rescue the cat (take it back and see to its adoption). While CACC initially assured her that the cat would be "tagged for finder" and that, if the cat had no fatal diseases, she would definitely be able to take the cat back, when she later contacted the shelter, she was told that although the cat was healthy, it had been categorized "unadoptable" because of its temperament, and that CACC would have to euthanize the cat. Despite her repeated calls to the shelter and to CACC's executive management to dispute the evaluation of the cat's temperament and plead for the cat's life, and her offer to sign whatever legal release necessary, this customer was unable to persuade management not to euthanize the cat. Eventually, she located the cat's original owner and worked with him to formally re-claim it. Only then did CACC release the cat.

**CACC's Management and its Operations Are Not Focused on Achieving All Aspects of its Mission and Contract**

All six additional former employees, three of the five additional rescuers, and one additional customer complained about various aspects of management.

One former employee stated that it was always a battle with executive level management to place animals through adoption because the executive level managers were afraid of many types of legal liability. Another former employee stated that she had requested additional help to get animals adopted but was denied help because management thought that adoption numbers did not warrant it. Yet another former employee claimed that he was fired for simply questioning why CACC was putting so many animals down when they did not have to.

Two of these former employees also complained that management discourages staff members who show a real desire to help the animals. One former employee stated that he knew of several other people who left CACC because they couldn't stand working there anymore, always fighting with management over the way things were done. Another former employee had come to CACC with extensive connections to rescue groups, but was prevented by management from placing many dogs with these outside groups—the dogs were instead put to sleep.

One of the former employees and one of the rescuers complained about management's prohibition against permitting adoptions of older animals. (These complaints are discussed in the section above.)

One customer also complained that CACC management seems to just want to push the animals through—not get them adopted. As described earlier, this customer stated that she had brought an abandoned cat to CACC, stating that after CACC checked the cat out, spayed or neutered it, etc., she would like to rescue the cat (take it back and see to its adoption). CACC designated the cat for euthanasia. Despite the customer's persistent and strenuous efforts, CACC would not reverse its stand and release the cat to her care until she found the original owner who formally re-claimed the cat.

**APPENDIX II**

**Participant's Tel. #:** (     )

**Interviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Borough:** Bronx ( ) Brooklyn ( ) Manhattan ( ) Queens ( ) Staten Island ( )

***Audit of the Shelter Conditions and Adoption Efforts of the  
Center for the Animal Care and Control  
Audit # ME01-109A***

**Public Awareness Survey**

**Introductory Comments:**

**Good morning/Good afternoon, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am with the NYC Comptroller's Office. We are conducting a survey on animal control issues in New York. Do you have a couple of minutes to answer a few questions concerning this?**

- 1. Do you own a dog or cat? Which one? Yes  No
- 2. Have you ever considered adopting a/another dog or cat? Yes  No
- 3. If you wanted to adopt a dog or cat, where would you go?
- 4. If you found a stray dog or cat wandering about the streets, whom would you call?
- 5. If you lost a dog or cat or knew someone who lost a pet, whom would you call?
- 6. Can you please name **3** places where you could adopt a dog or cat?

**sub-questions to #6** If CACC is mentioned, ask **How did you hear about CACC? Yellow Pages? Police Precinct? Word of Mouth? Flyers? Ad?**  
If they mention just 'Animal Shelter' ask **What Animal Shelters are you aware of?**

- 7. Do you think there is a problem with stray dogs and cats in NY? Yes  No
- 8. Have you ever heard of the Center for Animal Care and Control?  
Can you please name the locations that you are aware of? Yes  No

**APPENDIX III**

NYCOOH Veterinary Public Health Services  
 CACC Contract Monitoring - Facility Inspection Report  
 Contract Period: 01/01/98 - 12/31/00

CACC Facility 326 E 14th St NYC NY  
 CACC Manager present (signature) [Signature]  
 CACC Veterinarian on duty (signature) [Signature]  
 VPHS Representative (signature) [Signature]  
 Date of Inspection 8/25/00

Areas Requiring Inspection	Yes	No
1. Walls: a. Clean, no holes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Ceilings: a. Clean, no holes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Floors: a. Clean, no holes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Water proof	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Drains clean	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Lighting: a. Adequate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Exterior Doors: a. Clean, intact, rodent proof	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Interior Doors: a. Clean, intact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Washrooms: a. Clean	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Plumbing intact and adequate ventilation provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Toilet paper, soap, single service towels provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Wards: a. Cages not overcrowded	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Cages washable and clean	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Cages intact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Animals in appropriate cages	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Clean, appropriately filled cat litter pans provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Temperature appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Ventilation adequate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Storage: a. Away from floor and walls	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Free of vermin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Feeding equipment properly stored and clean	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Loose material properly stored	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Infirmary: a. Separate, adequate, clean area provided for sick animals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Examination and treatment rooms and equipment clean	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Vacuum breakers provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. All areas clean and free of vermin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Sharps container provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Medication within proper date and properly secured	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Areas Requiring Inspection (Cont'd)		Yes	No
11. Refuse:	a. Properly stored in containers with tight fitting covers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	b. Containers clean, free of vermin, odors and residual waste	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	c. Containers adequate for size of operation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	d. Hose bibb and vacuum breakers provided	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Records:	a. Adoption records kept	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	b. Self-inspection current	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	c. Animals kept 48 hours prior to euthanasia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Operations:	a. Veterinary protocols adhered to	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	b. Food protocols adhered to	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Number of animals currently held for DOH 23  
 Number of Dogs 17  
 Number of Cats 6  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of animals since last inspection 8

Total shelter cage capacity \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of cages available for use \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of cages currently in use \_\_\_\_\_

Action / Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
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*REVIEWED BY ED BOYD  
 ED BOYD 8-25-00*

*locked*

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER



125 WORTH STREET, CN-28  
NEW YORK, NY 10013  
NYC.GOV/HEALTH

THOMAS R. FRIEDEN, M.D., M.P.H.  
COMMISSIONER  
TEL (212) 295-5347  
FAX (212) 295-5426

May 3, 2002

Roger Liwer, Assistant Comptroller for Audit  
The City of New York Office of the Comptroller  
Bureau of Audits  
1 Centre Street, Room 1100 North  
New York, New York 10007-2341

Dear Mr. Liwer:

The Department of Health (DOH) is responding to the draft audit report on shelter conditions and adoption efforts for the Center for Animal Care and Control (CACC) dated April 19, 2002. This response relates only to matters within the scope of DOH's contract with CACC. CACC's response to matters within the scope as well as those matters outside the scope of the contract has been prepared by CACC and is attached to this response for your information.

The Department disagrees with the report's main findings: that animals are not sheltered under humane conditions and often receive poor veterinary care. These findings are contrary to observations by DOH Veterinarians and Sanitarians. DOH has been closely monitoring the operations of CACC, the contractor that provides services to the City under contract, since its inception, January 1, 1995. From that date through April 2002, DOH has closely monitored CACC's contract performance and conducted over 1,200 inspections of CACC facilities. During these inspections, DOH did not observe evidence of inhumane treatment or substandard veterinary care cited in your audit. Although the audit notes on pages ES7 and ES8 that differences in review methodologies may have yielded different results, the training and experience of the DOH staff who conducted these inspections provide us with a high degree of assurance that the animals in CACC's charge are appropriately cared for. While DOH did not see evidence of such deficiencies, the Department is nonetheless concerned by the audit's findings.

The Department generally agrees with the report's finding that CACC has not been as successful as hoped in the area of increasing adoptions. DOH is working with the CACC to streamline and improve adoption procedures and has begun discussions with the animal care community, of which CACC is a part, to explore potential partnerships that will maximize animal care efforts and reduce demand for animal control services.

Inspections of Shelter Conditions and Operations: Beginning in 1995, DOH inspected all CACC

CACC Audit Response 5/3/02

shelters at least once a week. Since 1999, the frequency of CACC shelter inspections increased to twice a week. Animal-receiving facilities are currently inspected at least once a month. All inspections are performed by either New York State licensed Veterinarians or Public Health Sanitarians. The two Veterinarians conducting these inspections have more than 26 years of combined clinical experience treating small animals. The two Sanitarians conducting these inspections have all completed an intensive 6-week training course conducted by DOH's Health Academy and have more than 20 years of combined experience conducting inspections. During the audit period from January 1, 1999 through June 30, 2001, DOH conducted over 531 inspections of CACC facilities. Copies of these inspection reports were provided to the Comptroller's Office at the March 4, 2002 meeting. Of these inspections, 222 by Veterinarians took place at the Manhattan Shelter, 218 by Veterinarians took place at the Brooklyn Shelter, 31 (2 by Veterinarians, 29 by Sanitarians) took place at the Staten Island Shelter, 30 (25 by Veterinarians, 5 by Sanitarians) took place at the Queens Animal Receiving Facility and 30 (24 by Veterinarians, 6 by Sanitarians) took place at the Bronx Animal Receiving Facility. These inspections included frequent unannounced visits that investigated the physical plant, ward conditions, humane treatment, rabies observation of biting animals, compliance with applicable laws and regulations, record keeping and other activities that affect shelter operations. During site visits, DOH Veterinarians inspected all caged animals and reviewed medical records.

Based on the observations by DOH Veterinarians and Sanitarians during these inspections, we disagree with the findings of poor veterinary care and inhumane treatment reported in the audit. Specifically, DOH did not observe any cases of poor veterinary care, contagious animals being caged in general wards with healthy animals or inhumane treatment during 531 inspections conducted by DOH Veterinarians and other staff during the audit period. The auditors may have drawn other conclusions about the handling of contagious animals based on a misunderstanding of how cage cards are used by CACC. In addition, we also monitor animal bite cases and found no instances where these animals were accidentally euthanized.

Monitoring of Contractual Requirements: Since its inception, the CACC contract has been monitored by DOH through the veterinary inspections described above, the review of CACC reports, and follow-up on customer complaints. With the contract period beginning July 1, 2001, DOH expanded its on-site monitoring to include a comprehensive review of all contractual requirements. DOH monitoring has found deficiencies in CACC's adoption process, customer service, volunteer program and education and outreach efforts. Monitoring includes both operational and veterinary care contractual requirements. Aspects of the monitoring plan include adoptions, euthanasia, volunteer program, education and community outreach, customer service, intake and record keeping. The protocol requires three (3) site visits to each facility and a review of random sampling of records. The first site visits were conducted in November 2001; the second site visits were conducted in April 2002; and the third site visits will be performed in June 2002. Effective July 2002, the number of site visits will increase to four times per year. DOH has met with CACC to begin implementation of a corrective action plan for the deficiencies found during the site visits, i.e., the process of adoptions, customer service,

CACC Audit Response 5/3/02

volunteer program and outreach.

Adoptions: DOH and CACC have planned to streamline adoption paperwork. DOH has provided CACC with an electronic version of the dog license application that will be completed through the Chameleon system, thereby eliminating the need for paper processing. DOH has approved an electronic prototype of the rabies vaccination card for CACC to pilot before implementation. In addition, DOH and CACC have formed a joint committee to review current adoption procedures and develop improved strategies to increase adoption, including streamlining the adoptions process, increasing utilization of the Internet, and increasing participation in community events.

Customer Service: As a result of deficiencies in CACC's customer service program observed during our contract monitoring process, DOH has worked with the CACC over the past several months to improve its customer service program. CACC currently makes random telephone calls to field and shelter customers to evaluate customer satisfaction. Recently they have developed a post card survey that will be mailed to customers to follow-up on their experiences with CACC services. In addition, CACC is training shelter managers and other staff in improved customer service skills. This training is ongoing and will be part of new CACC staff orientation.

Volunteers: DOH agrees with the Comptroller's findings of inadequate use of volunteer staff and has been working with the CACC to increase the number and utilization of volunteers. Currently, CACC uses interns who are enrolled in the Veterinary Technician Program at LaGuardia College. DOH is working with CACC to identify other areas that can increase the number and improve overall utilization of volunteer services.

Public Education and Outreach: Effective September 2000, CACC began reporting its public education field staff activities to DOH in a monthly activity report. During the period between September 2000 and June 2001, CACC field services staff conducted 4,624 public education contacts. We are working with CACC to develop partnerships with other city agencies as well as private entities with an interest in animal care issues to increase educational and outreach opportunities.

Additional Staff: DOH agrees with the recommendations to consider hiring additional kennel attendants and veterinary staff if additional funding becomes available. However, DOH and CACC are focusing on ways to improve services without additional DOH funding, i.e. developing a closer working relationship with the animal care community and developing strategies to better utilize current resources and increase funds raised from private entities. With increased funding from private sources, one of the potential uses will be to hire additional kennel staff for improved animal care services.

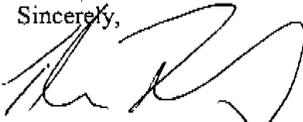
Performance Measures: Although the City's current contract between DOH and CACC does not include specific performance indicators, DOH does use specific guidelines to measure

CACC Audit Response 5/3/02

performance as part of our inspection process and CACC's overall compliance with the regulations and standards appropriate to its operations. The Department is currently renegotiating its contract with CACC to begin July 2002 and will include specific performance measures within the contract to enable DOH to better monitor contract compliance. These measures will be based on industry standards and guidelines and nationwide "best practices" for animal shelter operations.

In conclusion, the Department does not agree with the findings of inhumane treatment and substandard veterinary care. We do, however, agree with some of the other findings as described above. Beginning November 2001, discussions began with CACC concerning corrective actions required based on our monitoring. The Department continues to work with CACC toward improving animal care and control services. To that end, DOH has initiated discussions with members of the City's animal care community to strengthen public-private partnerships. DOH believes that improved public-private partnerships will enable the animal care community to improve animal care services and will help leverage the City's investment of City funds to maximize adoptions and reduce demand for CACC's control services. Such partnerships should also maximize spay-neuter initiatives to further reduce demand for control services and help educate the public on responsible pet ownership. We are committed to ensuring that the City achieves its overall goal of providing the highest level of animal care service while simultaneously reducing the need for animal control services.

Sincerely,



Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.  
Commissioner

Attachment: CACC audit response

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New York, New York 10007  
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Marilyn Haggerty-Blohm  
*Executive Director*



May 3, 2002

Honorable William Thompson  
Comptroller  
One Center Street  
New York, New York 10007

Dear Comptroller Thompson:

Attached please find the response of the Center for Animal Care and Control, Inc. ("CACC") to Audit Report of the Shelter Conditions and Adoption Efforts of the Center for Animal Care and Control/MEO1-109A. CACC anticipates that in accordance with audit protocol, this response will be amended to the Final Draft before public release. The opportunity to provide such a comprehensive response is appreciated.

Respectfully,

  
Marilyn Haggerty-Blohm  
Executive Director

**Response of Center for Animal Care and Control, Inc. (“CACC”) to  
Audit Report on the Shelter Conditions and Adoption Efforts of the Center for  
Animal Care and Control  
Audit Number: MEO1-109A**

**Overview**

Despite the inadequacy of the evidence cited in its preliminary and final draft audits, as shown by our response to them, the Comptroller’s Office chose to finalize its audit of our shelter conditions and adoption efforts (“Audit Report of the Shelter Conditions and Adoption Efforts of the Center for Animal Care and Control/ MEO1-109A”) in anticipation of its public release.

The observations reported frequently lack sufficiency, competency and relevance to the Comptroller’s conclusions, thus failing to support the conclusions reached. Moreover, the conclusions reached in the preliminary and final draft audits reflect an absence of expertise on the issues and a lack of objectivity that is to be expected of an audit conducted under the Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS), which govern these types of audits.

Many of the conclusions reached in this audit are not credible, as evidenced by: the antagonistic tone throughout the audit; the use of words and phrases of an inflammatory nature; the failure to use experts in areas requiring specialized knowledge; the slanting of the data presented; the inadequacy of the samples taken; the failure to make explicit the significant differences between CACC and the organizations with which it is compared in the audit; the failure to credit CACC’s significant accomplishments; and the use of anecdotal information from unnamed sources holding a clear potential for bias against CACC.

By limiting the scope of this audit, assigning specific staff with limited relevant knowledge, ignoring critical public safety issues, and ignoring reason and common sense, the Comptroller brings the objectivity of this audit into question. His choice of audit staff is akin to asking an Animal Control Officer to balance the CACC books.

During the period of this audit, CACC facilities were inspected 531 times by licensed DOH veterinarians and Public Health Sanitarians. This is an average of one inspection each day during the audit period. During these 531 inspections by licensed professionals, no evidence was found of inhumane treatment of animals or poor veterinary care when judged by the legal and professional standards in the field. The auditors, with no experience in this area, cite the 531 inspections, and state they do not believe their findings are “necessarily inconsistent with the findings in [their] report, because DOH veterinarians and public health sanitarians evaluate conditions in the shelters and the quality of care differently than [they] did.” This is precisely CACC’s point. The audit fails to evaluate CACC against relevant standards in the field and the auditors believe they understand the issues better than licensed professionals in the field.

They also claim that their findings are more accurate because their record reviews, surveys and 15 visits are more detailed and give broader insight than the 531 DOH inspections which, according to the auditors, cover specific periods of time and could not have identified the instances they found. This is absurd on its face. They also did not visit wards that were being cleaned at the time of their visits. Thus, their concern about getting wet prevented them from commenting on the cleaning procedures

The Comptroller was never denied access to CACC's official records, regardless of the irresponsible claim made in the audit. The auditors were again reviewing records in the central office on September 10<sup>th</sup> 2001, despite having been given access in April 2001. After September 11<sup>th</sup>, CACC did not return to its offices until late October because the area was restricted by order of the NYC Police Department. No further requests were made by the Comptroller to return to examine our documents further. It is understandable that they were preoccupied with other issues at such a tragic time, but it is not proper to blame us for their own failure to follow up on the data gathering. The audit team never advised DOH that it was having problems with access to documents at CACC further undermining the credibility of their repeated allegations

These are outrageous accusations that should have been deleted in the face of the documentation provided, if not for reasons of logic and fairness alone. At the minimum, it deserves a retraction and an apology.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Political influence in the audit process**

This audit was commenced, fieldwork was completed and the draft was issued under the tenure of former Comptroller Alan Hevesi. CACC is surprised therefore that Comptroller William Thompson could be so ill served by his staff both in the reporting and the issuance of this audit; one that was clearly motivated by the political interests of his predecessor. Comptroller Thompson has chosen to accept and finalize this audit despite CACC's invitation that the Comptroller conduct a new audit using veterinarians, public health sanitarians, and other licensed and/or credentialed animal care experts for fieldwork and statisticians capable of more thorough, statistically significant surveys. Instead, this well-intended and purposeful invitation was ignored by Comptroller Thompson, who has not responded to any of CACC's correspondence.

It is important to provide a context for this audit. CACC was originally approached by the Comptroller's Office in 1998 indicating that the animal activist community in NYC was not satisfied with the results of the financial audit just completed by the Comptroller and that they were pushing for a performance audit. CACC had recently received a significant increase in funding and suggested that a performance audit conducted one year hence would reveal significant improvements. CACC was not contacted by the Comptroller's Office until late 2000. When asked, the Comptroller's Office indicated that the audit was, in part, the result of renewed calls from the activist community.

Indeed, during the conduct of the audit the audit team met several times with outspoken and critical members of the special interest groups. The areas selected for audit mirror the criticisms of this small, but vocal, group.

The audit was conducted during the Mayoral campaign in which Alan Hevesi was a candidate who supported the special interest group's call for the abolition of CACC. More than once during the campaign, then Comptroller Hevesi responded publicly to questions from the special interest groups that he was auditing CACC and intended to release the audit. In fact the audit team met several times with Shelter Reform Action Committee members during the conduct of the audit. Clearly, this places the objectivity of this audit in question. The report itself answers that question.

### **Animal Control Issues**

CACC is the only organization in the New York area that is required by law and by contract to take control of every animal brought to it, including more than 21,800 deemed vicious or aggressive, which pose a significant danger to the people of New York and 16,218 which are too injured or ill to be adoptable. CACC cares for and re-homes or finds placement for more than 15,500 animals annually, while accepting animals no other shelter will handle.

CACC handles more than 57,000 animals per year; 90% of these are dogs and cats. The remaining 10% include urban wildlife – raccoons, possums, pigeons –as well as reptiles, birds, farm animals and 'pocket' pets – hamsters, rabbits, etc. Of the dogs and cats, fully half are animals that have been found roaming the streets of New York City, posing a risk to adults, children and leashed pets from attacks, disease, and auto accidents caused by animals darting into traffic. Those animals that are not a danger to the public are themselves in danger of injury, illness, attack and starvation.

Roughly half the animals that arrive at CACC shelters are deemed too aggressive, ill or injured for re-homing. One third of these are aggressive animals. In addition to street dogs, CACC assists the New York City Police Department in cases involving roaming packs of wild dogs, fighting dogs, which are typically gang related, and dogs used by drug dealers for protection. These animals are specifically trained to be aggressive and can rarely be rehabilitated successfully enough for that aggression to be eliminated. At best these animals remain unpredictable; at worst they remain dangerous. They do not belong on the streets of New York.

In addition to removing feral cats that are not associated with managed colonics and dangerous dogs from the streets and lots of New York, CACC responds to calls of wildlife that are injured or present a danger to residents. In 2001, 14 animals picked up by CACC, including one cat, tested positive for rabies. Few New Yorkers are aware that rabies has been found in New York City. If CACC were not responding to these calls, the potential for rabies exposure would be greatly increased. CACC provides an essential service to the City of New York.

CACC is under contract by the Department of Health to *provide services that protect the health and safety of the New York City public* and is the only organization in NYC charged with protecting the public health in instances involving animals. CACC is the only open admission shelter in NYC.

In conducting a performance audit of CACC, the Comptroller's Office ignored CACC's contractual obligations that protect the well being of New Yorkers and, instead, focused on those aspects of the contract that provide for the well being of the animals. In doing so, the Comptroller fails to portray the full importance of CACC to the residents of New York City.

The Comptroller failed to audit the success of CACC's efforts to pick up animals that are at-large, sick or dangerous (15,000 animals per year); its programs for accepting surrendered, lost and stray animals at the shelters (40,948 animals); the improvement in returning lost animals to their rightful owner (up 11%); the implementation of the progressive mandatory spay/neuter law aimed at controlling pet overpopulation (6,970 animals altered in 2001)and, finally, the level of compassion and expertise employed when providing a humane and painless death to unwanted and unadoptable animals.

#### **Animal Care Issues**

In addition to these important animal control responsibilities, as an animal welfare organization, CACC is committed to sheltering animals in a humane manner; reducing the numbers of homeless animals by promoting adoptions (up 12% in 2001), and conducting public education and community outreach *concerning animal control and related public health issues* (4878 times in 2001). All are required under the terms of the contract.

Furthermore, CACC works with smaller area shelters and humane organizations to reduce the number of homeless animals, which is part of our corporate mission (6,518 animals were released to more than 200 rescue groups for placement in 2001). The Comptroller chose to audit these last two functions that represent only a part of the overall efforts of CACC.

Despite the impression given by the Comptroller's audit, CACC takes its responsibilities to care for animals seriously. The provision of adequate housing, a safe and clean environment, adequate nurturance, medical services and temperament testing are clearly among our priorities and most significant accomplishments.

With respect to safety, CACC has an aggressive and proactive approach to dealing with mistreatment of animals in our shelters. CACC has rigorous standards for conduct, oversight within and outside the organization, staff training and documentation of any occurrences of what?. CACC disciplines employees, under contract provisions, for actions of commission as well as omission that affect the well being of an animal. CACC takes its responsibilities seriously and disciplines all such infractions up to and including termination. The evidence of animal mistreatment discovered by the audit team was

found in the personnel records of CACC employees indicating that CACC not only uncovers, but also disciplines, any acts of mistreatment. The auditors were too busy trying to support unfounded accusations to recognize that CACC is very effective at policing its staff.

The auditors spend a disproportionate amount of the report chastising CACC management for not providing “full” access to documents that are not the official CACC personnel records. Yet the accountants never requested reports generated by the CACC human resources management system, ABBRA, which provide a complete accounting of all employee infractions resulting in discipline, including those that involved direct care of the animals.

The auditors conclude that “animals are not always sheltered in humane conditions” but fail to define what standard is used, if any, to reach this conclusion.. In fact, the Federal standard for humane care of animals by laboratories, dealers and transporters requires access to water for at least one hour, two times each day. CACC far exceeds that objective standard.

The auditors play loose with statistics by indicating that 5 of 48 animals (10%) lacked access to water during one shelter tour. In reality there were 487 animals in the building on that day some of which were scheduled for surgery and had water withheld for that reason. Thus, less than 1% of the animals lacked access to water at the precise moment when the auditors walked though the shelter. But even this minute percentage does not demonstrate how long it took to provide water to these animals. Their conclusion that animals “were not being consistently spot-checked for clean water bowls” is based on their observation of “such a disparity between the conditions in the various wards – in some wards all animals had access to water, ...while in others none of the animals had access to water ...”. Their conclusions in these areas are wrong. In the case of wards being cleaned, water is filled before the animals are returned to their cages. Spot water inspections are done during all visits of the staff to the wards for any reason during the day.

In another walk-through, 21 of 144 (15%) of the animals were reportedly in soiled cages. The total number of animals in the building that day was 483, thus 4% were actually observed in soiled cages. The auditors did not determine how long it took to address these conditions, but assumed that the animals would not have been watered or cleaned at any time after the visit. Their conclusions in these areas are wrong. Full cage cleanings are conducted daily in each ward and spot cleanings are done as required. The auditors did not come back to check on those cages and have no basis to determine how long it takes before a soiled cage is cleaned.

### **Veterinary Care Standards**

Instances of sub-standard veterinary care are subject to strict disciplinary action by CACC, as evidenced in our personnel records. Largely through the unsubstantiated word of unidentified, non-credentialed persons, the auditors determined that there was “evidence of poor veterinary care.” These unfounded allegations injure the reputations of the licensed and unlicensed professionals at CACC and of our outside contract veterinarians. Such allegations are unfair in that staff is not afforded an opportunity to address their accuser. This biased and blatantly unfair tactic unfortunately is consistent with the overall tone of this audit report. Furthermore, the accountants, who should have an appreciation for numbers, failed to provide the proper context for these disciplinary actions despite the fact that we gave them information on the numbers of animals examined and treated without incident by each CACC veterinary department member.

For example, over a period of 2 ½ years, one veterinary technician was disciplined eight times for various infractions, none of which resulted in the death of an animal. During that time 27,000 animals were examined or treated by this veterinary technician. Failure to provide this context sheds doubt on CACC’s commitment to proper veterinary care. Providing all the facts confirms that CACC greatly values well-trained, competent and committed veterinary medical staff and effectively supervises this staff such that failure to follow procedures is caught, documented and disciplined.

CACC understands that the authority to perform euthanasia carries with it the awesome responsibility to be both accurate and humane. Even the most ironclad euthanasia procedures cannot protect against human error. CACC works to minimize the potential for human error by implementing strict procedures that, if followed, prevent accidental euthanasia. We regret those instances where human fallibility leads to erroneous euthanasia. This causes heartache for both the owner and the staff involved in the incident. Any discipline of employees for such matters does little to reduce their personal suffering over the animal’s death. An expert in the field of animal welfare could have assisted the auditors in understanding this dynamic.

The necessity of separating contagious and non-contagious animals by ward is determined by a veterinary evaluation based on the nature and degree of the contagion. Our contract requires the separation of these animals *only when necessary*. The auditors observed that ‘contagious animals were kept in wards with healthy animals and concluded that this “obviously increases the likelihood that healthy animals will become sick and possibly be euthanized as a result.” There is no factual underpinning supporting this claim. The Comptroller’s staff made limited visits (15 total visits to 5 shelters) and drew conclusions without the benefit of a veterinary determination. Under the State Education law, Article 130, Sub-Article 4, Section 6512, it is a class E Felony for an unlicensed person to practice veterinary medicine or to assist three or more persons in such practice. The practice of the profession of veterinary medicine is defined as diagnosing, treating, operating, or prescribing for any animal disease, pain, injury, deformity or physical condition...”. The accountants on the Comptroller’s staff are not qualified to render an opinion on the judgment of licensed veterinary professionals.

### **Adoption Efforts**

Despite considerable evidence to the contrary, the auditors concluded that "CACC has not made aggressive efforts to increase adoptions". Humane organizations view the "rate of live release" as a true and effective measure of success in making placements. The auditors dismissed this approach to focus narrowly on adoptions. Even with their limited focus, their analysis is flawed. Actual data provided to the auditors from the CACC Chameleon data base shows that in 2001 CACC increased its direct adoptions in each of three categories of adoptable animals: highly adoptable, adoptable and potentially adoptable. Most of the gain came in the category of highly adoptable where CACC showed an increase of 16% over 2000. In the adoptable category the improvement was 9% and in the potentially adoptable category CACC doubled its efforts from 3% to 6%. Overall, 80% of the highly adoptable animals, 65% of the adoptable animals and 27% of the potentially adoptable animals are placed by CACC directly or in partnership with more than 265 rescue organizations. Indeed, in 2001 CACC increased its direct adoptions overall by 12% despite a 4% decrease in total animals in the system.

The reliance of CACC on more than 265 rescue partners to place more than 6500 animals in 2001 belies the allegation that "CACC has discouraged some rescue groups." Since CACC implemented an aggressive direct adoption policy, we have been placing more of the highly adoptable animals directly from the shelters which has reduced the number of such animals available to the rescue organizations. Collectively, the humane community of NYC must focus its energies on those animals determined to be potentially adoptable and ensure adequate resources to address the health and behavioral problems of these particular animals.

CACC makes the utmost effort to adopt out animals approved for adoption. The auditors wrongfully conclude that "CACC limits the pool of animals available for adoption." Indeed, as an expert advisor would have confirmed, CACC uses an objective statusing system to evaluate all animals. CACC considers far more animals as adoptable than most open admission humane organizations. Our work with rescue organizations in the placement of potentially adoptable animals far exceeds efforts of other humane organizations. If the auditors had read and understood the implications of Status 4 (aggressive) designation, they would have realized that these animals (typically less than 10% of all intakes) are not merely nervous upon admission but indeed represent a public safety risk if released without a complete temperament evaluation to assess the level of risk. Not putting these animals into the placement stream protects the health and well being of New Yorkers, while ensuring that, where appropriate and possible, safety can be measured against the risk of releasing these animals. CACC is doing its job properly and appropriately.

There are many fine humane organizations that have perfected the art of selecting adoptable animals and finding them good homes. CACC has forged strong partnerships with other groups involved in humane animal care -- e.g., the ASPCA, Bide-A-Wee, the Brooklyn Animal Resource Coalition and more than 200 smaller organizations -- to

provide every animal with the best chance possible of finding a loving home. However, these organizations do not represent valid comparisons to CACC in either the number of adoptions, the cost per animal adopted, or the scope of the functions performed as each is a limited admissions shelters, while CACC is an open admission organization. Worthy of note is that CACC's adoption rate today is significantly higher than the rate attained by the ASPCA before CACC took over this contract.

All other shelters and rescue groups in the New York area have the luxury of choosing to assist those animals that are most adoptable and appealing to potential families. CACC must take in all those who are unwanted by anyone else. No other shelter system deals with the diversity or volume of animals CACC does. Despite this, CACC has either rehomed or found new homes for 45,947 animals over the past 4 years, with the number of successful placements growing over time.

The success of our colleagues is premised on the limited array of services they provide and the limited types of animals they will assist. In partnerships that acknowledge the strengths and constraints of each, CACC and other shelter organizations routinely transfer animals within this much broader network in order to place each animal in the shelter where it is most likely to be adopted. It is also appropriate for CACC to defer to these colleagues those services they provide well – humane education and community outreach – and to concentrate our limited resources on the tasks they will not perform – namely animal control and care for animals who are not easily placed. The Comptroller appears to disagree with this prudent resource choice.

### **Staffing**

Despite the deficiencies cited in the audit, the Comptroller's Office did recognize that CACC is only funded at 33 percent of the level it should be for comparable organizational functions and that as a result, CACC was understaffed to fulfill parts of our mission. In fact, going by the HSUS staffing guidelines, CACC is funded for approximately 12% of the kennel staff it requires.

### **Access to documents**

Throughout the conduct of this audit, CACC was asked for certain documents and reports, nearly all of which were provided the same day or within a few days when not readily available. At the conclusion of the exit conference, we provided the Comptroller with a computer-generated report of all disciplinary actions. Only ABBRA, the human resources computer software system used by CACC, and the personnel files maintained at the CACC Park Place headquarters are the official personnel records of this organization. At no time had the computerized information been requested by the auditors.

All other files, log books and notes to file are unofficial documents that are not permitted now that their existence has been brought to the attention of CACC management.

Individual shelter managers have been required to discontinue the use of secondary personnel documentation.

Despite this, the preliminary and final draft audits contains the unfounded allegation that they were not provided access to all personnel records and says they “can only reasonably assume that we were denied access to these records because CACC’s executive management did not want us to review any potentially adverse information they contained.” They could reasonably assume a lot of things, but the conclusion they made is not one of them.

Although CACC never denied access to the personnel files for the purpose of review, when the Comptroller asked for approval to *copy* personnel files, CACC requested assurances that the personal identifying information would be kept confidential at all phases during the audit including upon its release. A number of CACC employees had been harassed at home by members of the animal activist community and CACC sought only to protect their privacy. This request by CACC was originally made in April 2001 was eventually elevated to the level of the Comptroller’s Counsel and upon receipt in May 2001 of this written assurance of privacy protection, access to copy the personnel files was provided. The auditors fail to acknowledge the reason for this delay in the report and instead suggest that CACC used this time to delete damaging items from existing files. The auditors had full access to CACC personnel records from May 2001 through September 10<sup>th</sup> and spent several days during that time reviewing these files. This information belies the auditors accusations that CACC denied access to personnel records.

#### **Alleged restrictions on interviewing staff**

At the time of the Entrance Conference, CACC was in the midst of negotiating a Collective Bargaining Agreement with our unionized staff. Due to the delay of the City in promulgating revised Purchase of Service Guidelines, under which CACC could negotiate financial terms, we were unable to complete the negotiations. CACC staff at that time had been without a contract since October 2000 and had not had a raise since July 1999. Tensions were running high.

Therefore, CACC advised the audit team that we would permit all staff to be interviewed at the auditors’ convenience, but, as had been our practice during the financial audit previously conducted by the Comptroller, all interviews would be conducted in the presence of a member of CACC Counsel’s office. The auditors interviewed all senior staff in this manner. At no time did the auditors indicate that as a result of this routine and reasonable request, they would decline to interview current CACC employees. In the audit report, the auditors fail to note the reason why CACC chose to have only supervised interviews although they make a number of allegations as a result of this business decision. In fact, in a legal opinion by outside counsel sought by CACC following this allegation, CACC was told “CACC was prudent in seeking to have a representative present during interviews with its employees, both for the purpose of ensuring that employee rights were considered and for the purpose of evaluating the impact upon

CACC's obligations". It is difficult to believe that the official position of the Comptroller's Office is that a not-for-profit must subject its employees to interrogation by the City without the presence of a lawyer or that someone who avails himself of counsel is automatically considered suspect. Yet, that is the position of this audit.

Unlike most animal welfare organizations, CACC is a union employer. As such, CACC faces certain limitations in practice with which few other such organizations must contend. One of these is the use of volunteers. Although CACC uses volunteers in a number of non-animal related tasks, the audit criticizes CACC for not having a more extensive volunteer program. Although our Collective Bargaining Agreement allows for the use of volunteers, CACC has never been fully staffed in union positions, resulting in the potential for clashes with the union should we elect to use volunteers to perform the functions of unionized job titles.

### **Audit's failure to adhere to Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards**

In addition to its other failures as noted herein, this audit report is an egregiously unfair audit, failing to adhere to the Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards that the report claims to follow. The standards that this audit ignores, in whole or in part, are listed below:

- "Criteria are the standards used to determine whether a program meets or exceeds expectations. ... Auditors have a responsibility to use criteria that are reasonable, attainable and relevant to the matters being audited. The following are some examples of possible criteria: technically developed standards or norms, expert opinions, performance of similar entities..." [Section 6.11]

The auditors established their own criteria for evaluating the performance of CACC ignoring technical standards for care, *using standards not obtainable in the real world*, failing to engage experts in the conduct of the audit and selecting organizations for comparison that were not similar to CACC in scope, funding or size.

- "Assigning staff with the appropriate skills and knowledge for the job." [Section 6.17] "... With less experienced staff, supervisors may have to specify not only techniques for analyzing data but also how to gather it..." [Section 6.24]

The Comptroller assigned auditors with no known skills or knowledge in the areas of humane animal care, veterinary medicine or labor law to conduct an audit of a large, not-for-profit animal care organization. Furthermore given the size of potential survey fields, the sample sizes were so small as to be statistically insignificant and were referred to by a Deputy Comptroller as 'judgmental surveys'. That the auditors relied on data gathered under questionable means and with questionable validity to determine their findings and conclusions suggests that the auditors lacked the appropriate skills and knowledge and that proper supervision of the audit was lacking.

- “A written audit plan should be prepared for each audit.... The plan should include an audit program or a memorandum or other appropriate documentation of key decisions about audit objectives, scope, and methodology and of the auditors’ basis for those decisions. It should be updated, as necessary, to reflect any significant changes to the plan made during the audit...” [Section 6.19]

Although the Comptroller maintains that the matters covered in this report were discussed with officials from CACC and DOH **during** [emphasis added] and at the conclusion of this audit, the material in the report *was not* discussed with CACC before the Preliminary Draft was issued December 31, 2001. The original scope of this audit as presented at the Entrance Conference in September 2000, was changed as reflected in the Preliminary Draft released December 31, 2001. The scope again changed in the revised Pre-Draft released March 4, 2002 and the scope noted in the Final Draft released April 19, 2002 differed yet again. Despite repeated requests for a clarification and verification of the scope made by CACC during the audit itself, our requests were rebuffed. Four different scopes suggest that the auditors knowingly ignored the Government Auditing Standards relating to audit planning and that CACC was not afforded proper due process.

- “Evidence should be sufficient, competent and relevant. Evidence is sufficient if there is enough of it to support the auditors’ findings.... Evidence used to support a finding is relevant if it has a logical, sensible relationship to that finding. Evidence is competent to the extent that it is consistent with fact (that is, evidence is competent if it is valid).” [Section 6.53] “... Testimonial evidence obtained from an individual who is not biased or has complete knowledge about the area is more competent than testimonial evidence obtained from an individual who is biased or has only partial knowledge about the area...” [Section 6.54(f)]

The auditors conducted very limited sampling and admitted that the samples were neither random nor statistically significant. Interviewing 254 New York City residents out of a pool of 8 million is not a sufficient sample size from which to draw conclusions about awareness of CACC’s existence and its services. The auditors concluded that CACC is relatively unknown because 35% of the respondents named ASPCA as a place to adopt a pet while only 2% named CACC. In 2001, CACC adopted out nearly three times the number of animals as the ASPCA, a fact that is not reflected in the survey results. The auditors surveyed 33 persons out of a pool of more than 24,000 customers who had conducted business with CACC between January and June 2001. Of the 33 surveyed, 28 persons had adopted from CACC; from this limited pool (1%) the auditors formed several conclusions that are not favorable toward CACC adoption programs. Finally, the auditors surveyed 59 rescuers from a list of 265 rescuer organizations provided to them by CACC. In 2001, CACC placed more than 7,000 animals with rescue groups belying the auditors finding that “CACC has discouraged some rescue groups”. Thus the auditors’ evidence does not meet the test of sufficiency.

Nor does evidence that is presented in a deliberately misleading manner meet the test of competence. For example on page 16 the auditors record, “...During the first walk-through, animals in 3 of 19 wards lacked access to water. In those three wards, the total

number of occupied cages without water was 5 of 48 (10%)...". In actuality had the auditors not deliberately ignored the 16 wards where all animals had water, the number of animals without water in the shelter was just 5 of 487 or 1%.

Finally, the auditors admit that 6 out of the 8 former staff interviewed (the auditors chose not to interview current staff) had been terminated by CACC. The auditors do not question the possible bias of these former employees, nor do they report which comments were made by former employees who were terminated, as contrasted to those who were not terminated. They also do not reveal whether any of the people they interviewed has any undisclosed relationship with either CACC (e.g., as a prior volunteer) or with the special interest community of animal activists. Full disclosure is necessary to permit the knowledgeable reader to evaluate the testimony.

The inclusion in the Appendix 1 of some of the comments made by six former employees, five rescuers and three customers without revealing whether they had any potential bias is appalling as is the almost exclusive reference to negative comments. The audit states that most of them criticized some aspect of CACC's operation. That proves nothing. Criticizing aspects of our operation means that they also had positive comments that were not reported because they did not support the Comptroller's conclusions. Including their comments in this manner is additional evidence for our conclusion that the audit is neither balanced nor fair. Indeed, when asked for additional facts about allegations made by these persons the auditors indicted that "... to protect the anonymity of the source..." no evidence corroborating their allegations could be provided. Thus the competence of the evidence cannot be determined as it cannot be confirmed.

- The report should be complete, accurate, objective, convincing, and as clear and concise as the subject permits. [Section 7.5] ... Giving readers an adequate understanding means providing perspective on the extent and significance of reported findings, such as the frequency of occurrence relative to the number of cases or transactions tested and the relationship of the findings to the entity's operations. [Section 7.52] ... Correct portrayal means describing accurately the audit scope and methodology. [Section 7.56]

Auditors are expected to present an objective and balanced report. The subject audit is neither objective nor balanced. The auditors failed to present any of the significant improvements that occurred at CACC during the subject period including significant gains in funding levels, enhanced staffing levels, renovated facilities (Brooklyn), expanded Field Services, improved rates of adoption and the stabilization of existing and introduction of new computer management systems. Furthermore, the auditors failed to provide a reasonable perspective for the findings they recorded as they have repeatedly failed to provide the proper context for the frequency of occurrences. For example, the auditors claim that failures to properly record data in animal records occurred 44 times during the subject period although the magnitude of data entries exceeded one million. It was CACC's own personnel records that demonstrated to the auditors the existence of the

errors and demonstrated CACC's awareness and discipline of these errors within the progressive discipline set forth in our Collective Bargaining Agreement. Finally, that the audit scope changed four times without notification to CACC again suggests that the auditors were seeking specific answers and then fit the scope to these findings.

- The report should include only information, findings and conclusions that are supported by competent and relevant evidence in the auditors' work papers. If data are significant to the audit findings and conclusions, but are not audited, the auditors should clearly indicate in their report the data's limitations and not make unwarranted conclusions or recommendations based on those data. [Section 7.55] ... The audit report should be fair and not misleading, and should place the audit results in perspective. This means presenting the audit results impartially and guarding against the tendency to exaggerate or overemphasize deficient performance. [Section 7.58] ... Auditors should keep in mind that one of their objectives is to persuade, and this can best be done by avoiding language that generates defensiveness and opposition. [Section 7.59]

The allegations that were made by former staff, customers and rescuers that are not supported by fact or sufficient evidence as indicated by the auditors' failure to provide credible information on the actual occurrences shows that several of the conclusions are unwarranted and unsupported. Throughout the conduct of this audit, from the earliest days of fieldwork, the auditors used questions and made allegations that deteriorated into an environment of mistrust and antagonism. The auditors continue this atmosphere by releasing a report that is both inflammatory and adversarial. Such behavior has proven to be both unproductive and unprofessional.

### **Conclusion**

Upon the original late 1998 phone call requesting a performance audit, CACC endorsed the idea that such an audit could be beneficial once the opportunity for new programs to take hold had occurred. Thus we welcomed this audit when re-contacted in September 2000. As such our disbelief at the tone and inferences during the conduct of this audit and our outrage at its findings and conclusions is understandable. For whatever reason, this audit team has an ax to grind and chose to use it on the hard-working, dedicated staff of CACC. That subjective, personal attacks as reflected in this audit could be endorsed by the Comptroller is astounding. What will truly be unfortunate is that once again the animals at CACC will pay a price for the callous, biased manner in which accountants, this time, rather than activists, have portrayed a shelter system they were not qualified to audit.

## **AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES**

There are five major areas in which the findings of the comptroller do not accurately reflect the efforts of the Center or the conditions as they existed: conditions in the shelters; accidental euthanasia of animals, animal mistreatment, inadequate veterinary care, and the failure to be aggressive in increasing adoptions.

### **I. Alleged Conditions in the Shelters**

**Recommendation 1.** While additional funding most likely will be impossible to obtain in the near future, given New York City's financial situation after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on the World Trade Center, we recommend that, if it ever becomes possible, DOH consider amending CACC's contract to fund the hiring of additional kennel attendants. (The need to increase veterinary staff is addressed in *Recommendation 13*.) DOH and CACC should consult other shelters and organizations such as the Humane Society of the United States to determine appropriate staffing levels at CACC shelters. Required staffing levels should then be specified in the terms of CACC's contract and provided for in the contract budget.

**Response** CACC has aggressively pursued increased funding each year and has been successful. While the fiscal problems may impact all city-funded programs, the effect on CACC should be minimized because of its critical safety functions. An amended contract will be executed allowing for the hiring of additional kennel staff should additional funding be forthcoming.

**Recommendation 2.** We recommend that DOH amend CACC's contract to include a specific requirement on how frequently dogs should be walked.

**Response** An important fact for the public to know is that 35% of the CACC census of dogs are considered dangerous and, therefore, handling for the sake of exercise represents a risk to staff and other animals which has been demonstrated by serious injuries to experienced CACC staff. Implementing an increase in animal exercise where appropriate has fiscal consequences related to staffing not reflected in the comptroller's audit. The suggested language is not appropriate for a contract since the number of times alone is not a reasonable standard for exercise. The health and size of the animal, the type of exercise, and the duration of the exercise are factors that will be used to determine exercise requirements once space is available.

At the time of the audit assign was posted on the dog run access door in Manhattan prohibiting use of the runs because soda bottles and syringes were found in the runs, having been thrown at the animals by the residents in the neighboring building. Until CACC could assure the safety of staff and animals in the runs, they were temporarily closed.

**Recommendation 3.** Ensure that: all dogs are walked; all animals have constant access to water; animals' cages are kept clean; animals are put only into dry cages; and cats, dogs, contagious and nursing animals are kept in separate areas.

**Response** The Comptroller's staff ignored the reality of what humane housing of animals requires in favor of an unrealistic and unattainable standard. All animals in each CACC facility are provided access to water at all times, except during cleaning times when the water bowls are removed for disinfecting, and when they are scheduled for spay/neuter surgery. If an animal drinks and/or spills its water, the water is refilled during regular spot checks. During their visits to the shelters, the auditors did not revisit the wards where animals were observed without water to verify if the water had been replaced.

Cages are kept clean at all times in conformity with operational reality. Every cage is completely cleaned and disinfected each day and spot cleaned as needed during the day. The auditors use deliberate misrepresentation to depict conditions in a negative light. For instance, the report states "6 of 19 wards contained soiled cages..." then completely ignores the 13 wards with no soiled cages to state that 21 of 144 cages were soiled when in reality it was *21 of 483 cages*.

This is violation of GAGAS 7.28 which requires that "*[I]n reporting significant instances of noncompliance, auditors should place their findings in perspective. To give a reader a basis for judging the prevalence and consequences of non-compliance, the instances of noncompliance should be related to the universe of the number of cases examined. . . .*"

CACC houses all animals in dry cages. The materials used in the construction of the Manhattan T-Kennels absorb water and remain wet for a short period after cleaning. These kennels will be replaced during the upcoming renovations.

**Recommendation 4.** Enforce the policy of separating contagious and non-contagious animals at all the shelters. At the Staten Island shelter, CACC should implement its plans to convert the unused staff lounge as soon as possible and set up a separate ward for the contagious animals.

**Response** CACC uses a statusing system identifying degrees of contagious illness. If a licensed veterinarian determines that an animal's contagious condition represents a risk to other animals, it is relocated to a ward for contagious animals. In cases where the contagious condition does not present such a threat, it may be placed in a mixed ward. No reference to this veterinary determined rating was made in the audit. This policy is consistent with the Animal Welfare Act which requires that dogs or cats having or suspected of having a contagious disease must be isolated from healthy animals in the colony, *as directed by the attending veterinarian (Sect. 3.7 (e))*.

**Recommendation 5.** Investigate the possibility of obtaining additional interns through area colleges to supplement staff in providing animal care.

**Response** CACC routinely utilizes interns from the LaGuardia College Veterinary Technician program, which is the only licensed veterinary technician program in NYC.

## **II. Alleged Animal Mistreatment**

**Recommendation 6.** CACC immediately terminate any employee who physically abuses any animal.

**Response** Any CACC staff person found to have abused an animal is terminated. Pursuant to the labor contract, an employee can only be disciplined or discharged for "just cause." CACC has the legal burden of proving just cause. To date, because of the management system of discipline review, the discipline process has worked and management's decisions have not been reversed or modified by an arbitrator.

**Recommendation 7.** Provide more supervision of CACC employees, particularly the kennel attendants, who are directly responsible for the care of the animals.

**Response** CACC provides adequate supervision to all employees, including kennel attendants. During the primary hours of service to the animals and public (8AM – 8PM) there is a ratio of one manager

for every three staff in the shelters. With additional resources, CACC can provide additional supervision where desirable on evening and overnight shifts.

**Recommendation 8.** Provide employee support services to help employees deal with their frustrations and to prevent them from releasing their frustrations on the animals.

**Response:** There is no pervasive practice of staff venting frustrations on the animals. CACC's health benefits provide for employee assistance services. CACC provides training opportunities to staff and affords them the time to attend.

**Recommendation 9.** Reconsider its forced overtime policy, possibly offering incentives for staff members to come in and work shifts for which they are not scheduled, rather than forcing employees to work two shifts in a row. Possible incentives could include: the option of swapping shifts with other employees, "merit raises for outstanding job performance, and additional employee recognition awards.

**Response:** The present method of assigning overtime is the result of collective bargaining with the Union and is controlled by provisions in the labor contract. CACC cannot unilaterally change the present system without negotiating the change with the Union. To maintain services and operations, CACC is forced to utilize available staff following the labor contract's assignment of overtime procedures. Management does attempt to accommodate employees required to work overtime. Accommodations have included allowing employees to leave at the end of their regular shift and to later return to work after a substantial break to work on the overtime shift, and to working less than a full second shift by limiting their overtime work to just certain necessary tasks. If staff arrange a 'swap' with colleagues of equal training, CACC has acknowledged and permitted this practice.

**Recommendation 10.** Explore ways to recruit more qualified, dedicated staff, such as reliance on recruiting part-time employees from animal science-related programs in area colleges.

**Response:** CACC staff are dedicated, well-trained and thus qualified staff. It is offensive for the auditors to suggest otherwise. CACC regularly attends career day events and advertises employment on several websites that are likely frequented by animal science students. Entry level salaries are a significant deterrent.

### **III. Accidental Euthanasia**

**Recommendation 11.** Provide staff with continuous training concerning the use of the Chameleon system and the importance of entering the various types of information.

**Response:** All CACC staff receive Chameleon training at hiring and through daily supervision in the shelters. Any changes to Chameleon are handled with specific training classes. Failure to complete Chameleon data entry properly is disciplined.

**Recommendation 12.** Provide additional training on and increased supervision of the euthanasia process to ensure that all control procedures are followed.

**Response** CACC has implemented triple safeguards to ensure proper identification of animals. CACC implemented additional controls on the euthanasia process since the period of review by the Comptroller's staff (January 1999 – June 2001). If the procedures, which include matching the animal's collar to the card, the computer record and scanning for a microchip prior to euthanasia to verify the appropriate animal is being euthanized, are followed, no "accidents" can occur. If an animal is inappropriately euthanized, it is because the procedures in place have not been followed. All instances of failure to follow procedure are disciplined.

### **IV. Allegations of poor veterinary care**

**Recommendation 13.** While additional funding most likely will be impossible to obtain in the near future, given New York City's financial situation after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on the World Trade Center, we recommend that, if it ever becomes possible, DOH consider amending CACC's contract to fund the hiring of additional veterinarians and veterinary technicians. (The need to increase kennel staff is addressed in *Recommendation 1*.) DOH and CACC should consult other shelters and organizations such as the Humane Society of the United States to determine appropriate veterinary staffing levels at CACC shelters. Required veterinary staffing levels should then be specified in the terms of CACC's contract and provided for in the contract budget.

**Response** CACC has aggressively pursued increased funding each year and has been successful. While the fiscal problems may impact all

city-funded programs, the effect on CACC should be minimized because of its critical safety functions. An amended contract will be executed allowing for the hiring of additional veterinary staff should additional funding be forthcoming.

**Recommendation 14.** Ensure that staff veterinarians provide adequate supervision of veterinary technicians.

**Response:** CACC veterinarians provide adequate supervision of the veterinary technician. Veterinarians oversee the work of veterinary technicians and will correct or discipline deficiencies as noted in CACC personnel records.

**Recommendation 15.** Ensure that there is an adequate number of medical staff at all times to address the medical needs of animals.

**Response** During the audit the Comptroller's staff did not perform an efficiency study that would have determined if current staffing levels are adequate.

**Recommendation 16.** Quickly terminate any veterinary staff members who are found to be unqualified or who consistently provide poor care.

**Response:** As with any CACC employee, any veterinary staff member found to be unqualified or consistently providing poor care would be disciplined up to and including termination as appropriate.

**Recommendation 17.** Investigate ways to attract more qualified veterinarians and veterinary technicians.

**Response:** This recommendation alleges that current CACC veterinary staff are less qualified. The auditors conducted no review of the credentials of CACC veterinarians with the State Education Department, the licensing body for veterinarians. Had they, it would have been evident that no complaints or disciplinary actions have been initiated against CACC veterinarians. The auditors are otherwise unqualified to make judgments on the professional qualifications of CACC veterinary medical staff.

**Recommendation 18.** Evaluate the performance of all veterinary technicians and determine whether there is an advantage to employing licensed veterinary technicians (e.g., to perform more of the necessary medical functions and generally provide better care). If there

seems to be an advantage, CACC should consider hiring only licensed veterinary technicians in the future.

**Response** CACC actively posts all positions on national recruitment boards on the websites of animal welfare organizations frequented by veterinary technicians. The New York State Veterinary Medical Association concurs that there is a shortage of licensed veterinary technicians in the northeast. CACC urges CUNY to expand its veterinary technician offerings beyond the one limited program at LaGuardia Community College.

**Recommendation 19.** Implement a process to monitor and evaluate the performance of contracted veterinary clinics.

**Response** CACC monitors our contractors for compliance with contract provisions. Any pattern of repeated or deliberate mistreatment of animals would be noted and reported by CACC. No such patterns have been observed. Evaluating veterinary practices is a responsibility of the State Education Department, the licensing body for veterinarians.

## **V. Allegations of failure to increase adoptions aggressively**

### **A. Alleged limited outreach and marketing**

**Recommendation 20.** Ensure that photographs posted by CACC on Petfinder are clear and attractive.

**Response** CACC continues to improve the technology used in posting photographs to Petfinder.org and reassigned responsibility for this important function. The quantity and quality of the posted photos has improved measurably.

**Recommendation 21.** Increase CACC's outreach, public education and advertising efforts. CACC should speak to other shelters to obtain ideas, and pursue relationships with local media outlets and enter into partnerships with private companies willing to sponsor special events or advertising campaigns.

**Response** CACC continues its aggressive efforts to promote awareness of our services particularly adoptions through PSAs for radio and television, movie theater advertising, posters on sanitation trucks and buses, and advertisements on LIRR and Metro North train schedules. Nonetheless, CACC has retained the services of a

Public Relations firm to assist in the development of a multi-media public relations campaign.

**Recommendation 22.** Interact with local animal welfare organizations and enlist their aid in promoting CACC and its adoption services.

**Response:** CACC interacts daily with other local animal welfare organizations as evidenced in the more than 6,500 animals we place annually with our placement partners. For 2000 and 2001, CACC participated with Adoption Alliance members on a joint subway campaign promoting shelter adoptions. CACC, ASPCA, Bide-a-Wee and Humane Society of New York were featured in this joint advertisement. CACC as noted works with Petfinder.com to insure that our adoptable pets are featured on the Internet.

**B. Allegations of inadequacy of off-site adoptions**

**Recommendation 23.** Increase participation in adoption events.

**Response** CACC does not endorse offsite adoption events as they often result in impulse adoptions that have a higher rate of return. We will seek to balance this reality with the desire to increase availability of CACC animals.

**Recommendation 24.** Extend its off-site adoption program. CACC should consider showing animals for adoption at additional veterinary clinics and in pet supply stores, among other locations. CACC should also consider working with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to create pet adoption spaces where CACC animals can be shown at suitable times, such as spring, summer and fall weekends.

**Response** CACC does not endorse offsite adoption events as they often result in impulse adoptions that have a higher rate of return. We will seek to balance this reality with the desire to increase availability of CACC animals.

**Recommendation 25.** Improve its controls over record keeping for adoption events to ensure the accurate documentation of the animals adopted at each event and the number of hours that volunteers worked at each event. CACC should use this information in planning future adoption events.

**Response:** CACC has added an adoption sub-type to the Chameleon outcome field that will reflect off-site adoption events. CACC will explore acquisition of software designed to track and report volunteer contributions.

**Recommendation 26.** Specifically designate those animals adopted at adoption events in the Chameleon system.

**Response:** See recommendation 25.

**C. Allegation of failure to provide formal customer services quality assurance program**

**Recommendation 27.** Develop a formal customer service quality assurance program as required by the contract with DOH.

**Response** CACC has a customer service quality assurance program in development. Following customer service training of shelter staff this program will be implemented. A September 2002 target date is set. Presently all complaints are followed up with the complainant.

**Recommendation 28.** Provide service representatives with additional, and continuous, training in customer service.

**Response** CACC has a customer service quality assurance program in development. Following customer service training of shelter staff this program will be implemented. A September 2002 target date is set. Presently all complaints are followed up with the complainant.

**D. Allegations of discouraging rescue groups**

**Recommendation 29.** Work more cooperatively with rescue groups interested in helping CACC place animals. CACC should ensure that all employees understand the importance of maintaining good working relationships with these groups, and that they treat rescuers professionally and courteously, and that they return calls from rescuers in a timely fashion.

**Response** CACC employees understand the importance of maintaining good working relationships with PET Partners and other 'rescue' groups and individuals. CACC staff treats all such persons and groups professionally and courteously although they are not always

treated in a like manner. CACC routinely utilizes the services of 'rescue' groups and individuals to a greater degree than most humane organizations. It is a chronic, never ending complaint of rescuers that CACC does not work well with rescue individuals and organizations, yet during the period of the review, CACC placed more than 18,000 animals with rescue groups. The auditors failed to acknowledge the success of the CACC special adoption initiative.

**Recommendation 30.** Make the PET applications process less cumbersome and less paper intensive.

**Response** CACC advised the auditors that the PET Program was in response to state legislation that would have prohibited CACC (and any other humane organization) from utilizing the services of unincorporated rescue groups. At the request of CACC, Governor Pataki vetoed this legislation. CACC provided a copy of the Governor's message and the proposed legislation to the auditors who chose to ignore this important information.

**Recommendation 31.** Inform rescue groups by letter that: CACC is implementing the PET program incrementally; it plans to eventually provide PET applications to all rescue groups; it will not stop working with those rescue groups that have not yet received their PET applications.

**Response** CACC notified all rescue groups that have previously or are currently working with CACC that the PET Program was being implemented in phases. CACC also notified rescue groups that no one would be discontinued during the transition phase unless there was just cause. Copies of this correspondence and the recipient lists were provided to the auditors and not acknowledged.

**E. Allegations of limitation to the pool of adoptable animals**

**Recommendation 32.** Ensure that all animals initially given a "4" status are re-evaluated for temperament.

**Response** CACC agrees that all animals should be afforded a full temperament evaluation. Current staffing levels do not permit this at this time. However, the Comptroller's staff did not report that the number of animals that receive a Status 4 designation typically represent fewer than 10% of total animals. Furthermore, as provided to the accountants, 50% of the animals statused as a 4T are cats, for which there is not an industry approved temperament

evaluation. CACC did provide information on those animals that received re-evaluations that were not reflected in the audit.

**Recommendation 33.** Cease the practice of limiting the adoption of older animals. CACC should work cooperatively with customers so they may adopt the animals most suited to their individual situations, and with rescue groups so that they can take as many animals as possible out of the shelters to be placed in adoptive homes.

**Response** CACC does not limit the adoption of animals exclusively by age. Information to this effect was presented to the audit team and was not reflected in the report.

**Recommendation 34.** Use the Bronx and Queens receiving centers to show adoptable animals until the opening of planned full-service shelter in the Bronx and Queens.

**Response** CACC is working actively with community representatives and elected officials in the Bronx and Queens to open full service shelters in both boroughs, as required by law. Due to limited funding, CACC is unable to provide adoption services in the Bronx and Queens receiving facilities at this time

#### **VI. Allegations of failure to raise funds and use volunteers**

**Recommendation 35.** We recommend that CACC plan and implement additional fundraising efforts. CACC should contact other non-profit shelters to obtain ideas regarding effective fundraising methods.

**Response** CACC has aggressively pursued City funds to establish a baseline that adequately supports the services for which CACC is contracted. To this end between 1998 and 2001 through aggressive negotiation and lobbying, CACC secured an increase of 53% in city funds.

CACC believes that private funds should be used to supplement not supplant City funds. CACC's private funding efforts are not part of the contract and not an appropriate subject of review by the Comptroller. The auditors did not request a full accounting of private resources available to CACC. CACC has maintained that the quasi-government nature of the Board of Directors limits our ability to raise private funds. Nonetheless, CACC will utilize the services of its Public Relations consultant to explore more aggressive ways to raise private funds.

It is important to note that the humane organizations to which the auditors compared CACC, that is the ASPCA and Bide-a-Wee, spend 21% and 11% of their annual budgets on fundraising respectively. The ASPCA spend more than \$8.2 million per year and Bide-a-Wee spends more than \$1.1 million per year on fundraising alone. As limited admission shelters, neither organization serves animals in the volume that CACC handles. Thus, perhaps more compelling is the percent of funds spent on program services; this is only 56% for the ASPCA and 67% for Bide-a-Wee. CACC allocates 86% of its funds to program services. Auditors have an obligation to disclose such information when using comparisons to formulate findings and recommendations.

**Recommendation 36.** Aggressively increase the number of volunteers through a stronger recruitment effort aimed at individuals interested in the care of animals. CACC should consider enlisting the aid of rescue groups and other area animal welfare organizations in recruiting volunteers.

**Response** Upon the recommendation of the Humane Society of the United States, volunteers should not be used or encouraged until CACC can complete a formal program of job descriptions, training, evaluation and supervision. Indeed, HSUS states: *“For some shelters, a volunteer program is not worth the investment. Certain animal care and control facilities, for example, do without volunteer programs because liability concerns or labor issues make it impractical or impossible to place volunteers in positions of responsibility. Other humane organizations lack the resources necessary to oversee such a program. Simply put, a shelter can be successful without volunteers.”* The auditors believe that “. . . CACC should provide more supervision of CACC employees . . . thus supporting its believe that CACC is not yet ready to launch a volunteer program. Nonetheless, CACC actively engages volunteers in tasks that are not directly involved in the care and handling of animals.

**Recommendation 37.** Expand duties available to volunteers to include more direct animal care, such as dog walking, cage cleaning, and cat grooming.

**Response** The Humane Society of the United States recommends that volunteers not be used or encouraged until CACC can complete a formal program of job descriptions, training, evaluation and supervision. Indeed, HSUS states: *“For some shelters, a*

*volunteer program is not worth the investment. Certain animal care and control facilities, for example, do without volunteer programs because liability concerns or labor issues make it impractical or impossible to place volunteers in positions of responsibility. Other humane organizations lack the resources necessary to oversee such a program. Simply put, a shelter can be successful without volunteers.”* As noted by the auditors, “...CACC should provide more supervision of CACC employees...” thus concurring that CACC is not yet ready to launch a volunteer program. Nonetheless, CACC actively engages volunteers in tasks that are not directly involved in the care and handling of animals.

**VII. Allegations of failure of management and operations to focus on meeting contract requirements**

**Recommendation 38.** CACC’s board of directors and executive management convene to discuss the organization’s mission, to determine whether the current mission statement accurately reflects CACC’s purposes, and to reconcile its organizational and management philosophy with its contract and stated mission. If the board and executive management determine that the current mission statement is accurate, then they must develop a plan for the organization to change direction and bring its operations in line with the pursuit of all of the goals in its mission statement. If the board and management decide they are not interested in pursuing all of the goals in CACC’s mission statement, they should change the mission statement accordingly, and negotiate any necessary amendments to CACC’s contract with DOH.

**Response** CACC is engaged in a strategic planning process that began with the revision of the organization’s mission statement. The Strategic Planning Committee adopted this mission statement in mid 2001 leading to the auditors’ confusion in their use of the old mission statement. CACC is aggressively pursuing all aspects of the mission statement regardless of which version is used. Nothing in the audit report supports the Comptroller’s allegation that CACC is not pursuing all the goals identified in the mission statement. Indeed, the auditors admit that they did not audit significant parts of the contract and mission statement.

**Recommendation 39.** We recommend that CACC’s board of directors ensure that there is a quorum present when it holds its meetings and votes on items.

**Response** CACC agrees.

**Recommendation 40.** We recommend that CACC's board of directors should comply with the Open Meeting Law and ensure that all board members, officers, and invited speakers speak audibly so that members of the public who attend the board meetings may hear what is said.

**Response** The CACC Board of Directors complies with all aspects of the Open Meetings Law. Persons attending the meetings can observe and hear all discussions; however hidden recording devices may not be able to record the proceedings frustrating our audience.

**Recommendation 41.** We recommend that DOH amend CACC's contract to include specific and measurable performance requirements and/or standards for all appropriate service-related areas.

**Response** Effective July 2001 CACC and DOH entered into a performance-based contract that the auditors fail to note. The specificity of the performance measures suggested by the auditors reflect the oversimplification of complex variables that they failed to grasp throughout this audit process. Clearly the auditors cannot believe that such restrictive terms that fail to account for changing field conditions would be acceptable to any contractor.

# Led Astray:

## Reforming New York City's Animal Care and Control

January 2013



Office of the Manhattan  
Borough President

**Scott M. Stringer**  
Manhattan Borough President

## ABOUT MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT SCOTT M. STRINGER

During his nearly three decades of public service, Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer has achieved tangible results for New Yorkers by forging diverse coalitions and addressing the City's most enduring urban challenges. He has dedicated himself to making Manhattan more affordable and livable, tackling issues such as housing, school overcrowding, public safety, balanced development, sustainability, and equal opportunities for underserved communities.

Prior to being elected Borough President in 2006, Stringer, a native New Yorker, served for 13 years in the New York State Assembly. Representing Manhattan's Upper West Side, he led the successful fight to end "empty-seat voting" in the State Assembly, and voted against every attempt to weaken rent regulations. Stringer also emerged as a leader on animal care issues, particularly in the fight against Puppy Mills and Canned Shoots.

As Borough President, Scott Stringer has released over 45 reports, including most recently:

- Start-Up City: Growing the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem for All (December 2012)
- The Fiscal Cliff: How Looming Program Cuts and Tax Hikes Could Affect New York City Residents (November 2012)
- Economic Abuse: The Untold Cost of Domestic Violence (October 2012)
- Reforming NYCHA: Accountability for the nation's largest housing authority (August 2012)
- Time to Rebuild: A Blueprint for Reforming New York City's Department of Buildings (March 2012)
- Rooftop Revolution: How Solar Panels on Public School Rooftops Can Jumpstart the Local Green Collar Economy and Dramatically Expand Renewable Energy in New York City (January 2012).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The report cover photo was taken at an AC&C shelter by Sabrina Paige.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	1
I. Introduction: A History of Animal Care and Control.....	4
A. New York City Animal Care 1866-1995	
B. The Center for Animal Care and Control	
C. Report: “Dying for Homes”	
D. Attempts to Fix the System and Service Cuts, 2000-Present	
II. Today: Ongoing Problems at AC&C.....	7
A. Unacceptable Conditions at City Shelters	
B. Declining Results	
C. Shifting the Burden of Responsibility to Outside Groups	
D. Feral Cats	
E. Lack of Transparency	
III. Securing the Financial Future.....	15
A. Dog Licensing	
B. Strategies to Increase Licensing Compliance	
C. Fundraising and Revenue Generation Model	
IV. Best Practices: Jurisdictions with Successful Animal Care Systems.....	18
A. Calgary, Alberta, Canada	
B. San Diego, California	
C. Washoe County, Nevada	
V. A Local Governance Model: The Central Park Conservancy.....	20
VI. Recommendations.....	21

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New York City's Animal Care & Control ("AC&C") – the non-profit corporation that runs the largest animal shelter system in the Northeast – is in dire need of reform. Since 1995, AC&C has been under contract with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene ("DOHMH") for rescuing, caring for and finding loving homes for the city's homeless and abandoned animals. However, AC&C's performance falls short of this mission.

Adoptions have dropped 37 percent in the past six years while placements, which enable AC&C to pass the responsibility of caring for an animal onto a rescue group, have increased by 70 percent. Dog licensing, a viable source for significant revenue, lingers at around 10 percent, and the number of new licenses issued has declined for three straight years. Furthermore, a high rate of illness at AC&C shelters exposes thousands of animals each year to potentially life-threatening conditions. AC&C's inability to generate outside revenue has made the non-profit overly-dependent on City funding, which historically has been inconsistent and inadequate.

The root of the problem is structural: AC&C is controlled by the DOHMH. The DOHMH both administers the City's contract with AC&C and oversees its board – leaving little room for AC&C to question DOHMH priorities and decisions. In short, AC&C's Executive Director and board members lack the independence, animal care expertise and fund-raising capabilities necessary to properly fulfill their mission. As a result, AC&C has experienced years of under-funding, mismanagement and service cuts – and the animals under its control have suffered severe neglect at shelters.

Nothing reflects the organizational dysfunction of Animal Care & Control more profoundly than its management history. Since 1995, the corporation has had eleven different Executive Directors, including eight in the last ten years. Additionally, AC&C has been without a full-time Medical Director on staff since February 2010, contributing to deplorable shelter conditions and a high rate of illness among dogs and cats.

On October 29, 2012, Superstorm Sandy hit New York City, causing catastrophic damage to numerous neighborhoods and displacing thousands of residents, businesses and animals. In the days following the storm, volunteers and rescuers reported that AC&C's doors were closed and field operations ceased – preventing individuals from dropping off found animals or adopting out existing ones. Veteran rescuers said the agency effectively stopped communicating – by phone, e-mail or web postings – making it impossible to know how its animals were faring or what the agency needed.

As AC&C struggled to respond, outside groups stepped in to fill the leadership void. Many smaller rescue groups took on the sometimes dangerous tasks of searching for lost animals, while others successfully set up a new network of foster families to take in strays – both responsibilities that should have reasonably fallen to AC&C. Ultimately, the ASPCA established an Emergency Boarding Facility, thanks to a \$500,000 grant provided by television personality Rachel Ray, in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn to provide temporary sheltering for scores of animals displaced by the storm. The shelter did not open until November 17, more than two weeks after the storm hit.

In addition to a moral obligation, New York City has a legal requirement to care for its stray animal population. Various State and City laws outline requirements for the humane treatment of animals as well as mandate the City to operate shelters and necessary services. AC&C's record of underperformance stands in stark contrast to New York City's history as a national leader in animal care. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ("ASPCA"), the first animal welfare organization in the country, was founded in New York. Additionally, some of the nation's first and most important animal welfare laws were enacted in the city. It is time for New York to lead once again.

This report recommends a top-to-bottom restructuring of AC&C – one that reconstitutes the corporation as an independent, non-profit with a diverse board that can bring both new resources and new expertise to the City’s animal welfare system. We examine the history and current performance of the corporation, as well as successful operations in other jurisdictions. Finally, we identify new revenue sources that could boost AC&C’s annual funding by 133 percent.

Despite the passage of Local Law 59 in September 2011, which committed \$10 million in additional funding to be appropriated by July 2014 and called on the DOHMH to increase licensing compliance, AC&C continues to fall short of fulfilling its mission. Although AC&C has made some progress in recent years – including a significant reduction in the euthanization rate over the past decade – its inability to build a comprehensive animal shelter system on par with other major cities can be seen on a number of fronts:

- **AC&C’s performance continues to decline while it shifts the burden of responsibility onto rescue groups.** As shelter adoptions have decreased by 37 percent in the past six years, AC&C has shifted its focus to placements, which now account for 70 percent of all transfers. However, these placements enable AC&C to pass the responsibility for animal care onto rescue groups, leaving them to assume the burden of paying for boarding and associated medical costs while trying to find dogs and cats permanent homes.
- **Deplorable conditions at AC&C shelters.** According to the ASPCA’s Director of Medicine at its Adoption Center, there is a nearly 100 percent rate of infection among the animals that they receive from AC&C facilities. Meanwhile, AC&C has been without a full-time Medical Director on staff since February 2010. This report details incidents of animal neglect at City shelters, ranging from dogs and cats being left to wallow in their own waste to animals being stacked in cages and left in hallways.
- **AC&C lacks sustained funding and requires new revenue sources to implement essential services and effectively plan for long-term needs.** The DOHMH’s failure to implement an effective dog-licensing program costs the City millions of dollars each year in potential revenue; monies which could be used to fund the AC&C. Currently, only 10 percent of New York City’s one million dogs are licensed – well below the 90-plus percent rate achieved by cities such as Calgary, Alberta, Canada – and the number of dog licenses issued has declined in each of the last three fiscal years. Further, despite recent efforts to increase rates, New York City’s licensing fees are among the lowest in the country.

The problem, however, goes beyond a lack of municipal funding. According to AC&C’s most recent reporting, it raised \$56,276 in FY2010 – a paltry sum given the city’s passionate philanthropic community. By comparison, Stray from the Heart, a group run by part-time volunteers, raised \$156,780 in 2010 from private funds – nearly three times as much as AC&C in roughly the same time period. AC&C lacks the fundraising ability and focus to effectively solicit private donations that could supplement operations. Furthermore, many potential donors are disheartened by AC&C’s sustained record of failure and choose to give to other groups instead.

On October 19, 2012, AC&C Executive Director Julie Bank stepped down after two and a half years – the eleventh change in leadership in AC&C’s seventeen years of operation. This change presents AC&C with an opportunity to establish a new structure finally giving the non-profit the independence, expertise and revenue generating abilities it needs to fulfill its mission. This report recommends the following:

## **1. Restructure AC&C into an independent non-profit modeled after the Central Park Conservancy**

AC&C needs a strong Executive Director with genuine authority over shelter operations, as well as an independent board with animal care and development expertise. To accomplish this, the DOHMH and other City officials should be relieved of their operational responsibilities and an expanded board should be established, comprised of expert stakeholders with broad knowledge of animal welfare issues and dedicated private citizens with a passion for supporting the City's animal shelter system.

The Central Park Conservancy offers a model that AC&C should adopt: although the Parks Department retains policy control over the park, 85 percent of Central Park's \$45.8 million annual budget – approximately \$38.9 million – is raised independently by the conservancy and its dedicated, 52-member board. If a reconstituted AC&C board raised just a quarter of what the conservancy does, that would provide over \$9 million a year.

## **2. Substantially Increase Revenue by Aggressively Promoting Dog Licensing Compliance**

The City should work with State Legislators to transfer licensing enforcement from the DOHMH to AC&C, so that the any revenue raised can go directly to funding shelter operations. Next, the new Executive Director and board should develop a multi-faceted approach to increase revenue from pet licensing. This effort should include: mandating dog licensing at all “points of transfer” (adoptions or sales) and authorizing external entities, such as pet stores, to sell dog licenses; launching a robust publicity campaign to advertise the animal welfare benefits of licensing pets; creating an incentive rewards program to encourage licensing; and increasing enforcement and penalties for owners of unlicensed animals.

Additionally, the AC&C should work closely with State Legislators to raise the City's licensing fees, which are among the lowest in the country. Increasing licensing compliance to 30 percent and raising fees to \$20/\$50 for altered/unaltered animals – about even with the fees charged by Los Angeles and San Francisco – could generate close to \$20 million annually in revenue. In conjunction with a potential \$9 million raised from private sources (discussed in the previous recommendation) AC&C could generate \$28 million a year. That sum would increase per capita funding to \$3.90, slightly above the minimum that the ASPCA estimated in 2007 is necessary to operate a comprehensive shelter system in New York City.

## **3. Commit to Building Full Service Shelters in the Bronx and Queens**

The reconstituted AC&C should commit to building full service shelters in the Bronx and Queens. Despite legislative changes that have relieved the City of any legal obligation to build shelters in each borough, the need for them remains very real. The DOHMH estimates construction of these shelters would cost \$25 million with an additional \$10 million annually for operation costs. While this is a significant sum of money, it is also a necessary investment in the shelter system. Section III of this report outlines ways that AC&C can substantially increase its funds in order to pay for the costs of new shelters as well other necessary services.

By implementing these sensible reforms, AC&C can finally have the independence, expertise and revenue generating ability it needs to properly fulfill its mission. And in doing so, we can re-establish New York City as a national leader in animal care.

# I. INTRODUCTION: A HISTORY OF ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL

## *New York City Animal Care, 1866-1995*

Government-sponsored animal care in New York City dates back to 1866, when New York State authorized the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (“ASPCA”) to enforce animal anti-cruelty laws. Founded earlier that year by Henry Bergh as the first animal welfare organization in the United States, the ASPCA’s initial goals included educating the public on the proper treatment of animals and advocating against the inhumane treatment of horses, wild dogs and pigeons. Around 1870, the City asked the ASPCA to assume management of the municipal animal shelters, but Bergh declined because the City would not provide adequate financial and political support.<sup>1</sup>

In 1894, to address the growing stray dog and cat problem, the State granted the City authority to designate an operator of a municipal shelter system. For a second time, the City approached the ASPCA, now overseen by a board of directors subsequent to Bergh’s death in 1888.<sup>2</sup> This time the ASPCA accepted, and for the next seven decades the organization used its private donations to provide animal care free of charge – a tremendous bargain for a city with a perpetually large stray animal population. However, as the ASPCA expanded into a national organization, its leadership questioned the wisdom of diverting funds to pay for what many viewed as a local government responsibility.

Subsequently, in 1977, the ASPCA entered into a formal contract with the Department of Health (“DOH”) – later expanded into the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in 2002 – that compensated the organization \$900,000 annually in exchange for operating New York’s shelter system – a

1 Testimony of Stephen L. Zawistowski on behalf of the ASPCA at the September 29, 2005 New York City Council Committee on Health Oversight hearing on Animal Care and Control.

2 Ibid.

rate of nearly \$0.13 per resident.<sup>3</sup> With the ASPCA’s new reliance on municipal funds rather than private donations to run the shelters, the inadequacy of government funding became a constant source of contention.<sup>4</sup> Many perceived the lack of sustained and sufficient funding as a clear message that animal care remained a low priority for the City. In the mid-1980s the gap between costs and revenue for the ASPCA led to the closure of shelters in the Bronx, Queens and Staten Island and the establishment of receiving centers – which do not provide adoptive or medical services – in these boroughs.<sup>5</sup>

In 1985, the City refused to pay the ASPCA \$250,000 in overdue payments, which prompted the organization to threaten to close its Brooklyn shelter and cut back on services.<sup>6</sup> Although service cuts were avoided, tensions continued to mount. In 1991, New York’s worsening fiscal condition led the City to slash the ASPCA’s contract by approximately 25 percent.<sup>7</sup>

By 1992, New York City was paying just \$0.53 per capita on animal care, still one of the lowest rates in the country.<sup>8</sup> Advocates and volunteers became increasingly vocal about diminishing shelter conditions and high euthanasia rates.<sup>9</sup> In 1994, 75 percent of shelter animals in New York City were euthanized – well above the American Humane Society’s estimate of a nation-wide average of 56 percent for dogs and 71 percent for cats between 1994 and 1997.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, the ASPCA estimated that by 1993 it was running the City’s shelters at a loss of \$2 million per year.<sup>11</sup> In light of these factors, the ASPCA terminated its contract with the City in 1993, effective January 1, 1995.

3 Per capita funding is calculated by dividing the funding amount by the population level. In 1980 the population of New York City was 7,071,639 people, giving a per capita number of \$0.127.

4 <http://www.shelterreform.org/DyingForHomesPart2.html>.

5 Testimony of Stephen L. Zawistowski on behalf of the ASPCA at the September 29, 2005 New York City Council Committee on Health Oversight hearing on Animal Care and Control.

6 <http://www.shelterreform.org/DyingForHomesPart2.html>.

7 Ibid.

8 Testimony of Stephen L. Zawistowski on behalf of the ASPCA at the September 29, 2005 New York City Council Committee on Health Oversight hearing on Animal Care and Control.

9 <http://www.shelterreform.org/1993ASPCAMemo.html>.

10 <http://www.shelterreform.org/DyingForHomesPart2.html>; <http://www.americanhumane.org/animals/stop-animal-abuse/fact-sheets/animal-shelter-euthanasia.html>.

11 <http://www.shelterreform.org/DyingForHomesPart2.html>.

## *The Center for Animal Care and Control (CAC&C)*

For the first time in nearly a century, New York City needed a new operator for its vast shelter system. While the loss of an experienced and committed operator like the ASPCA posed difficulties for the City, it also presented an opportunity to enact a new vision for animal care. However, no genuine effort at reform was undertaken, and the factors that led to the ASPCA's departure were never fully addressed.

The DOH issued a request for proposals ("RFP") for the operation of municipal shelters, but a satisfactory applicant did not emerge. The situation grew so desperate that the agency approached the ASPCA employees' union, Local 355 of the Service Employees International Union (AFL-CIO), to see if existing shelter employees would be willing to stay on and run the shelters themselves.<sup>12</sup>

The Giuliani administration ultimately decided that the City should establish its own non-profit entity, the Center for Animal Care and Control ("CAC&C"), to take over the ASPCA's contract. Unlike the ASPCA, which was always an independent organization, the CAC&C was placed under the auspices of the DOH.

CAC&C began its operations in January 1995. Its initial by-laws provided for a seven-member board – three of the members were appointees from the Department of Sanitation, the Police Department and the Department of Health, while the four others were "independent" directors chosen by the Mayor. The Commissioner of the Department of Sanitation was installed as chair of the board, a decision that raised questions among many animal advocates about the City's regard for animal care. The Department of Health was given responsibility for overseeing CAC&C's day-to-day operations, including setting its budget, hiring executive staff and overseeing its board.<sup>13</sup>

Notably, the CAC&C's initial by-laws mandated that

certain actions, such as appointing or removing officers and amending by-laws, required a unanimous vote of the three City Commissioners, even if a majority of the board had been reached.<sup>14</sup> To many, this established a clear message that the remaining four "independent" directors, who served voluntarily and at the pleasure of the Mayor, were effectively powerless. Eleven years later, following an unsuccessful lawsuit from the Shelter Reform Action Committee ("SRAC"), the by-laws were quietly amended and this provision was removed.

## *Report: "Dying for Homes"*

From the beginning, the CAC&C faced daunting challenges to carrying out its mission. In addition to an unwieldy organizational structure, the CAC&C inherited aging facilities that were not adequate for providing proper animal care. In 1996, the City Council Committee on Contracts, under the leadership of Councilmember Kathryn Freed, requested a comprehensive performance review of the CAC&C, pursuant to its contract with the City. The subsequent June 1997 report entitled "*Dying for Homes: Animal Care and Control in New York City*," described the CAC&C as "dead on arrival," given its severe funding and facilities challenges.<sup>15</sup>

*Dying for Homes* was especially critical of the structure of the CAC&C board, which it noted failed "to provide the appointed members with fixed terms and places them in a position of being dismissed at any moment," facts that, "may have a chilling effect on the exercise of independent judgment."<sup>16</sup> The report went on to identify several systemic problems with the CAC&C, including a lack of animal care expertise on its board, inadequate funding, insufficient and inaccessible facilities, poor public relations, shoddy volunteer management and an ineffective adoption program – all problems that persist today.<sup>17</sup>

At the June 1997 City Council hearings on the CAC&C's activities, board member Dr. Louise Murray testified about her "serious misgivings as to the

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.shelterreform.org/NYCSherterHistory.html#1992-1994>.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.shelterreform.org/TestimonyofMurray.html>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.shelterreform.org/DyingForHomesPart1.html>.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.shelterreform.org/DyingForHomesPart3.html>.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.shelterreform.org/DyingForHomesPart1.html>.

ability of [the] organization to succeed under current structural and political conditions.”<sup>18</sup> As part of her remarks, Dr. Murray related the frustration several directors felt when the Search Committee for an Executive Director was “unable to function meaningfully due to obstructive tactics” from the Administration. Said Dr. Murray,

[the] CAC&C is trapped in a cycle of failure which can only be broken if we are released from the stranglehold of City Hall. Without the right leaders, we cannot raise funds, improve our programs, or take the kind of care we would like to of the animals in our charge. Yet we are not free to use our judgment to select this leader.<sup>19</sup>

Within hours of their testimony, both Dr. Murray and Rosemary Joyce – another board member who raised concerns about the CAC&C’s operations – were removed from their positions on the board by the Giuliani administration.<sup>20</sup> The termination of Dr. Murray and Ms. Joyce sent a clear message to directors that publicly challenging the policies of the DOH would not be tolerated.

### ***Attempts to Fix the System and Service Cuts, 2000-Present***

In the aftermath of the *Dying for Homes* report, the City Council sought to strengthen the CAC&C. In 2000, the Council passed the Animal Shelters and Sterilization Act (also known as the Shelter Act), which required the City establish full-time, full-service animal shelters in each of the five boroughs by 2002.<sup>21</sup> The legislative findings of the act described shelter overcrowding as a key contributor to abusive and negligent conditions in City shelters. The findings also estimated that “67,000 unwanted, stray or abandoned dogs and cats entered CAC&C facilities in 1998, with 70 percent of animals not spayed or neutered.”<sup>22</sup> At the time, both Manhattan and Brooklyn operated full-service shelters, while Staten

Island’s shelter provided services for 12 hours a day. Queens and the Bronx – which accounted for roughly half of the City’s population – had part-time receiving centers, where animals could only be dropped off and no other services were provided.

Citing financial difficulties following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the Mayor’s Office and the City Council extended the DOH’s deadline to submit plans for the new shelters to 2006.<sup>23</sup> In September 2002, the City announced budget cuts that slashed shelter hours by 50 percent.<sup>24</sup> That same year the Center for Animal Care and Control was renamed Animal Care and Control (“AC&C”), with a re-christened board to be chaired by the Commissioner of the DOH, not the Department of Sanitation.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, on July 1, 2002 the City merged the Department of Health and the Department of Mental Hygiene, establishing the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”).

In 2007, the ASPCA launched a campaign to establish a comprehensive animal care and control program in New York City. The organization proposed a new Bureau of Animal Care and Control Services within the DOHMH that would replace AC&C. According to an ASPCA memorandum submitted to the Manhattan Borough Board on February 15, 2007, the organization estimated the City was spending as little as \$0.93 per capita on animal care and control services. With AC&C failing to provide essential services, outside organizations such as the ASPCA were forced to pick up the slack. The ASPCA estimated that it spent over \$30 million on animal care services between Fiscal Years 2004 and 2006 to provide supplemental services such as spay/neuter clinics and animal placement. The ASPCA’s proposal cited a lack of compliance in dog licensing as a potential revenue stream that could generate as much as \$11.5 million for the AC&C budget each year.

Severe cuts to the AC&C budget in 2009 resulted in a dramatic reduction of essential shelter services. Cuts included the firing of shelter dog-walking staff

18 <http://www.shelterreform.org/TestimonyofMurray.html>.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 <http://www.shelterreform.org/2000AnimalBill.html>.

22 <http://www.shelterreform.org/files/SFTHLawsuitVerifiedComplaint.pdf>, page 6.

23 <http://www.shelterreform.org/NYCSherHistory.html#2002>.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

(October 2009), a halving of admission hours at the Brooklyn shelter from 24 hours a day to 12 hours a day (February 2010), and a significant reduction/elimination of the Lost and Found, Field Services, and Telephone System programs (September 2010).<sup>26</sup>

The City's FY 2008 Executive Budget allocated \$15.3 million in the DOHMH 2008-2017 capital plan for the construction of new shelters in the Bronx and Queens.<sup>27</sup> However, by 2009 the City had yet to comply with the Shelter Act.

In June 2009, Stray from the Heart ("SFTH"), a local not-for-profit dog rescue organization, sued the DOHMH for failing to provide the mandatory services established by the 2000 law. In 2010 the New York State Supreme Court ruled in favor of SFTH and ordered the DOHMH to submit a plan for the immediate implementation of their compliance with the Act. The City appealed this decision, and in Spring 2011 the First Department of the Appellate Division of New York State ruled that SFTH lacked legal standing to sue because the Act, as interpreted, was related solely to human public health issues and did not address animal welfare, thereby preventing organizations such as SFTH from enforcing the Shelter Law.

SFTH filed a motion with the New York Court of Appeals requesting the Court accept their appeal of the 2011 decision on the grounds that animal rescue groups have standing to sue the City to enforce laws that are fundamentally related to animal welfare, in addition to public health. With the support of Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, who filed an amicus brief in support of SFTH's suit, and pro bono representation by the law firm of Kaye Scholer, SFTH's motion was successful, and on September 13, 2011, the Court of Appeals decided in favor of hearing the appeal.

However, before the appeal could be fully heard, the

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.shelterreform.org/2010ServiceReductions.html>; <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/aid-city-strays-dogs-budget-cuts-hurt-wayward-pooches-cats-article-1.187032>.

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/mm4\\_07.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/omb/downloads/pdf/mm4_07.pdf), pages 156-157.

City Council passed Local Law 59 in the fall of 2011. As part of an agreement to commit \$10 million in additional funds by July 2014 and a commitment from the DOHMH to increase licensing compliance, Local Law 59 absolved the City of its responsibility to construct these shelters.<sup>28</sup> Instead, AC&C announced it would fund vans to pick-up animals in Queens and the Bronx and take them to the already crowded shelters in Brooklyn, Manhattan or Staten Island. Funds would also go to hiring nearly 100 new staff members, implementing trap-neuter-return (TNR) rules, and requiring owners to spay or neuter all owned, free-roaming outdoor cats. Additionally, as part of this agreement, the DOHMH agreed to appoint two new independent directors to the AC&C board, bringing the total board membership to nine.

On December 11, 2012, the Court of Appeals ultimately decided that since the City law had been changed to eliminate the key requirements for full-service, citywide shelters, Stray From the Heart could no longer sue to enforce those requirements and also could not sue for damages; hence the Court dismissed the case. However, the Court emphasized in its decision that it was clear that the original law was enacted for the "benefit of the general public in New York City and for the safety of unwanted dogs and cats." This suggests that if the law had not been substantially amended, it is possible that animal welfare organizations could have sued to enforce the law's requirements.

While Local Law 59 provided a welcome increase in funding, many advocates were disappointed that the City was relieved of its legal obligation to build shelters in the Bronx and Queens, a development that undermines the City's capacity to care for animals. To many in the animal care community, the New York City shelter system is no better than it was when the CAC&C/AC&C experiment began in 1995.

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.c0935b9a57b-b4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=mayor\\_press\\_release&catID=1194&doc\\_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2011b%2Fpr274-11.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1](http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.c0935b9a57b-b4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=mayor_press_release&catID=1194&doc_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2011b%2Fpr274-11.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1).

## II. TODAY: ONGOING PROBLEMS AT AC&C

Nothing reflects the organizational dysfunction of AC&C more profoundly than the agency's management history. Since 1995, the agency has had eleven different Executive Directors – including eight in the last ten years. Additionally, AC&C has been without a full-time Medical Director on staff since February 2010, contributing to deplorable shelter conditions and a high rate of illness among city dogs and cats.

The root of the problem is structural: AC&C is controlled by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”), an agency whose mission and expertise has not sufficiently focused on animal welfare.<sup>29</sup> As a result, AC&C has experienced years of under-funding and service cuts, and the animals in its care have suffered from neglect at shelters. The DOHMH both administers the City's contract with AC&C and oversees the non-profit – leaving little room for independent leadership or innovation. Although AC&C has made some progress in recent years – including a significant reduction in the euthanization rate over the past decade – it continues to struggle to build a comprehensive animal shelter system on par with other major cities.

In order to succeed, AC&C needs a strong Executive Director who has genuine authority over day-to-day shelter operations, as well as an independent board with animal care and development expertise. Without that commitment to a more rational structure, the agency will never attract and retain top-level talent committed to running a world-class shelter operation.

The current board structure has limited expertise in animal care and fundraising, two areas that if buttressed could greatly enhance AC&C's ability to fulfill its mission and foster stronger links to the city's vibrant animal care community. Of the two addi-

<sup>29</sup> As part of its mandate to protect public health, the DOHMH has had tremendous success in reducing animal illnesses that pose a threat to people, such as rabies. According to a February 13, 2012 DOHMH advisory on rabies (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/cd/2012/12md02.pdf>), the last known case of a dog infected with rabies in New York City was in 1954. Additionally, the disease has also become rare in cats, with only one feline testing positive for rabies in 2011.

tional independent directors added this year, only one has even tangential animal care expertise. Dissenting opinions on the Board are rare.

According to AC&C's website, the non-profit is under contract with the City “to rescue, care for and find loving homes for homeless and abandoned animals” in New York City. Central to this responsibility should be finding humane ways to decrease the stray animal population of our city. There is no better way of accomplishing this than through full-service animal shelters, which provide adoption programs, spay and neutering and lost-and found services. This three-pronged approach tackles both the root of the stray population and strives to put healthy animals in loving homes. Full-service shelters also provide a platform for rescue groups and volunteers to build up programs and develop strong, community-based networks dedicated to animal welfare.

DOHMH officials estimate building full-service shelters in the Bronx and Queens would cost the City more than \$25 million for construction and another \$10 million annually for operation. While this is a significant sum of money, it is also a necessary investment in the shelter system. Section III of this report outlines ways that AC&C can substantially increase its funds in order to pay for the costs of new shelters and other necessary services.

In the year following the passage of Local Law 59, AC&C continues to fall short of fulfilling its mission. Volunteers and advocates continue to regularly document cases of abuse and neglect in our City's shelters. Despite the hiring of 30 new staffers and projections for hiring an additional 63 by July 2013, essential services like cat rescue operations and establishing a sufficient number of dog walkers have yet to be restored. Additionally, the Bronx and Queens, with a combined population that would rank among the 20 largest cities in the country, still lack animal shelters.

### *Response to Superstorm Sandy*

On October 29, 2012 Superstorm Sandy hit New York City, causing catastrophic damage to numerous neighborhoods and displacing thousands of residents,

businesses and animals. In the days following the storm, volunteers and rescuers reported that AC&C's doors were closed and field operations ceased – preventing individuals from dropping off found animals. Furthermore, AC&C's computers were down for 11 days, during which time the nightly “kill list” (of animals at risk for euthanasia) stopped going out to rescue groups, leaving many volunteers and rescuers to question what happened to these animals.

Individuals who visited AC&C shelters during these days describe it as being unusually quiet and empty. Rob Maher, who helps to run an AC&C-certified rescue group called Dog Habitat Rescue and routinely pulls animals from City shelters, said he visited the Brooklyn AC&C shelter on Saturday, November 3, and the Manhattan shelter on Sunday, November 4 – some five days after the storm hit – and said he saw more than a dozen empty cages in both locations. “Everybody there was shocked at how quiet it was,” Maher reported. “There were so many empty cages.” He was told by AC&C staff that animals had been adopted out in the previous few days, even though the agency's computers were down and other would-be rescuers had reported being turned away at the door in the immediate aftermath of the storm.

As AC&C struggled to respond, the ASPCA and outside groups stepped in to fill the leadership void. The ASPCA established an Emergency Boarding Facility, thanks to a \$500,000 grant provided by television personality Rachel Ray, in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn providing temporary sheltering for hundreds of animals displaced by the storm. Meanwhile, Maher and other rescuers put out a call for foster families and to date have placed more than 80 cats and dogs in new homes – all without any leadership from AC&C.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Shelter Tales: AC&C and Hurricane Sandy***

*Like a lot of veteran animal rescuers, Rob Maher knew Hurricane Sandy would force scores of terrified New York City pets out in the cold. What he and other experienced rescuers did not fully expect was the total failure of Animal Care & Control to help deal with the devastation.*

*The agency all but retreated into a bunker in the days just*

*before, during and after Hurricane Sandy, say rescuers and volunteers who were inside AC&C shelters as the super-storm swept across the city.*

*“No one could get in touch with AC&C - there was no phone communication, no internet communication, no website communication - no one could figure out what they were doing,” said Maher.*

*Maher's concern only deepened when he went to visit AC&C shelters in Brooklyn and Manhattan the weekend after the storm and saw over a dozen empty cages in each location. “This was four or five days after the storm, they hadn't been talking to anyone, and they said, ‘Oh, we had lots of adoptions in the last two to three days, in the middle of a hurricane,’” recalled Maher. “We were like, ‘OK, that's kind of crazy.’”*

*In fact, say volunteers at city shelters during the storm, there were two causes to the sudden decline in population: a limited number of private rescue groups were working overtime to pull animals from city shelters, and – much more unusual - AC&C all but locked its doors to new intakes from the public.*

*“There were animals there but they were locking the front doors, so people could not get in,” said Jeff Latzer of Adopt NY, an umbrella group representing some 45 rescue groups. “That, combined with AC&C field operations doing nothing, meant that the normal shelter population was just decimated.”*

*Added one experienced volunteer who worked at the Manhattan shelter every day in the week after Sandy hit: “They basically just shut down. That was their answer to the crisis – to not be open. There were no real intakes except from police.”*

*To try and fill the leadership vacuum and help the scores of cats and dogs made homeless by the storm, Maher's group sent out an urgent plea for new foster families, a request that usually nets about a dozen willing families. This time, more than 850 families volunteered, an overwhelming response.*

*Maher utilized Adopt NY's network to help get the word out about the new foster families – a basic task of most municipal shelter systems – and so far more than 80 placements have been made.*

*“AC&C just really wasn't doing anything,” Maher concluded. “They are supposed to be there to help animals, but if they are not doing that, then I don't know what the point is.”*

30 <http://aspc.org/pressroom/press-releases/120512-1>

The following is an examination of the major ongoing problems in AC&C shelters.

***A. Unacceptable Conditions in City Shelters: “A nearly 100% outbreak rate of infection”***

Of the three existing shelters, only the East Harlem facility in Manhattan currently accepts stay animals 24 hours a day, as the Shelter Law had mandated. The Brooklyn and Staten Island centers provide full services only between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. As a result, if a stray animal is picked up by a good Samaritan or police between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m., the only AC&C shelter they could take the animal to is in East Harlem.

As part of the Fall 2011 City Council agreement to relieve the City of its obligations under the Shelter Act, AC&C has until 2014 to expand hours of operations for receiving centers in the Bronx and Queens to twelve hours a day, seven days a week. Currently, there are plans to relocate the Queens facility, but it will remain a receiving center. Overall, these improvements still fall short of providing residents of the Bronx and Queens with adequate animal care services.

Receiving centers allow for the drop-off of animals but do not have medical staff or provide other services – a serious shortfall when wounded or sick animals are brought to a center or if a neighborhood resident is looking for a lost animal. When animals arrive they are placed in temporary cages and stacked one atop the other until they can be picked up by vans. Vans then take the caged animals to already over-crowded Manhattan and Brooklyn facilities.

Overcrowded shelters create conditions that foster animal neglect and illness. In January 2012, a volunteer at the Manhattan shelter posted a grim description of conditions in the temporary cages on the Shelter Reform Action Committee (“SRAC”) website. “These temporary cages are always filthy – covered with feces and no food or water. I know

that some dogs or cats can be messy, but I’m usually at the shelter for several hours straight, and I check on these cages when I come arrive [sic] and when I leave, and they stay the same: filthy with vomit, diarrhea, dirty or no water.”<sup>31</sup>



Photo posted on Shelter Reform Action Committee website on January 2, 2012.<sup>32</sup>



Photo posted on the Shelter Reform Action Committee website, taken in June 2011.<sup>33</sup>

Volunteers and anonymous employees have offered numerous eyewitness accounts of horrific conditions in the Brooklyn and Manhattan shelters: hallways lined with cages, stacked two or three high, with animals crying loudly. The smell has been described as a nauseating mixture of animal excrement and vomit.<sup>34</sup> Many cats are put into tomahawk cages, which are intended as carrying vessels but end up as permanent homes.

31 <http://shelterreform.org/blog1/2012/01/02/notes-from-the-underground-volume-6/>.

32 <http://shelterreform.org/blog1/2012/01/02/notes-from-the-underground-volume-6/>.

33 <http://www.shelterreform.org/2011AuditAnalysis2.html>.

34 <http://shelterreform.org/blog1/2012/01/13/notes-from-the-underground-volume-8/>.



Photo posted by an anonymous volunteer on the Shelter Reform Action Committee on July 25, 2012.<sup>35</sup>



Photo posted by an anonymous volunteer on the Shelter Reform Action Committee website on July 25, 2012.<sup>36</sup>

In November 2010, WABC Eyewitness News reporter Sarah Wallace did a three-part exposé on the terrible conditions facing shelter animals: animals in cages with soaked and soiled sheets, cages smeared with feces, cat food mixed with kitty litter, and other examples of animal neglect.<sup>37</sup>

In spite of these conditions, AC&C has operated without a full-time Medical Director on staff since 2010. As one might imagine, shelter animals are exposed to a uniquely high risk of illness. The most frequent affliction is an upper respiratory infection (URI), commonly referred to as “kennel cough,” but which affects dogs and cats alike. URI is a fast-moving airborne illness that presents an immediate hazard for animals entering the contaminated shelter system. Other potentially fatal illnesses that afflict shelter animals include Canine Influenza, a highly-contagious disease which can lead to pneumonia, and Feline Leukemia Virus, which is easily transmitted through saliva or close contact.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.shelterreform.org/2011AuditAnalysis2.html>.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> <http://abclocal.go.com/wabc/video?id=7806880>.

### *Shelter Tales: Cocoa*

*Cocoa was a healthy female dog when she was dropped off at AC&C to be spayed on the morning of June 20, 2012. It turned out to be her last day: Cocoa died on the operating table at AC&C, which has been without a full-time medical director on staff since February 2010.*

*It would take some time for the rescue group Project Pet to find out how a seemingly simple procedure like spaying could prove to be fatal to Cocoa. But an independent necropsy performed on the dog, as well as medical records filled out by AC&C, eventually uncovered the cause: Cocoa died because the surgical team failed to provide her with oxygen during the operation, because of an improperly monitored valve.*

*“In simplest terms, the AC&C suffocated Cocoa to death, cutting off oxygen to her while she was being operated upon,” Project Pet wrote in a follow-up letter to AC&C. “So there is no misunderstanding here, this is not simply our conclusion, but that of a number of veterinarians.”*

*In a June 20, 2012, letter informing Project Pet of Cocoa’s demise, AC&C Director of Operations Doug Boles apologized for the lapse and said the agency was “working to ensure that such risk is minimized as much as possible” for other animals in the future.*

*More than six months later, AC&C is still without a full-time Medical Director on staff.*

When healthy animals get sick in shelters, it can lead to dramatically higher medical costs for adopters or, worse, euthanizations that could have been avoided. Evidence submitted by animal professionals and shelter insiders suggests that illness has become rampant in City shelters. In testimony submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Health as part of the hearings on Local Law 59 in September 2011, Jennifer Lander, the ASPCA’s Director of Medicine at its Adoption Center, stated, **“When animals from AC&C arrive at our facility we see a nearly 100 percent outbreak rate of infection, typically upper respiratory infections, including influenza. These conditions can become very serious, to the point of being life-threatening, but are entirely preventable.”**<sup>38</sup>

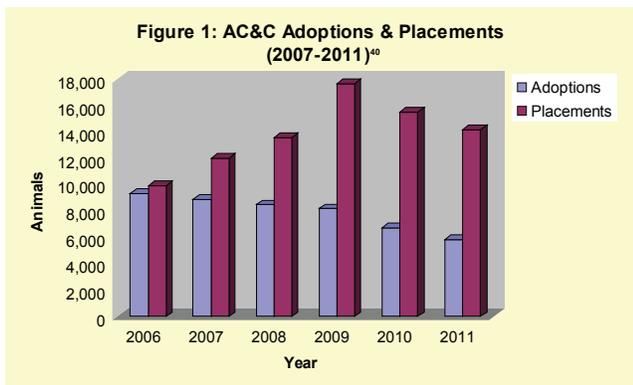
<sup>38</sup> <http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View>.

ashx?M=F&ID=1553562&GUID=833625D7-7F15-4B9C-985C-

DOHMH officials have contested this number. At an October 9, 2009 AC&C board meeting, then Medical Director Dr. Stephanie Janeschko reportedly stated that 40 percent of shelter dogs exhibited signs of URI within 5 to 7 days of arrival. However, many animals stay in shelters for more than 5 to 7 days. As an animal's length of stay in the shelter increases, so does its risk of developing an illness. Shelter illness can lead to the animal being deemed unadoptable and therefore euthanized or being placed with a rescue group, who must assume the financial burden of nursing the animal back to health.

### B. Declining Performance and Results

Over the past six years AC&C shelter adoptions have decreased by 37 percent from 9,313 in 2006 to 5,843 in 2011. AC&C has instead shifted its focus to placements, which now account for 70 percent of all shelter transfers, up from 9,937 in 2006 to 14,167 in 2012.<sup>39</sup>



In an adoption the AC&C animals go directly from the shelter into a permanent home, whereas in a placement, AC&C transfers animals into the possession of a rescue group. When an adoption takes place and a dog or cat enters what is hoped to be a loving home, the journey is complete. However, when an animal leaves the shelter for place-

ment with a rescue group, its journey is just beginning. The rescue group becomes responsible not just for finding the dog or cat a permanent home, but also for the costs of interim housing and medical expenses for that animal. There is no guarantee that a placement leads dogs and cats to permanent homes.

AC&C's reporting of these numbers has created confusion as to the status of animals that leave their shelters. In some statistical reports, AC&C has provided a cumulative total of adoptions and placements while failing to make clear that it has included placements – which do not necessarily lead animals to permanent homes – in that total.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, on the AC&C's website, under statistical reports, there is a link to see the number of "Placements," however, the hyperlink for the document refers to it as a chart for adoptions. This confusion gives the mistaken impression that AC&C is finding homes for more stray animals than is actually the case.<sup>42</sup> While increasing its reliance on placements over adoptions, AC&C is effectively out-sourcing the responsibility to keep animals healthy and find them permanent, loving homes.

In 2011, 14,000 animals – over a third of those animals taken into AC&C shelters – were diverted to rescue groups through the New Hope partnership program.<sup>43</sup> Toni Bodon of Stray from the Heart says that her organization will care for a dog taken out of AC&C until a permanent, suitable home is found, while incurring boarding and medical expenses to treat serious upper respiratory conditions contracted at AC&C operated shelters. While the collaboration between rescue groups and AC&C is completely voluntary, these figures indicate how profoundly AC&C has come to rely on their partners to carry out its mission.

25FD5A0C1609, page 20.

39 <http://www.animalalliancencyc.org/about/annual2010.htm>; [http://www.nycacc.org/pdfs/boardmeetings/2012Q2\\_PublicPresentation.pdf](http://www.nycacc.org/pdfs/boardmeetings/2012Q2_PublicPresentation.pdf).

40 <http://www.animalalliancencyc.org/about/annual2010.htm>; [http://www.nycacc.org/pdfs/boardmeetings/2012Q2\\_PublicPresentation.pdf](http://www.nycacc.org/pdfs/boardmeetings/2012Q2_PublicPresentation.pdf).

41 In ACC's Second Quarter 2011-12 Review document ([http://www.nycacc.org/pdfs/boardmeetings/2012Q2\\_PublicPresentation.pdf](http://www.nycacc.org/pdfs/boardmeetings/2012Q2_PublicPresentation.pdf)), page 6 includes a chart with the number of adoptions. However, the figures provided also include placements.

42 <http://www.nycacc.org/Statistics.htm>.

43 [http://www.nycacc.org/pdfs/boardmeetings/2012Q2\\_PublicPresentation.pdf](http://www.nycacc.org/pdfs/boardmeetings/2012Q2_PublicPresentation.pdf).

### ***Shelter Tales: Lacey***

*In August 2012, the rescue group Stray from the Heart pulled a pit bull named Lacey from an Animal Care & Control shelter through the New Hope partnership, which coordinates with rescue groups to “pull” certain at-risk animals from City shelters.*

*At first it appeared that Lacey suffered from kennel cough, an airborne illness rampant in city shelters, according to the ASPCA. But like so many animals that spend time inside a New York City shelter, Lacey’s condition turned out to be much worse.*

*It was soon discovered that she had pneumonia and required \$5,000 worth of veterinary care, costs that fell entirely on Stray from the Heart. This is a familiar story that once again underscores the degree to which AC&C is outsourcing its responsibility to keep animals healthy and find them permanent, loving homes.*

*As of September, Lacey has made an almost complete recovery and SFTH is now trying to find her a permanent home – an often lengthy process. Toni Bodon of SFTH says the group is committed to finding good homes for every adoptable dog that comes into their care no matter how long it takes– even though they once had to hold onto a pit bull terrier for 2 years before finding it a family.*

### ***C. Shifting the Burden of Responsibility to Outside Groups***

New York City is home to a uniquely passionate, committed and organized animal care community. Every day, countless New Yorkers work to improve the quality of life for the city’s stray animal population – whether by volunteering at a shelter, working with a rescue group, adopting a cat or dog or just by keeping watch on their block. As AC&C has continually failed to provide adequate animal care, rescue groups and volunteers have stepped up to supplement AC&C’s activities.

In 2002, the Mayor’s Alliance for Animals, a coalition of non-profit shelters and rescue groups, was founded to end the killing of healthy and treatable cats and dogs at our City’s shelters. In 2005, the

Mayor’s Alliance received an initial \$15 million grant from Maddie’s Fund, a national organization committed to making “no-kill” the standard for all municipal shelters in the country. The purpose of the grant was for the Mayor’s Alliance to work with AC&C to establish a “no-kill” shelter system for the City by 2008, though that target was later revised to 2015.

As part of its activities, the Mayor’s Alliance established AC&C’s New Hope department, which coordinates with rescue groups to “pull” (a term for removing cats and dogs from shelters by means other than adoption) certain animals from City shelters. When a rescue group pulls an animal, it automatically assumes the financial responsibility for all required medical or behavior services, kenneling or foster fees and efforts to find the animal a permanent home. Mayor’s Alliance members receive a small subsidy for each animal for whom they find a permanent home.

The majority of animals eligible for placement are deemed “unadoptable” by the AC&C – either because they have fallen ill, failed the shelter’s “temperament” testing, or suffered from conditions that the shelter does not treat, such as broken or fractured bones. As mentioned earlier, since 2006, New Hope placements have consistently outpaced AC&C adoptions.<sup>44</sup> In 2011, New Hope placements accounted for more than 70 percent, or 14,162 out of 20,008 AC&C shelter transfers. While the New Hope program achieves the laudable goal of relocating stray animals from City shelters – thereby reducing the shelter population, eliminating potential euthanization and also inflating adoption numbers – the reality is most of the time, the AC&C is simply shifting the burden of animal care onto rescue groups.

Jeff Latzer, co-founder of Adopt NY, which provides resources for rescue groups, recently described the working relationship between those groups and AC&C as follows: “Rescue groups are faced with mounting vet bills stemming from widespread and well-documented AC&C medical neglect, no re-

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.animalallianceny.org/about/annual2010.htm>.

liable behavior assessments of the animals they're pressured to pull, and a race against the clock to find quality fosters and adopters through very limited means of exposure."<sup>45</sup>

Because of the high rate of illness in City shelters, almost all shelter animals require veterinary care ranging from antibiotics to surgery – sometimes at a cost of hundreds or even thousands of dollars per animal. The fact that so many dogs and cats receive this care is a testament to the commitment of animal rescuers, but also underscores AC&C's limited ability to care for the City's stray population.

Toni Bodon, co-founder of SFTH, says the City should be working with rescue groups to spur adoptions instead of having them pick up the bill for nursing animals back to health. Between August 2009 and September 2010, SFTH spent two-thirds of its \$156,780 operating budget on care for AC&C shelter dogs – with nearly a third of the budget going just to veterinary care alone. SFTH, like many other rescue groups, is run by part-time volunteers and raises its operating costs through private fundraising. Because SFTH spent so much on caring for AC&C animals, the organization was able to rescue fewer dogs.

Further complicating this dilemma for rescue groups are the pleas coming directly from AC&C itself. The daily e-mails that AC&C shelter staff send out to New Hope partners often include subject lines such as "HERE ARE OUR 10 SMALL DOGS AT BROOKLYN ACC WHO NEED YOU, WE ARE OVERLOADED, PLEASE HELP!", "PLEASE HELP THEM, NO ONE RESPONDING" and "ADORABLE SWEET THROWAWAY MOMMA WHO LOVES BELLY RUBS!" [sic]<sup>46</sup> These e-mails, which can number about six on a given day, include an assessment of the animal's behavior, health and condition, all of which offer insight into the kinds of struggles that healthy animals entering AC&C shelters confront.

45 <http://shelterreform.org/blog/2012/06/25/notes-from-the-underground-volume-15-life-after-volunteer-death/>.

46 7/1/12 AC&C e-mail to New Hope partners; 7/3/12 AC&C e-mail to New Hope partners; 8/12/12 AC&C e-mail to New Hope partners.

### ***Shelter Tales: OptimusPrime***

*For rescue groups, the financial burden of taking on sick animals is often weighed against the risk of leaving them in the care of AC&C, an organization that is not above prodding rescuers with heart-wrenching e-mails about an animal's deteriorating condition.*

*For example, a July 26, 2012 e-mail sent out by AC&C advertised a dog named OptimusPrime. The e-mail noted that "OptimusPrime is an EXCELLENT dog!" but then added ominously that a routine exam showed that he "looks like he may be getting sick and is in [a] cage next to a dog with KC [kennel cough]."*

*"Please pull this vital, charming doggy; he deserves a family as awesome as he is," the e-mail beseeched.*

*Rescuers interviewed for this report said situations like these are common and often force them to make a tough decision – either rescue these animals and incur whatever costs are needed to nurse them back to health, or delay and risk the possibility that they will succumb to shelter illnesses resulting in an almost certain death, either by disease or euthanasia.*

While the commitment of the Mayor's Alliance, rescue groups and other outside organizations is laudable, their ability to continue filling these gaps is contingent upon the availability of grants and the generosity of donors. Sustaining this burden over the long-term is exceedingly difficult. With the increased prevalence of serious shelter-borne diseases, rescue groups face escalating expenses. Many have argued that adoptions are a core function of any shelter and should be funded with public, rather than private dollars to assure continuity of services.

### ***D. Feral Cats***

It is estimated that tens of thousands of feral cats roam New York City's alleyways, backyards and other outdoor spaces.<sup>47</sup> Cats must be socialized at a young age to appreciate human companionship. As such, most feral cats are rarely suitable for adoption. As a result, many animal care advocates agree that the most humane solution to controlling

47 <http://www.nycferalcat.org/>.

this population is a practice known as Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). TNR involves humanely trapping feral cats, sterilizing them, clipping their left ear tip for identification, and then returning the animal to its familiar habitat. Friendly cats and kittens young enough to be socialized are put up for adoption.<sup>48</sup>

Surprisingly, AC&C does not perform TNR or any other practice to reduce the city's feral cat population. Instead, AC&C relies on rescue groups to do the work through the New York City Feral Cat Initiative, run by the Mayor's Alliance.

As part of AC&C's agreement with the Mayor's Alliance and Maddie's Fund, "no-kill" protections only extend to animals that are potentially adoptable. Because feral animals are not socialized, they often fail to meet AC&C's standard for being kept alive – whereas, had the animal gone to a rescue group instead, it would have received TNR and likely survived.

As passed, Local Law 59 required that the DOHMH issue regulations for animal groups to perform TNR, a curious decision given AC&C's hands-off attitude toward the practice. However, in August 2012, the City Council amended the law to remove this requirement.

### ***E. Lack of Transparency***

Tracking AC&C's costs and expenditures with any precision is difficult at best today, despite the fact that it relies on tax dollars and is overseen by a City agency. As a contractor of the City of New York, AC&C is not subject to the same disclosure requirements as a City agency. Whereas the public can easily learn about the DOHMH's fiscal activities through public budget documents, there is no line in the City budget for AC&C spending – only what the DOHMH reports as part of its overall agency spending.

Instead, as a non-profit corporation, AC&C is required to submit a Form 990 to the State Attorney General's office. While this document gives

a rough breakdown of AC&C's total revenue and expenditures on salary and infrastructure expenses, it does not require AC&C to disclose details on spending for specific services, such as adoptions, where there has been a 37 percent decline over the past six years.

## **III. SECURING THE FINANCIAL FUTURE**

As part of the negotiations concerning Local Law 59, the City committed to a one-time infusion of \$10 million dollars into AC&C's budget. The first \$1 million was given at the time of the agreement and \$3.8 million was added into the FY 2013 budget. The remaining \$5.2 million is scheduled to be distributed over the next two years and will bring AC&C's budget for FY 2014 to \$12 million.<sup>49</sup> This will increase per capita spending on animal care to \$1.46 for every New Yorker – well below the \$3.75 minimum that the ASPCA estimated in 2007 is necessary in order to run a comprehensive shelter system in New York City.<sup>50</sup> By comparison, Los Angeles spends \$5.30 per capita and Miami spends \$4.36 per capita.<sup>51</sup>

Outside groups have dedicated their money and resources in an attempt to close this gap. In 2010 the ASPCA spent around \$20 million on direct animal care programs in the city and Mayor's Alliance contributed an additional \$6 million to supplement efforts.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, hundreds of smaller rescue groups across the city spend thousands of dollars each year on similar efforts. However, throwing money at a problem is not always the solution – rather, better

49 [http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.c0935b9a57b-b4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=mayor\\_press\\_release&catID=1194&doc\\_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2011b%2Fpr274-11.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1](http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.c0935b9a57b-b4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=mayor_press_release&catID=1194&doc_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2011b%2Fpr274-11.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1); <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/public/testi/testi20110909.pdf>.

50 September 14, 2006 memo from ASPCA Senior Vice president for Government Affairs and Public Policy, Lisa Weisberg. . DOHMH argues that a more accurate measure of spending is to consider per animal rather than per capita. The agency cites varying pet ownership rates across different cities, with New York City being lower than most. However, per capita spending is the metric used by the ASPCA, US Humane Society and other leading animal care advocacy organizations as well as most municipalities.

51 [http://las.depaul.edu/chaddick/docs/Docs/Companion\\_Animal\\_Final\\_Report\\_030310.pdf](http://las.depaul.edu/chaddick/docs/Docs/Companion_Animal_Final_Report_030310.pdf).

52 Testimony of Ed Sayres President of the ASPCA, before the New York City Council Committee on Health, 12/17/2010; <http://www.animalalliance-nyc.org/about/annual2010.htm>.

48 Ibid.

management structures and improved strategies are necessary.

### A. Dog Licensing

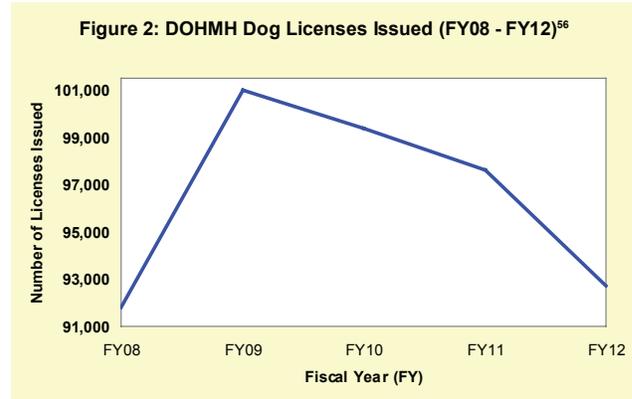
Revenue from dog licensing presents an important opportunity to supplement city spending on animal care. Cities like Seattle and Calgary, Alberta, Canada rely on these revenues to fund their animal operations. In fact, the City of Calgary Animal and Bylaw Services does not use any taxpayer funding to cover its \$5.9 million budget.

In New York City, the DOHMH is responsible for implementing dog licensing, with the majority of revenue going to the City’s general fund and – thanks to state legislation passed in 2012 sponsored by State Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal and State Senator Tom Duane – a small portion of collected fees is now directed to the Animal Population Control Fund to provide spay and neutering services for low-income individuals.<sup>53</sup> However, the AC&C only provided about a tenth of the over 67,000 spay/neutering surgeries reported in 2011 – with the ASPCA and Maddie’s Spay/Neuter project responsible for the vast majority of procedures.<sup>54</sup> If this revenue were fully redirected to the AC&C, then the non-profit would have the flexibility to spend the money on operational costs, as necessary.

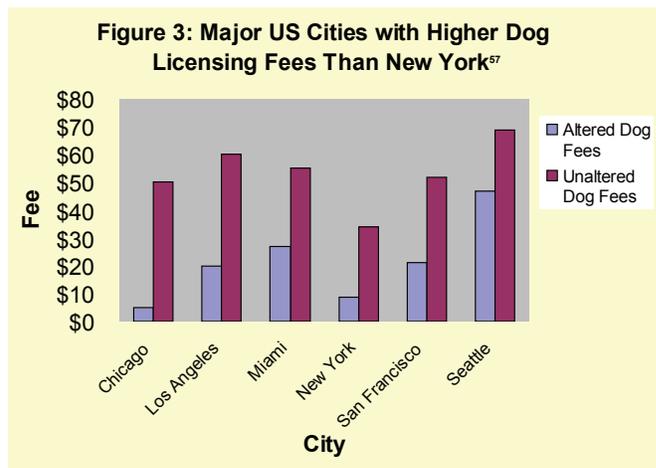
To date, New York’s City’s dog licensing program has been poorly implemented, costing AC&C millions of dollars a year in uncollected potential revenue. Currently, only 10 percent of New York City’s estimated one million dogs are licensed (the DOHMH estimates the number at closer to 500,000 dogs; however the ASPCA pegs the number at over a million).<sup>55</sup> This pales in comparison to cities like Calgary which has a 90 percent compliance rate. Furthermore, the situation appears to be getting worse. According to the September

53 [http://www.nycbar.org/pdf/report/Control\\_Animal\\_Report061109.pdf](http://www.nycbar.org/pdf/report/Control_Animal_Report061109.pdf).  
 54 <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/vet/2012-annual-statistical-report.pdf>; <http://www.animalallianceny.org/about/progress2011.htm>  
 55 September 14, 2006 memo from ASPCA Senior Vice president for Government Affairs and Public Policy, Lisa Weisberg; Testimony of Ed Sayres President of the ASPCA, before the New York City Council Committee on Health, 12/17/2010.

2012 Mayor’s Management Report, the number of dog licenses issued has declined in each of the last three fiscal years, including a 5 percent decline between Fiscal Years 2011 and 2012.



In addition to a declining rate of licensing compliance, New York City’s licensing fees are among the lowest in the country: \$8.50 for altered dogs and \$34 for unaltered (altered animals have been spayed/neutered). If increased to levels commensurate with other major cities, these fees, which are set by the State government, would provide New York City’s animal care system with millions of dollars in added revenue. Additionally, New York City does not license cats – doing so would create another potential source of revenue. Any increase in dog licensing fees or redirection of the subsequent revenue would require legislation with State approval. DOHMH has been supportive of increasing licensing fees and should continue its work with the animal care advocacy community and elected officials towards this goal.



56 [http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/mmr0912/0912\\_mmr.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/mmr0912/0912_mmr.pdf).  
 57 <http://chicityclerk.com/dog-registration/prices.html>; [http://animalcare.lacounty.gov/cms1\\_153864.pdf](http://animalcare.lacounty.gov/cms1_153864.pdf); <http://www.miamidade.gov/animals/dog-license.asp>; <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/vet/vet-doglicense.shtml>; <http://www.sfgov2.org/index.aspx?page=2856>; <http://www.seattle.gov/animalshelter/licensing-fees.htm>.

By focusing on increasing compliance and working with the State Legislature to increase fees the City can charge for licensing, AC&C could create a new revenue model to ensure it has the necessary funds to fulfill its mission. A September 14, 2006 memo from ASPCA Senior Vice President for Government Affairs and Public Policy, Lisa Weisberg, outlines the ways that AC&C could drastically increase revenue by improving dog license compliance.

The ASPCA memo estimates there are one million dogs in New York City and roughly one third of those dogs are altered (spay/neutered). Based on those figures, the ASPCA estimates AC&C could generate a minimum of \$8.5 million per year by increasing compliance to 100 percent. Furthermore, increasing the licensing fee to a minimum of \$10 could render some \$11.5 million.

While a 100 percent – or even 90 percent – rate of compliance may be an unreasonable goal for New York to achieve given its sizable population, a boost from 10 to 30 percent is attainable. Assuming the current pricing scheme and a 30 percent rate of compliance, the AC&C could generate \$7.65 million in new revenue. Adding this sum to the Fiscal Year 2014 baseline budget of \$12 million would give AC&C \$19.65 million in funds – a 64 percent increase.

Taking these calculations a step further, if licensing fees increase to \$20/\$50 for altered/unaltered animals, comparable to the current fees of Los Angeles and San Francisco, then a 30 percent compliance rate could net the AC&C an additional \$12 million for a total of \$24 million in funds – an impressive 100 percent increase. In short, the City could double AC&C's current budget simply by aligning its licensing fees with other major cities and undertaking a pro-active campaign to license more animals.

### ***B. Strategies to Increase Licensing Compliance***

As part of Local Law 59, the DOHMH launched the “Is Your Dog a Real New Yorker” campaign to

encourage greater dog licensing. The campaign consisted of ads placed throughout the city, but ran for only about 90 days between October 2011 and January 2012.<sup>58</sup> It is unclear what, if any, additional strategies accompanied the ad campaign. Despite the campaign, the number of dog licenses issued declined 5 percent between July 2011 and June 2012. Furthermore, the 92,700 licenses issued during that time frame were well short of the DOHMH's stated target of 105,000.<sup>59</sup>

While this program was a step in the right direction, clearly more needs to be done. In 2006, the ASPCA recommended several strategies that the DOHMH and AC&C could implement for increasing compliance, including mandating licensing at “points of transfer” (adoptions or sales), and authorizing external entities to sell dog licenses, such as veterinarians, humane societies, shelters, pet shops, boarding, grooming and training facilities. Unfortunately, none of these recommendations have been implemented.

Bill Bruce, who ran the highly successful City of Calgary Animal and Bylaw Services for 12 years (see Section IV), believes the secret to significantly boosting licensing compliance is a value-based approach. Simply put, pet owners are more likely to license their animal if they can see the tangible benefits of what they are paying for. Licensing should not be viewed as a burden, but rather as a value added for a pet owner. One easy-to-replicate idea is Calgary's “I Heart My Pet Rewards” program, which gives discounts on restaurant meals, hotels, car services and clothing at over 60 participating businesses. Bruce estimates most pet owners recoup their licensing fee after one or two purchases.

Moreover, because Calgary's \$5.9 million animal operation budget is funded completely with revenue collected from licensing and other fees, the agency has a strong incentive to focus on generating this revenue.

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/pr2011/pr025-11.shtml>.

<sup>59</sup> [http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/mmr0912/0912\\_mmr.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/mmr0912/0912_mmr.pdf).

In addition to increasing awareness and enforcement, an effective licensing campaign must also eliminate barriers to licensing compliance. As such, Calgary has made licensing as convenient as possible, including automatically sending out renewal notices, establishing a 24-hour hotline to license pets, creating an online form and allowing owners to license animals at the bank or even directly through an officer.<sup>60</sup>

Recently, Chicago has shown how a comprehensive campaign can boost dog-licensing compliance in a short period of time. Chicago is home to roughly 560,000 dogs and has historically struggled to get dog owners to license their pets, with an estimated compliance rate of 5 percent as of 2011.<sup>61</sup> In fall 2011, Chicago City Clerk Susana Mendoza announced the City would begin a significant crack-down on pet owners who did not license their dogs following a 90-day education and public awareness campaign and a “Dog of Distinction” contest.

The results have so far been impressive: through the first quarter of 2012, 9,100 Chicagoans have registered their dogs – more than double the number of dogs registered during the first quarter of 2011.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, dog-licensing revenue is up 118 percent over that same time period. While Chicago still has a long way to go, this initiative gives New York a tangible example of how a comprehensive awareness campaign can yield immediate results.

### ***C. Fundraising and a Revenue Generation Model***

A June 5, 2011 *New York Times* article estimates the United States Pet Industry generates over \$55 billion in annual revenues.<sup>63</sup> In 2007, the ASPCA estimated the industry is responsible for over \$100 million in tax revenues for New York City alone.<sup>64</sup>

60 <http://network.bestfriends.org/groups/conferences/news/archive/2008/10/31/municipal-animal-programs-that-work.aspx>.

61 <http://www.suntimes.com/news/cityhall/8412365-418/no-dog-license-you-could-finally-face-a-ticket-in-chicago.html>.

62 Ibid.

63 [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/05/business/05pets.html?pagewanted=all&\\_moc.semityn.www](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/05/business/05pets.html?pagewanted=all&_moc.semityn.www).

64 Source: Documents submitted to the Manhattan Borough Board on 2/15/07.

AC&C should be working with the pet services industry to boost private fundraising and form public-private partnerships to promote its operations, such as dog-licensing compliance or adoptions.

In FY 2011, AC&C reported it had raised a paltry \$56,276 from private sources – equivalent to less than half a penny per New Yorker. In contrast, Stray from the Heart, a group run by part-time volunteers, raised \$156,780 in 2010 from private funds – nearly three times as much as AC&C in roughly the same time period.

By comparison, the Central Park Conservancy raised \$38.9 million through fundraising and invested revenue. By restructuring the AC&C board to include the city’s passionate and generous philanthropic community as well as individuals with marketing expertise, the City could significantly increase private fundraising revenue.

When combined with an increase in dog-licensing compliance and a steady commitment in funding from the City, the results could be transformative for AC&C. For example, if:

- The City were to establish a baseline funding of \$10 million a year for AC&C (\$2 million less than FY 14 projections);
- Dog licensing fees were restructured to generate \$12 million a year through an increase to \$20/\$50 for altered/unaltered animals and a 30 percent compliance rate; and
- A new AC&C board raised about a quarter of the Central Park Conservancy’s annual fundraising haul – approximately \$9 million

Then the AC&C would have a robust \$32 million a year in funding to carry out its mission. That is the equivalent of \$3.90 per capita, slightly above the ASPCA’s estimate of minimum required spending in order to provide comprehensive animal care services for New York City.

## IV. BEST PRACTICES: JURISDICTIONS WITH SUCCESSFUL ANIMAL CARE SYSTEMS

As part of this report, information was gathered on animal welfare systems in other cities that are independent, staffed by trained animal care experts in leadership positions and have robust fundraising operations that leverage the goodwill of their communities. All are recognized as models in the field of municipal animal shelter operation.

### *Calgary, Alberta, Canada*

Calgary, home to 1.1 million residents, has the most impressive municipal shelter system in North America. The City of Calgary Animal and Bylaw Services, run from 2000 to 2012 by Bill Bruce, funds its entire \$5.9 million annual budget at no cost to taxpayers.<sup>65</sup> Instead, it relies entirely on its own revenues – a mixture of licensing, adoption, fines, and other sources. The licensing compliance rate for dogs is 91 percent and the euthanasia rate is a mere 6 percent; for cats it is 50 percent and 18 percent respectively.<sup>66</sup> Despite having a population one-eighth the size of New York City, Calgary boasts roughly 11,000 more licensed dogs than the five boroughs (using the ASPCA's estimate of 100,000 dogs).<sup>67</sup>

This success starts at the top. Bruce was granted the freedom and independence to make key changes to the Calgary shelter system. His unique approach started with the belief that the emphasis in animal care should be placed on humans, rather than their pets. "Any animal that ends up in a shelter is there because the human end of the relationship failed," he says.<sup>68</sup> From there, Bruce implemented a three-pronged approach to responsible pet ownership: licensing, public education and enforcement.

As discussed in Section III of this report, Bruce's approach focused on creating a value for licenses. Pet

65 <http://www.thestar.com/news/article/1053251--what-cowtown-s-pound-can-teach-hogtown>.

66 <http://saveourdogs.net/2009/08/09/the-calgary-model-for-success/>.

67 <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Documents/ABS-2011-Annual-Report.pdf>.

68 <http://saveourdogs.net/2009/08/09/the-calgary-model-for-success/>.

owners are more likely to license their animal if they can see the tangible benefits of what they're paying for – as seen in the successful "I Heart My Pet Rewards" program. Another clear benefit is the City's return-to-owner policy, which provides drop-off service at home for any licensed animal found alone on the street.

Calgary puts its licensing revenues to work. For instance, in 2011 the system processed 731 animals through a No Cost Spay/Neuter Program funded entirely from cat-licensing fees.<sup>69</sup> Revenue from the dog-licensing program goes directly to covering the cost of operations. The benefits of licensing are touted in the agency's 2011 annual report: "Licensing allows pets to be returned to their owners faster and reduces euthanization rates. Calgary has one of the highest return-to-owner and lowest euthanization rates in North America."<sup>70</sup>

One important distinction between the approaches taken by Calgary and New York City is the cost of licensing an animal. The DOHMH charges \$8.50 for neutered dog and \$34 for non-neutered, whereas Calgary charges \$31 for a neutered dog and \$53 for non-neutered. Additionally, Calgary charges for cat licensing – \$15 for altered and \$30 for unaltered. This is a significant boost that undoubtedly helps with generating needed revenue. At the same time, the "I Heart My Pet Rewards" program allows owners to quickly recoup licensing fees through discounts.<sup>71</sup> It is a win-win for animal owners and the shelter system.

### *San Diego, California*

Mike Arms, Director of the Helen Woodward Animal Center (HWAC) in San Diego, believes a shelter system should be run like any successful multi-million dollar business – "Marketing, fundraising and promotion... that's the first thing you have to do." Since Arms took over in 1999, the Center's endowment has increased from virtually nothing to \$10 million. The Center is also launching a \$50 million expansion project.

69 <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Documents/ABS-2011-Annual-Report.pdf>.

70 <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/ABS/Documents/ABS-2011-Annual-Report.pdf>.

71 <http://www.thestar.com/news/article/1053251--what-cowtown-s-pound-can-teach-hogtown>.

HWAC has the highest adoption fees in all of San Diego County, yet is one of the most popular private animal shelters in the country. Arms' approach is simple: a warm and inviting shelter and an aggressive media strategy will drive foot traffic. In 1999, HWAC launched the "Home 4 the Holidays" pet adoption campaign, which strives to reduce euthanasia by encouraging families to adopt a pet rather than purchase from a puppy mill or backyard breeder. The campaign has quickly grown from fourteen shelters in San Diego County to a national campaign that has resulted in the adoption of over seven million animals in the past twelve years.

Additionally, HWAC uses the momentum of current events as a tool to drive potential adopters to visit their facilities. During the Occupy Wall Street movement in fall 2011, HWAC staged an "#Occupyhearts protest" to raise awareness for adoptions. Animals were accompanied by signs that said "too cute to fail" and "I am the K-99%." Arms says a successful shelter should find ways to engage the media: "You have to market your product and increase footsteps by playing up the beautiful pets that you have."



Photo of puppy at Helen Woodward Animal Shelter's Occupy Hearts adoption drive on October 20, 2011.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> <http://helenwoodwardanimalcenter.wordpress.com/2011/10/20/occupy-protests-gone-to-the-dogs/>.



Photo of puppy at Helen Woodward Animal Shelter's Occupy Hearts adoption drive on October 20, 2011.

Arms also believes shelter system success begins at the top with the Executive Director and that independence is necessary for effective leadership. "I can't work if my hands are tied and I can't get things done," he says. When asked how New York could adopt an incentive-based approach to encourage animal licensing compliance, Arms offered a truly outside-the-box idea: raise the base dog licensing fee from \$8.50 to \$9. Then set aside revenue generated by that extra fifty-cent increase and create a lotto where each year one owner of a licensed animal is selected and given a cash prize. Arms' point is whether you are trying to get people to comply with laws or adopt animals, it all starts with generating attention and getting people excited to be part of your solution.

### *Washoe County, Nevada*

Public-private partnerships can provide a strong foundation for a municipal shelter system, provided there is strong leadership at the top.

One of the more unique public-private partnerships is in Washoe County, Nevada – home to Reno and approximately 430,000 residents. Since 2006, Washoe County Animal Services (WCAS) and the Nevada Humane Society have operated out of the same building and developed a joint strategy for pro-

viding animal care. In the first year, adoption rates increased by 53 percent for dogs and 84 percent for cats while the “save rate” for dogs increased county-wide by 50 percent.<sup>73</sup> Today, Washoe County boasts a 9 percent euthanasia rate – among the lowest in the nation.<sup>74</sup> The collaboration behind this remarkable turnaround is documented in a report by WCAS Manager Mitch Schneider entitled “*Creating a Win-Win: Reducing Costs While Improving Customer Service and Public Support.*”<sup>75</sup>

## V. A LOCAL GOVERNANCE MODEL: THE CENTRAL PARK CONSERVANCY

In addition to employing best practices from other animal welfare agencies, the City should redesign AC&C’s governance structure along the model of the Central Park Conservancy.

In the late 1970s, Central Park was in a state of disrepair and neglect. In response, the Central Park Conservancy was founded in 1980 by merging the Central Park Task Force and the Central Park Community Fund into one group. These individual groups had formed in response to concerns that Central Park was being abandoned because of its astoundingly high crime rate. Many philanthropists and community members were concerned over the fate of the park.

Today Central Park is one of the nation’s greatest public spaces, thanks largely to over \$470 million in funds raised privately by the Conservancy since its founding. Although the Parks Department retains policy control over the park, 85 percent of its \$45.8 million annual budget – approximately \$38.9 million – is raised independently each year by the Conservancy and its dedicated board.<sup>76</sup>

The Conservancy is run by a board of trustees that has 52 members. The Mayor appoints five, and there are four ex-officio members, including the Manhattan Borough President, the Commissioner of the Department of Parks and Recreation, the President of

73 <http://www.cvent.com/events/2012-no-more-homeless-pets-national-conference/custom-17-7c5bde28f9439ca5c058e2f7300b65.aspx>.

74 <http://www.toledoblade.com/local/2011/08/06/Collaboration-results-in-reduced-dog-euthanasia-rates-officials-say-2.html>.

75 [cma.org/Documents/Document/Document/303807](http://cma.org/Documents/Document/Document/303807).

76 <http://www.centralparknyc.org/about/>.

the Women’s Committee for the Central Park Conservancy, and the President and CEO of the board. The other members, who have to run for re-election every two years, are meant to support the city’s businesses and philanthropic goals and are expected to donate to help fund the restoration, maintenance, and projects of the park. The Board of Trustees elects its President and CEO, a Board Chair, Vice-Chairs, a Secretary and a Treasurer every year. There are no term limits for any elected members of the board.

The AC&C should adopt a similar model as the Central Park Conservancy. A larger board would add diversity and independence to the AC&C’s structure and improve its ability to raise private sector dollars, while also adding a level of animal welfare expertise that simply does not exist today.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. RESTRUCTURE AC&C INTO AN INDEPENDENT NON-PROFIT MODELED AFTER THE CENTRAL PARK CONSERVANCY

Under its current model, AC&C lacks the independence and funding to fulfill its mission. The best chance at reversing this trajectory and providing New Yorkers with the animal care system they deserve is by restructuring the AC&C.

As with any successful agency, non-profit or private sector company, leadership starts at the top. An Executive Director must have authority over day-to-day operations and a level of financial support that allows for the creation of a clean, safe, forward-thinking animal welfare system. The best way to accomplish this is through an expanded board comprised of expert stakeholders with broad knowledge of animal welfare issues, as well as dedicated private citizens with a passion for supporting the City’s shelter system. Such a framework would vastly expand AC&C’s ability to raise funds, while also providing a level of expert oversight that does not exist today.

AC&C currently has a nine-member board of directors, all of whom serve at the pleasure of the Mayor, and the Commissioner of the Health Department

chairs the board. As outlined in Section V, the Central Park Conservancy has a 52-member Board of Trustees – with only five appointed by the Mayor and the rest selected by fellow board members. The composition of the board includes a robust mixture of individuals with knowledge. Although the Parks Department retains policy control over the park, 85 percent of its \$37.4 million annual budget is raised independently by the Conservancy and its dedicated board.

### *Implementation*

Changes to the AC&C's structure can be made by the corporation's Board of Directors. Additionally, the City Council could push for changes as part of contract negotiations when the current AC&C agreement with the City expires in 2015.

From there, the City should seed the new AC&C board with an initial group of roughly ten individuals who can help the new board establish new by-laws and a system for selecting new members. Initial representation on the AC&C board should include outside experts in animal care who can counsel AC&C management, such as the ASPCA, Mayor's Alliance and other organizations that have significantly invested in improving New York's homeless animal population. As with the conservancy, the board members should decide on their own system for governance, independent of municipal control. With this solid foundation in place, the reconstituted AC&C should bring on a strong Executive Director to oversee day-to-day operations.

In order to significantly boost collaboration, promotional efforts and private sector fundraising, individuals with development and marketing expertise and members of the pet services industry should be represented on the board. The DOHMH should serve as an ex-officio member and its relationship with AC&C should be similar to that of the Parks Department and the Central Park Conservancy. However, it is crucial the new board be granted the freedom to run the day-to-day operations of the City's shelters.

By bringing together these diverse stakeholders, AC&C would be able to take on a stronger leadership role in the city's animal care community and

work with outside groups on a coordinated approach to fundraising and spending. This would help ensure that spending on animal care happens in the most strategic and efficient manner.

### *Support*

Proposals to reform AC&C's Board of Directors and re-model it based on a structure similar to that of the Central Park Conservancy have already attracted tremendous support in the animal care community. In Fall 2011, Manhattan Borough President Stringer launched the Protecting Animal Welfare and Safety (PAWS) campaign to encourage New Yorkers to support such a reform proposal. To date, the petition has received over 8,800 signatures, nearly 5,000 likes on Facebook and over 200 tweets.<sup>77</sup>

## **2. SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE REVENUE THROUGH AGGRESSIVE PRIVATE FUNDRAISING AND PROMOTING PET LICENSING COMPLIANCE**

In order to attain necessary operational funds, establish appropriate shelter conditions and pay for necessary capital expenditures, the new board should develop a business plan with an emphasis on proactively identifying new opportunities to increase licensing compliance and adoptive services. One way to do this is to partner with corporations, cultural institutions and the pet service industry to raise awareness about AC&C activities. The goal should be to generate excitement and media attention around AC&C and its services.

Additionally, the AC&C board should focus fundraising efforts on necessary capital expenditures – such as new shelter facilities. People are more likely to give money if they can see the tangible benefits of their donations. Additionally, calling attention to necessary capital projects would generate interest in shelter activities. If a reconstituted AC&C board raised a quarter of what the Conservancy does, that would be over \$9 million a year – enough to double the AC&C's budget.

Currently, the responsibility for enforcing pet license compliance rests with the DOHMH, with the majority of revenue going straight to the agency and a

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.mbpo.org/paws/>.

small portion directed to spay/neutering services. The City and AC&C should work with state legislators to transfer this responsibility to the reconstituted AC&C. The new Executive Director and dynamic new board should then be charged with developing a multi-faceted approach to increasing revenue from pet licensing that includes:

- Mandating the issuance of dog and cat licensing at all “points of transfer” (adoptions or sales) and authorizing external entities to sell dog licenses, such as veterinarians, humane societies, shelters, pet shops, boarding, grooming and training facilities;
- Undertaking a robust publicity campaign to advertise the animal welfare benefits of licensing dogs and cats, especially now that licenses can be obtained easily and quickly online. The City should involve all relevant stakeholders – rescue groups, pet store owners, dog-run operators, city schools – to raise awareness and engage the general public. This should be a comprehensive effort that utilizes digital tools and harnesses the energy of the City’s active animal care community. The NYPD and Parks Police should be encouraged to issue warnings, and then summonses, to increase compliance; and
- Creating an incentive rewards program to encourage dog and cat licensing, modeled after Calgary’s “I Heart My Pet Rewards.” Such a program would not just incentivize compliance but also provide pet owners with an opportunity to save money on needed pet products and services.

In addition, the reconstituted AC&C should work with the State Legislature to increase the licensing fee, which at \$8.50 for spayed/neutered animals is one of the lowest fees in the country.

AC&C has the potential to more than triple its annual funds by aggressively targeting private fundraising and boosting pet compliance. As with the Central Park Conservancy model, public funding should continue to pay for a portion of animal care services, but the reconstituted AC&C should move aggressively to create its own revenue stream that would give it the

needed independence and flexibility to effectively revamp its operations.

### **3. COMMIT TO BUILDING FULL-SERVICE ANIMAL SHELTERS IN THE BRONX AND QUEENS**

According to AC&C’s website, the non-profit is under contract with the City “to rescue, care for and find loving homes for homeless and abandoned animals” in New York City. Central to this responsibility should be finding humane ways to decrease the stray animal population of our City. There is no better way of accomplishing this than through full-service animal shelters, which provide adoption programs, spay and neutering and lost-and-found services. This three-pronged approach tackles both the root of the stray population and strives to put healthy animals in loving homes. Full-service shelters also provide a nexus for rescue groups and volunteers to create strong, community-based programs dedicated to animal welfare.

The DOHMH estimates these shelters would cost \$25 million for construction and \$10 million annually for operation. While this is a significant sum of money, it is also a necessary investment in the shelter system. Construction of the Bronx and Queens shelters would also give the reconstituted AC&C a worthy and tangible project to fundraise around – one that could potentially generate positive press attention for the shelter system.

These facilities would not just give residents access to services such as adoptions, spay and neutering and lost and found – which will help control the stray animal population in these boroughs – but would also help reduce overcrowding at the Manhattan and Brooklyn shelters. Further investment should also be made to the antiquated facilities in Manhattan and Brooklyn, which are in serious need of an upgrade.

By implementing these sensible reforms, AC&C can finally have the independence, expertise and revenue generating ability it needs to properly fulfill its mission. And in doing so, we can re-establish New York City as a national leader in animal care.



**SCOTT M. STRINGER**

**MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT**

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[REDACTED]

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**From:** Matty Motylenski <matthew.motylenski@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 6:00 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue -- Queens, NYC

[REDACTED]

Good evening,

I am writing this message in haste because I recently learned about the testimony regarding the state of animal rescue in the city and the 6 pm deadline. As a Queens resident with three cats, I struggle to afford pet care. Therefore, along with many other pet owners, we worry that every vet bill will put us into debt. We should not have to worry about whether to be in insurmountable debt and the welfare of our feline companions. My friend's mother is a veterinarian on the reservation in Montana, and she meets people where they are at. She is a community provider. In addition, around the holidays, I discovered five stray kittens in my backyard. Queens shelters were overcrowded and every local organization I contacted could not guarantee that they would euthanize the animals. Local pet owners and civilians helped connect me with dog crates because no one would come to my house to trap the kittens. My mother, a senior citizen, managed to corner the kittens. Yet, several places would not take them. Even Long Island places said they had to be local animals. Other volunteers I connected with offered to shelter them. Puppy Kitty NYC graciously offered to take them in, cover neuter costs, and find homes for them. Through donations from my officemates, I could afford their \$100 per kitten charge to take them from hands. As it was Christmas Eve, I appreciated finding something for these kittens before the snowstorm came in. We need support and pet care for our cats and for the strays!

All the best,  
Matty + Whiskey, Riley, and Chloe

--  
Matty Motylenski  
Bay of Quinte Band of Mohawks  
[REDACTED]

My name is Rachael Ziering, and I'm the Founding Executive Director at Muddy Paws Rescue. We are a foster-based dog rescue group. To date this year, we have taken in 96 dogs from NYC Animal Care Centers, 12 dogs from the ASPCA (many of whom originated at ACC), and 3 NYC strays directly from the public.

Of the 96 dogs we've taken from ACC since January 1, 15 were altered prior to entering the shelter, and 23 were altered by the shelter - the rest we altered in our care through private vet clinics or, in the last few months, using our own clinic. This is not a knock on ACC—almost every dog that comes through the shelter comes down ends up with kennel cough and/or pneumonia due to the tight space and the building's lack of adequate HVAC system, and it would not be safe to put dogs under anesthesia while they're sick. ACC does allow us to bring animals back for alter, but they're always booked out for months, and many of the dogs we take have been issued a permanent waiver due to age and the fact that they don't have the appropriate anesthesia for certain possible complications. Theoretically, we can utilize the ASPCA for free alter surgeries, but trying to get these appointments is much like trying to get concert tickets for the Backstreet Boys in the late 90s. For many years, we jumped through all the hoops to secure these appointments, but it was not sustainable, and eventually we came to the conclusion that paying \$300 to \$700 for these alter surgeries at private vet clinics was worth it to reduce the time and energy we were putting into trying to secure the free appointments. For a long time, this meant that we had to very carefully pick and choose who we pulled from ACC to ensure we were spending responsibly, giving priority to those who were already altered.

In March of this year, we partnered with another rescue group to bring a vet on staff part-time and begin doing our own surgeries in-house. This has allowed us to say yes to far more animals from ACC, but it should not have been something that we, a private foster-based rescue group, should have had to have done to ensure that we were able to say yes to more NYC dogs.

While we certainly do not have all of the answers, I do believe that we've managed to implement a sustainable low cost spay/neuter system for our own dogs on a relatively small scale, and we would love to be a part of a larger-scale solution to support NYC animals, whatever that might look like. Thank you to everyone who is boots on the ground at ACC for saving lives daily, and thank you for letting me speak today.

**TESTIMONY BY RITA PASARELL  
ON BEHALF OF NEIGHBORHOOD ANIMAL RESCUE NETWORK (NARN)**

**Hearing of the New York City Council Committee on Health  
September 13, 2024**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the New York City Council, to offer suggestions on how the city can support animal rescuers. Thank you Speaker Adrienne Adams, Councilmember Lynne Schulman, and members of the Committee.

My testimony is on behalf of [Neighborhood Animal Rescue Network \(NARN\)](#). I live in Crown Heights, in Councilmember Chi Osse's district.

I am here to ask that you support high volume, low cost spay neuter and vet care for all pet owners and animal rescuers.

**Spay neuter is the most effective tool we have to prevent overpopulation, and is the best way to lower the amount of preventable animal deaths.**

**I want to underscore it is also a cost-saving measure** - a short-term investment in low cost spay neuter could generate long-term cost savings with fewer shelter animals to take care of and rehome. The City provides certain funding for shelters,<sup>1</sup> but **New York City's animal service budget is a very small fraction of what other cities spend: as mentioned in the testimony of Committee Chairperson Schulman and according to Voters for Animal Rights, New York City spends only \$2.89 per capita** compared to L.A.'s \$10.08 per capita, Miami's \$13.70 per capita, and Dallas' \$14.78 per capita.

In the absence of City spending, a patchwork group of people step in, such as myself and the other animal rescuers who have seen the vast suffering and feel called to act in to lend a hand. We commit their own funds and free time to fill the gap of what the City fails to provide.

However, of course we cannot keep up with the needs of the City's animal population, and can never match the successes that could be achieved by a well-funded and organized City initiative to fund low cost spay neuter.

According to the ASPCA, one single pair of unspayed/unneutered cats can give rise to a population as high as 2,048 in 2.5 years.<sup>2</sup> Of course, multiplied by the actual number of

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.nycacc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ACC\\_June\\_30\\_2022-Final\\_Financial\\_Statement.pdf](https://www.nycacc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ACC_June_30_2022-Final_Financial_Statement.pdf) (see Note 12 "New York City Funding")

“community cats” sometimes called strays, in our city, preventing increased overpopulation would require a meaningful amount of spay neuter taking place, however, **according to Voters for Animal Rights, there are currently fewer than 1,000 discount spay neuter appointments each month in NYC-- to have a meaningful impact on the overpopulation, the number of appointments should be close to 10,000.**

This is ineffective and dangerous, and the results are clear: shelters closing intake, an ever-exploding population of community cats, and massive amounts of suffering by cats as well as humans.

For example, this week, I participated in a rescue of 4 live cats removed from a cat hoarding situation where recently there were up to 30 cats. In the course of that rescue, we found starving cats stuck inside crates without food or water, multiple dead cats, and countless community cats on the block, including a pregnant cat. I spent my own personal funds in this mission, including the costs to flea treat my car after the flea infestation which resulted from transporting the cats to a safe space.

I believe the suffering and deaths were preventable if our city had a robust program for high volume, low cost spay neuter and vet care.

This is just one case of so many every day our city, as **the pandemic erased 15 years of progress on reducing overpopulation** -- privately funded spay neuter was suspended and the community cat populations soared.

**Private spay neuter now costs over \$1,000, which many residents cannot afford, leading to a high number of “dumped” cats,** as the cats mature and show normal but undesirable behaviors as a result of not being spayed/neutered, and are dumped outside to try and survive in the streets.

**Additionally the high costs of vet care and ever-soaring housing costs further leads to dumped cats, especially in neighborhoods where housing displacement is common.**

Family members who are traumatized by displacement are further traumatized when they cannot afford to care for their pets who they love dearly.

There is a misconception that community cats may fare well outside, but they do not. According to a study by the American Veterinary Medical Association, around 75% of kittens born outside die.<sup>3</sup> For the 25% who survive, their lives are not easy. Aside from having to find food and

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.aspcapro.org/sites/default/files/Animalelessons\\_%20Pet\\_Overpopulation.pdf](https://www.aspcapro.org/sites/default/files/Animalelessons_%20Pet_Overpopulation.pdf)

shelter, unneutered male cats frequently fight, which can lead to further deaths, wounds, and infections including with Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (F.I.V.), which is roughly the cat equivalent to H.I.V.<sup>4</sup>

Last week, I took in a friendly community cat to secure vet care for him, and testing showed the cat has F.I.V.. Now we are struggling to find him a home indoors so he can live a healthy life and avoid the outdoor fighting that would infect other community cats with F.I.V.

These are just some of the experiences we have had recently, as self-funded animal rescuers, and we need your help.

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide testimony today and I again thank the Council for their time. Our hope is that this hearing continues a productive conversation to improve the lives of animals and pet-owners across all five boroughs.

Thank you,  
Rita Pasarell  
Neighborhood Animal Rescue Network (NARN)

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<sup>3</sup> “Reproductive capacity of free-roaming domestic cats and kitten survival rate”  
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15552315/>

<sup>4</sup> F.I.V. is not transmissible to humans. See <https://www.vet.cornell.edu/departments-centers-and-institutes/cornell-feline-health-center/health-information/feline-health-topics/feline-immunodeficiency-virus-fiv#:~:text=Although%20FIV%20is%20similar%20to,or%20cause%20disease%20in%20humans.>

September 12, 2024

**Board of Directors**

Alexandra Alton

Emma Cobb

Anitra Frazier

Bryan Kortis,  
National Programs  
Director

Jocelyn Okee

Nancy Peterson

Susan Richmond,  
Executive Director

**NYC Community Cat  
Program Director**

Jackie Borodan

To: The Committee on Health – New York City Council

**Re: The State of Animal Rescue in New York City**

Dear Councilmembers,

Neighborhood Cats has been deeply involved in the management of unowned, free-roaming cats in New York City for the past 24 years. Ours was the first organization in NYC to widely promote spay/neuter as the best approach for reducing the cats' numbers, lowering complaints and improving the cats' welfare. We have trained thousands of residents how to safely trap and care for the cats. We've also performed large-scale spay/neuter projects in cooperation with multiple city agencies, including the Department of Corrections, the Parks Department, NYPD, the Department of Sanitation, and others. Since the beginning of our work, we have also collaborated with Animal Care Centers of NYC.

In 2011, the New York City Council showed support for spay/neuter of feral and stray cats (also known as "trap-neuter-return") by enacting Administrative Code section 17-804(e) which provides that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, "shall post and maintain on its website a regularly updated list of organizations in New York City that offer trap-neuter-return information and conduct trap-neuter-return activities."

Through the years, the nonprofit sector has funded and led the efforts in New York to get street cats spayed and neutered and no resources have been provided by the City. However, the pandemic and ensuing shrinkage of nonprofit resources devoted to this issue has created an affordable spay/neuter crisis. To help address this, Neighborhood Cats offers surgical subsidies to individuals seeking to get feral and stray cats fixed in NYC, but we can only cover a fraction of the overall need.

We encourage the City to take a more proactive approach and more actively support access to low-cost spay/neuter, especially for street cats. As one possible model, we would point to Honolulu's Feline Fix program (<https://www8.honolulu.gov/csd/free-roaming-cat-management/>).

The management of feral and stray cats is not only an animal welfare issue, but it also speaks to public health and quality of life, especially in underserved communities. At this time, the City is the only entity capable of providing the resources necessary to scale up the work. With the City's support, our cat overpopulation problem can be solved. Without it, it cannot.

Thank you for considering our testimony,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Richmond". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Richmond  
Executive Director

September 9, 2024

Testimony for Increased Funding for High-Volume, Low-Cost Spay/Neuter and Affordable Veterinary Care

As a lifelong animal rescuer and founder of Paws of Hope NYC, I have dedicated my life to rescuing and caring for our city's most vulnerable animals in East New York, Brooklyn, and beyond. Over the years, I have witnessed firsthand the heartbreaking reality faced by New York City's homeless cat population and the rescuers who tirelessly work to save them. Every day, we confront the devastating effects of overpopulation—cats left to fend for themselves on the streets, suffering from preventable diseases, and facing the relentless cycle of reproduction that condemns generation after generation to a life of hardship.

This crisis is not just about the cats. It is about the people who care for them—the rescuers, the fosters, and the everyday New Yorkers who want to do the right thing for their pets but find themselves trapped in a system that offers little to no support. We desperately need the NYC government to recognize the scale of this problem and allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care.

For rescuers like myself, who are already stretched thin emotionally and financially, the burden is becoming unbearable. We are not just rescuing cats; we are battling a broken system, one where the cost of veterinary care is skyrocketing, and accessible spay/neuter options are too few and far between. We want to save lives, but without adequate resources, our efforts are limited, and the suffering continues.

Imagine being out in the field, trapping cat after cat in dire need of care, knowing that for each one you help, there are countless more waiting in the shadows. Every rescuer, every pet parent who has reached out for assistance, feels the weight of this reality. The financial strain of providing even the most basic veterinary care for these animals can be overwhelming. A single emergency can deplete a rescuer's resources or force a pet parent to make an impossible choice between rent and the well-being of a beloved companion.

Affordable and accessible veterinary care is not a luxury—it is a necessity. By investing in high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs, the city can dramatically reduce the number of homeless cats, decrease the burden on shelters, and most importantly, prevent suffering on a massive scale.

This funding is not just about dollars and cents; it is about compassion and community. It is about empowering those who are on the front lines of this crisis to continue their lifesaving work without fear of financial ruin. It is about ensuring that no cat or pet parent has to face the heartbreak of preventable suffering due to a lack of resources.

The time to act is now. We must invest in the infrastructure that will save lives, support our community, and honor the commitment we have made to be a humane city. I urge the NYC government to step up and provide the critical funding needed for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care. Lives depend on it, and so does the heart of our city.

Sincerely yours,

Gissell O'Donoghue

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Positive Tails Testimony  
New York City Council, Committee on Health  
Oversight - The State of Animal Rescue in New York City  
September 13, 2024

Positive Tails is a non-profit organization founded in 2013 to improve both animal and community welfare in New York City. Our mission is centered around the belief that dogs and cats are part of our families, and we're committed to helping to keep these families together. Working in conjunction with Veterinary Emergency and Referral Group (VERG) and other partner hospitals we work toward our mission in three ways: we provide funding for lifesaving emergency veterinary care for those who can't afford treatment, or for animals who are abandoned or abused; we organize and hold an average of 9 veterinary clinics for people who can't afford or don't have access to veterinary care for their animals; and we provide follow up care and spay/neuter services to help animals lead long, healthy lives, and to control the incidence of unwanted animals.

Since our founding, we've funded over 700 emergency cases. Some of our most common emergencies - such as pyometra and parvo - are preventable with routine care and spay/neuter services. In 2019 Positive Tails started hosting pop up clinics for people who don't have access to routine care, whether because of financial constraints or because they live in areas without affordable veterinary options. Since then, we've hosted more than 15 pop up clinics, treating over 1200 dogs and cats. Through these clinics we've seen first hand the incredible demand for affordable veterinary services and desire for spay/neuter services across New York City. We've also seen the lengths people will go to obtain affordable care - including traveling across the city at all times of day to seek otherwise unattainable medical care for their pets.

We have met hundreds of families who are desperate to take care of their pets, but have not had access to affordable care to prevent small issues from becoming life threatening, cost prohibitive, emergencies. We know that without our assistance many families would have been forced to consider surrendering their beloved pets or at worst euthanizing them. As a small volunteer run non-profit organization we have limited reach compared to the outsized need in the city. Investing in veterinary care including spay and neuter is cost effective, prevents families from making heartbreaking decisions, and relieves overtaxed city shelters. Maintaining the health of companion animals pets should be within the reach of all New Yorkers, not a luxury. We urge the City Council to support New York City families by funding spay/neuter and wellness services to keep families together and to prevent the unnecessary surrender of pets to overcrowded city shelters.

Thank you chairwoman and council members for allowing us to shed light on this ever growing problem. My name is Barbara Myskowsky, VP of PuppyKittyNYCity. We are one of larger rescues here in NYC. It is my experience over the years I've been working in rescue that the only thing that will help get the problems of overpopulation under control is high- volume, low-cost spay neuter clinics in every borough. Honestly, state wide even better. We cannot win this battle with breeding that goes on in people's backyards, bodegas, and the ferals on the city streets. There must be a city-wide ban on breeding pets especially cats and dogs. It is disgraceful for individuals to profit from breeding often using very dangerous practices as well as neglectful and abusive conditions while the city shelters are overrun with animals waiting for homes. Rescuers are overwhelmed and struggling to keep up financially and physically often with no funding. This not only goes against everything we stand for but also directly undermines our mission to reduce the overpopulation crisis and save lives. Dogs and cats must be spayed and neutered and the city should be providing the resources available to for citizens to do so. For most of 2024 there was zero low cost spay neuter available to anyone in queens including rescuers. Without low cost spay/neuter clinics in every borough accessible to individuals as well as rescuers we will never fix this problem. We've encountered many situations this year that could have been avoided if spay neuter resources were available to people. One example is 37 cat hoarding cases that started from just two cats. This case was handled by our organization with no support from the city. Overpopulation is cruel to the animals and affects our communities our neighborhoods. The strain on shelters and rescues cannot continue as the problem grows many will be left with no choice but to not help more animals or shut down entirely because of lack of resources. Addressing this issue at its root will benefit everyone especially the animals and the people who are trying to do the right thing. I urge you, council members, to not only support Council Member Brannan's bill 1234 but to work together to create a comprehensive, lasting solution to this issue. If we don't act now, this crisis will only continue to escalate, leaving countless animals to suffer, and stretching our city's resources even thinner. We must set the precedent in NYC so that other cities can see if it can be done in a large, highly populated city like ours it can be done everywhere! Let everyone see that we are a community that values compassion and responsibility and we back it up with programs to enable all to do what needs to be done. Let's show the nation what animal welfare should look like in the greatest city in the world.

Thank you chairwoman and council members for allowing us to shed light on this ever growing problem. My name is Meagan Licari and I run PuppyKittyNYCity. As one of the larger rescues here in NYC, I can promise you there is only one clear solution to an over population crisis and that is high volume low cost spay neuter. We cannot win this battle with breeding going on in our backyards, bodegas, and city streets. There must be a city wide ban on breeding companion animals especially cats and dogs. It is utterly unacceptable for individuals to profit from breeding while the city shelter and rescuers are overwhelmed and struggling to keep up financially and physically—this not only goes against everything we stand for but also directly undermines our mission to reduce the overpopulation crisis and save lives. Dogs and cats must be spayed and neutered and the city must provide the resources available to for citizens to do so. For most of 2024 there was zero low cost spay neuter available to anyone in queens including rescuers. There needs to be low cost spay neuter clinics in every borough available to individuals and rescuers or we will never fix this problem. So many situations I have encountered this year could have been avoided if spay neuter resources were available to people. One example is 37 cat hoarding cases that started from just two cats. This case was handled by my organization with no support from the city. Overpopulation doesn't just affect the animals—it affects our communities and our neighbors. The strain on shelters and rescue organizations creates economic and social stress on our city. Addressing this issue at its root will benefit everyone. I urge you, council members, to not only support Council Member Brannan's bill 1234 but to work together to create a comprehensive, lasting solution to this issue. If we don't act now, this crisis will only continue to escalate, leaving countless animals to suffer, and stretching our city's resources even thinner. We must set the precedent for other cities and show that we are a community that values compassion and responsibility. Let's show the nation what animal welfare should look like in the greatest city in the world.

## SHELTER REFORM ACTION COMMITTEE

127 West 83rd Street

New York, NY 10024

[info@shelterreform.org](mailto:info@shelterreform.org)

September 3, 2024

Statement to the City Council Committee on Health

(drawn from SRAC's [latest newsletter](#))

### **"IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME."**

ACC recently opened its new Queens shelter, heralded as a state-of-the-art facility that would be the "go-to" place for Queens animal lovers. Even better, ACC claimed that the building would entice people to work and volunteer there. What a refreshing change that would be for an ACC shelter!

Those hopes quickly faded. The Queens Shelter is no Field of Dreams.

The Queens facility reflects ACC's core weaknesses. The shelter lacks enough staff and volunteers. Volunteers who transferred over from the closed Brooklyn shelter report tension between them and kennel staff, to the animals' disservice. The shelter is a testament to ACC mismanagement.

### **A NATIONAL CRISIS MADE EVEN WORSE AT ACC**

Shelters across the U.S. are experiencing a deluge of surrendered or abandoned pets combined with stagnant or lower adoptions. [ACC is no exception](#). The Queens shelter quickly filled with twice the number of dogs it was designed to hold. Lacking enough staff and volunteers, [many cages are filthy, the smell of animal waste is often overwhelming, and frantic dogs go unwalked](#).

### **ALWAYS TRUST THE DOH NEVER TO BE TRUSTED**

One thing is certain about the City's Department of Health (which funds and effectively controls ACC): if left to its own devices, the DOH will always underfund ACC. Nor will the DOH spend a nickel for ACC services that help reduce animal surrenders and abandonment. Those services start with making basic vet care -- spay/neuter and vaccines -- available and affordable to low income pet owners.

**"NICE" DOESN'T CUT IT**

Another thing that's certain about the DOH is that it will not tolerate any challenge from ACC.

The ACC Board of Directors is filled with nice people. The 3 government Directors (representing DOH, NYPD and PARKS) are nice. But they violate their fiduciary duty to ACC because their first loyalty is to the City.

The non-government directors the DOH allows on the Board are well-meaning. Yet, they know better than ever to challenge the DOH. Thus, they also violate their fiduciary duty as directors.

A well-run, truly independent charity inspires a feeling that "we're all in this together," from the Board and the Executive Suite down to minimum wage workers and volunteers. ACC Executives remain sequestered in their Park Place office – strategically located near the DOH. If any message trickles down, it's "keep your head down and lips zipped."

### **OVERSIGHT BY THE CITY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE**

We thank the Health Committee for holding this hearing.

We submit that ACC has been in crisis ever since its creation in 1994. That's when Shelter Reform was formed (as our name implies) to reform NYC's animal shelter system. Through our advocacy, the ACC Board is no longer headed by a government official. (First it was the Sanitation Commissioner and then the Health Commissioner). We opened up ACC Board Meetings. We demanded non-government directors be added to the Board. Even though non-government directors have joined the 3 government directors, the "independents" know better than to challenge the DOH. Thus, they also violate their fiduciary duty.

If ACC cannot run the Queens Shelter, why should we expect a different outcome when the Bronx Shelter comes online in 2026? Or when the replacement Brooklyn Shelter opens a few years after that? Or if the long-promised Manhattan Adoption Center *ever* opens? (The DOH never championed these capital projects, but was forced by the prior Mayoral Administration and City Council to accede to them.)

NYC needs a true charity that selects its own leadership, operates in the best interests of homeless animals and pet owners, can stand toe-to-toe when bargaining with the City, and can attract loyalty and support from animal advocates, businesses and City government itself.

Thank you to the council for holding this session. My name is Rose Martin and I am the President of SunsetParkCats, dedicated to helping cats in District 38. My council member is Alexa Aviles.

City funding for spay/neuter is a non-partisan no-brainer. Residents of Sunset Park, Brooklyn love their pets and the animals in their community. The will is there. The resources are not. Many of my neighbors face serious budget challenges to keep their family members, furry and not, healthy and fed. The sharp increase in friendly cats being found abandoned outside speaks to times those challenges become insurmountable and good people make a bad choice and abandon animals that were once loved.

As a rescuer focused on unowned cats outdoors, I am fielding increased inquiries from neighbors looking to get their own pet cats spay, neutered and vaccinated, and I cannot do it all. I routinely direct them to low cost resources that are still out of reach for them financially, have long wait periods, and are not easily accessed by public transport or during times hard working residents can accomplish.

The city could be a leader in animal welfare. The pet owners, animal lovers, or simply residents who don't want to face animals suffering in the streets on their walk home from the subway or in their back yards, all want this or would benefit from it. Property values tend to suffer when back alleys are strewn with sick and fighting cats as well. The greatest city in the world, with the hardest working residents, just need the tools to help animals in their families and communities.

Thank you.

My name is Hoa Vu and I am the Director of Waggytail Rescue. Waggytail Rescue was established back in 2004 by our President, Holly DeRito, as a dog-only rescue. I started as a foster and decided to get more involved. We are now also intaking cats, primarily from NYC ACC.

We have been saying this for years that the dogs that we take in from the South help us pay for NYC dogs. Now they are also helping us pay for the cats because of how expensive vet care is in NYC. The cost to get a dog vaccinated, tested for heartworm, neutered, and transported to NYC from the South is somehow less expensive than the cost of neutering alone here in NYC.

We've worked with ACC a lot on their deterred intake to prevent owner surrendered dogs from entering the shelter and place them in foster homes directly, however, this would mean paying for vet care without the ACC's support. If the dog has been neutered and comes with medical records, we are always happy to help. However, that's usually not the case. The dogs almost always have no previous vetting. We have no choice but let them go to the shelter first because it is \$0 vs \$1000.

As a rescue who mostly focuses on pulling medical cases from ACC, we often have to say no to helping healthy cats that the public found because we want to allocate and save our money for the cases that need help the most. Unfortunately, if we don't step up to help the public, they have no one to turn to. So instead of spending \$300 on a sick cat, we have to put that money towards a healthy kitten just to get them spayed/neutered/vaccinated/etc. In the past, with the help of free vetting from the ASPCA, we wouldn't hesitate to say yes to helping them. We haven't been able to get appointments from ASPCA since 2023 and primarily use the Brooklyn Cat Café clinic and Flatbush Vet for spay/neuter. We have fosters in the Bronx and even upstate NY who have to take a day off from work just to travel to Brooklyn to get their foster pet neutered.

I urge the City Council to step up and provide high volume, high quality, no cost or low-cost spay/neuter services to all the residents of NYC. This will not only help owners keep their pets, but also provide rescue organizations necessary resources to help more pets.

Yours sincerely,  
Hoa Vu



*Helping Cats in the Heights*  
359 Fort Washington Avenue 2A, New York, NY 10033  
julie@wahicats.org • [www.wahicats.org](http://www.wahicats.org)  
(408) 623 6915

Thank you **Chair Lynn Schulman** and Speaker **Adrienne Adams** for listening to our concerns. I also want to thank the Council Members for our district - **Carmen de la Rosa** and **Shaun Abreu** who I know are big animal lovers

My name is **Julie Flanagan** and I'm the Director of Operations for **Washington Heights Cat Colony** – a 501c3 cat rescue group. I had written a testimony but changed it somewhat after hearing all the compelling statements on Friday. I wanted to focus on particular points (I attended via Zoom).

- People in Washington Heights and the Bronx I've spoken to who qualify for cannot get appointments for low/cost spay neuter or medical care for their pets as there are so few available appointments it is basically impossible. It would be easier to win the lottery.
- Veterinary practices in the area (Inwood and Washington Heights) are overcharging clients. One vet in particular who advertises on Spanish language TV is a total rip-off and sub-standard to almost negligent treatment of pets. Two veterinary practices closed during COVID as unfortunately their owners passed away sadly. Both were old-school veterinarians who cared about their community and didn't over-charge. This limited what is available to the residents in Washington Heights. People are going into debt and borrowing from their friends, not paying their rent or putting their pets outside.
- We cannot effectively spay/neuter community cats in Washington Heights because we are forced to pay for private spay/neuter so can only afford a few at a time. If we could secure significant number of spay/neuter spots we could then do one block (street) at a time and get every cat spayed/neutered. People in the Heights feel bad for the kittens born outside, take them in but then cannot afford to get them any medical care so they have to put them back outside again. Others are affected by cats noisy behavior during mating season which has an impact on quality of life for the residents. The cycle of reproduction is relentless. If we can effectively spay/neuter we could ease the burden on the shelters and the downstream cost to the city.
- Cats are New Yorkers too – they didn't ask to be left outside to fend for themselves – we humans put them there. They are citizens or rather "catizens" and we are urging the City Council to **invest significant funding in high-volume low-cost spay neuter and**



*Helping Cats in the Heights*  
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julie@wahicats.org • [www.wahicats.org](http://www.wahicats.org)  
(408) 623 6915

**affordable veterinary care that is accessible to every rescuer and pet parents who need it**

**Some information about the veterinary overcharging in NYC**

To piggy back on some concerns raised by the high cost of veterinary care, I pasted a snip from an invoice we received from a vet in NYC. This kind of charging is common. I've listed the wholesale cost of some of the tests (and this is just for the smallest quantity, the cost decreases for bulk orders). Also note below the cost for a **nail trim**. This was once included as part of the exam but now has been added as an extra. **\$45.65**. I can get a manicure in Manhattan for less and this procedure takes about 1-2 minutes.

- **\$30** VetScan FeLV/FIV test
- **\$4.92** FVRCP vaccine
- **\$8.20** for rabies vaccine Purevax

Detailed Visit Information					
Date	Description	Qty	Price	Tax	Total Price
5/14/2023	Exam/Consultation Well Patient	1.00	\$133.85	\$0.00	\$133.85
	FVRCP Vaccine 4wk	1.00	\$101.25	\$0.00	\$101.25
	Rabies Vaccine Purevax 1yr Feline	1.00	\$101.25	\$0.00	\$101.25
	VetScan FeLV/FIV Test	1.00	\$177.00	\$0.00	\$177.00
	Nail Trim Feline	1.00	\$45.65	\$4.05	\$49.70
	New Patient Kit + Feline Product	1.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	- Revolution + Fel 11.1-22lb Free First Dose	1.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

[REDACTED]

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**From:** mike phillips <mphil22@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:34 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting Testimony for 9/13/2024 Health Committee hearing  
**Attachments:** THE FORGOTTEN POPULATION OF RIKERS ISLAND 7-25-23.docx

[REDACTED]

**City-owned Rikers Island is home to hundreds of free-roaming cats.**

Although the Dept. of Corrections serves at the pleasure of the Mayor of NYC, no city agency is responsive or appears prepared to address the urgent cat situation on Rikers Island. The Mayor’s Office of Animal Welfare, The Animal Care Centers, and The Dept. of Corrections have all been approached with no success to get the city to take ownership or to assist financially in a remedy for the situation.

Nonetheless, with great difficulty, Urban Cat League, Inc. has negotiated with the DOC successfully to gain volunteer access and has received a \$60K grant from the NY Community Trust to create a sanctuary on the island to separate the cats from birds and wildlife. An inmates program of cat care has also been promised by the DOC and the situation is at last hopeful. After 25 years of struggle by DOC volunteer employees, one of the current commissioners at Rikers is currently facilitating their work for the situation “allowing” them to openly care for the cats, carry on TNR and has approved a location for the aforementioned Cat Sanctuary.

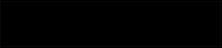
HOWEVER, without NYC taking an active part in the financial requirements to bring 350-400 cats down to zero on this city-owned property, the ultimate success of the project is in doubt.

**Systems are needed to enable the rescue of animals on ALL NYC owned, MTA and Port Authority properties inaccessible to the public.** In the absence of any rescue activity being done by a city agency, private rescuers need permission and access in order to rescue animals in distress or to perform Trap, Neuter, Return on feral cat colonies living on properties with restricted access.

If attention and policy could be normalized for this and similar situations on city properties, the necessary rescues could be agency-reviewed, given the green light to proceed and appropriately funded when necessary. With no direct or even apparent avenue toward resolution, the private rescuers who are more than capable and willing to assist are sidelined and the animals suffer waiting for a city-response that may never come.

Attached please find photographs and an Op-Ed prepared in 2023 that gives more background on the Rikers Island Cat Colonies.

Sincerely,  
Mike Phillips, L.V.T.  
President and co-founder,  
Urban Cat League, Inc.

  
484 West 43rd St. #42E. NY, NY. 10036  
UrbanCatLeague.org













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[www.urbancatleague.org](http://www.urbancatleague.org)

P.O Box 2476

Times Square Station

NY, NY 10108

## THE FORGOTTEN POPULATION OF RIKERS ISLAND

Rikers Island has been in the news a lot lately – from serious overcrowding; the deaths of many detainees; staff absenteeism; and violence – [editorials](#), [articles](#), and even letters to the editor about the terrible conditions. It's a crisis by any standards. By 2027 New York City is required to close Riker Island and replace it with jails in four boroughs. Still overseen by the Department of Correction (DoC), there is growing support for Federal Receivership.

But while this is debated by those in power, there is one high risk, vulnerable population at Rikers that is going unheeded. They need to be acknowledged and helped. They are the 300-plus forgotten cats roaming the island, which most New Yorkers do not know exist.

My involvement with this began almost 24 years ago in 1999, when I learned of appalling accusations in the press about cats being thrown onto razor wire. Unknown to the public, Rikers had a population of hundreds of feral cats – who got to the island via staff who thought it was OK to dump an unwanted cat there.

One pair of unneutered cats can quickly grow to hundreds and Rikers proved that exponentially. At that time, I was President of Neighborhood Cats, an organization doing TNR for feral cats (Trap, Neuter, and Return), then a very new practice in NYC. [TNR has since proven time and again](#) to be an effective, humane, and cost-effective approach to reduce the free-roaming cat population. Rikers hates bad press – whether about jail conditions or feral cats. They wanted the issue to go away, and NYC Animal Control (now Animal Care Centers) had no resources to round up the cats and remove them.

Things quickly developed and DoC commissioner William Fraser agreed to allow a full-scale TNR project to take place on the island and to provide the necessary staging areas.

After two years of red tape, the project got off the ground and the first cats were neutered – thanks to Neighborhood Cats trappers and the ASPCA spay/neuter mobile van where I was onboard as one of the veterinary technicians.

All of us were excited since an Island would be the perfect location to prove how TNR can phase out even a very large cat population. The project was a big success and after the initial trapping of most of the cats, the Rikers Island employee-volunteers were entrusted with the endgame to continue trapping the last few unneutered cats. The one-generation humane solution had been implemented.

With a change in commissioner in 2002, leadership and support for the cat project fell off the DoC management's radar. In 2012 the ASPCA found an entirely new

group of unneutered cats when they returned to the island with the mobile clinic. This is an island, surrounded by water and cats do not swim. Dumping of cats by employees had continued, despite pleas for the DoC to officially reprimand that practice.

Last spring a cat with a pink collar was found with a litter of kittens trailing behind. Recently, an employee passed through Island security with a cat from his neighborhood still in a trap. He was prepared to release the cat with impunity until another employee intervened. The friendly cat was spayed and adopted.

What started 20 years ago as a promising, sure-fire project with robust support from the DoC, has fizzled for lack of ownership or follow-through. With no public awareness or bad press there is no urgency to solve this invisible situation.

Out of sight out of mind.

Since the DoC is a mayoral agency, I assume that their refusal to allow any outside party or agency to collaborate in solving the cat situation is supported by the Mayor's office.

TNR works. With community support, in [Newburyport, MA](#) using TNR, a colony of 300 cats was reduced to zero between 1992 and 2009.

Currently, staff-volunteers care for these cats – mostly from their own pockets, with a few donations and ingenuity. They scramble to improvise shelters from the harsh cold and scorching heat, doing adoptions via [RI cat rescue](#).

This is a plea to the Adams' administration, including the DoC, to responsibly address this free-roaming cat situation; to work with and respect what volunteers have been endeavoring for decades; to bring this to a humane conclusion.

Elsewhere, with institutional leadership and continued support, TNR has been implemented quickly and effectively to arrive at a maintenance situation for the gradual attrition of the cats over time. Friendly cats are rescued, and kittens tamed for adoption. The status quo of abandoned, hungry, and breeding cats cannot be sustained, nor should it be.

When companion animals fall victim to a selfish and ignorant public, they deserve better than a stagnant, uninterested government bureaucracy.

The cats are not at fault. They need our help.

Mike Phillips, L.V.T.

[Urban Cat League](#),

President and co-founder

**From:** Urban Cat League <urbancatleague@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:43 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting Testimony for 9/13/2024 Health Committee Hearing

## Existing City-Funded Spay/Neuter Programs around the USA

The examples linked below may be helpful in the event that the Health Committee wishes to pursue ways to institute a non-profit and/or subsidized public Spay/Neuter program in NYC.

After the initial investment, many of these programs are self-sustaining. Free or reduced costs charged to the rescue community are often off-set by slightly higher than cost fees charged to the general public. It usually takes 12-24 months for the clinics to start breaking even after the initial investment. These organizations have all made it work.

The open door vet collective: <https://opendoorconsults.org/our-veterinary-consultants/>

You might find some good info. here: <https://opendoorconsults.org/research/>

There are quite a few private practice vets that are making it work.

Dr. Warren is a new example that has come my way: <https://focusvetcare.com/about/>

In MA there are two for profit clinics that have been successful in this space:

Heal: <https://www.heal.vet/>

Boston Pet Clinics. <https://www.bostonpetclinics.com/>. (Olga is very supportive of TNR at her 8 locations and has a different price list for shelters/TNR). So there is a sliding scale at her practice I believe.

The [MRFRS's Catmobile Program](#) has operated either break even or in the black since 2008. We had the CM at a consistent break even within 6 months of operation. The staffing is very lean- 1 vet, 1 tech, 1 vet assistant. Very low overhead right now. We use automation to the best of our capabilities. Larger organizations with a leaning toward more overhead have a hard time making this work.

When setting up a spay/neuter program/clinic I have found that folks that have been in rescue/TNR really have a hard time making business models work out. The ASNA has a worksheet that you can use to craft a business plan for success. I used This template convinced the MRFRS board that they could create a break-even model. I also like the ASPCA Program models document for consideration too.

Having this be municipally supported you may need a hybrid voucher/direct service provider model so that the NY private vets won't be on your case. [Mass Animal Fund](#) is a solid model for reimbursement.

I hope these examples will be of some help.  
Sincerely,

Mike Phillips, President and co founder  
Urban Cat League  
[www.urbancatleague.org](http://www.urbancatleague.org)  
484 W. 43rd Street #42E  
NY, NY 10036

Dear New York City Council,

I am a resident of Queens, a voter, and a volunteer animal rescuer. I do not work at a non-profit, I do not have any funding source, I simply spend my own time and money trying to reduce the overpopulation of cats in New York City. Every action that I take comes with the awareness that it is nowhere near enough to make any real difference. Trying to help one animal at a time is like trying to hold back the ocean with your hands. I often feel discouraged by the scale of the issue.

I am only one person, and I have personally helped 13 friendly cats, found on the streets and in city parks, after presumably being dumped by owners who could not afford to get them sterilized once they reached adulthood. I have a neighbor on public assistance with six unsterilized cats in her care. She is only one example of a New Yorker who wants to take personal responsibility but simply can not access affordable spay and neuter. As an individual animal rescue volunteer, I spend my time begging overwhelmed non-profits for help, driving back-and-forth across the metro area trying to find altruistic vets who offer rescuer rates, waking up before dawn, using vacation days at work, and personally spending thousands of dollars to spay and neuter homeless cats.

The current New York City cat overpopulation crisis is not an unpredictable public health issue. We can easily track population growth into the future and also anticipate the outcome of large scale affordable spay and neuter. Each in-tact female cat can give birth to over a dozen kittens every year. The New York City cat overpopulation crisis is an entirely predictable and entirely avoidable public health issue. If New York City Council took aggressive action to spay and neuter all of the animals within the five boroughs we could effectively halt this overpopulation crisis and, ultimately, be able to reduce spending and efforts within just a few years. Homeless animals do not materialize out of thin air, each and every one comes directly from an unsterilized parent animal. The nonnegotiable first step in managing the crisis is aggressive affordable and free spay and neuter. I have complete confidence that New Yorkers would step up and do the leg work to get ahead of overpopulation if the city made the sterilization resources available.

Abigail Stahlman

██████████ Richmond Hill NY 11418

City Council District 29 Resident

[REDACTED]  
New York, NY 10032  
[adamjesseburns@gmail.com](mailto:adamjesseburns@gmail.com)  
[REDACTED]

9/13/24

To my City Council,

I am writing to testify that I have seen the impact of the cat housing crisis and it is a city-wide concern – a shameful lack of care for the greatest city in the world.

The City Council must allocate funding our city urgently needs to cover the cost of high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs, to better control the street cat population and to reduce the strain on overrun shelters.

Some measures should be taken to alleviate the financial pressure currently placed on individuals and organizations doing the work, to address the cat crisis. We need to invest significant funding and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker who needs it, including rescuers and pet owners.

I am a voting, tax paying New Yorker.

Thank you,  
Adam Burns

Saturday September 14 2024

  
New York, NY 10012

New York City Council

Re: Friday Sept 13 10:00 am Committee on Health

Dear Council Members

I am writing to voice my concern for the pets and strays of New York City. The ever-skyrocketing costs of living in NYC have made everything next to impossible for New Yorkers to afford. Many residents with pets are having to choose between food for themselves and their children or food for their pets. Because of this, our shelters are overcrowded and animals are being abandoned because the cost of care is unattainable for many.

Please, we need funds for spaying/neutering strays and pets and programs that provide food for those pet owners who can no longer afford to feed their pets.

Regards,

-Adam Wade

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Ademir Da Costa Junior <costademir@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:50 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of animal rescue testimony

[REDACTED]

Hello, my name is Ademir da Costa and I live in Kings County, Flatbush Brooklyn.

I'd like to strongly urge city council to allocate substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Dogs and cats enrich our lives, our health and our well being. Many people are forced to make the heartbreaking decision to give up their pet due to financial circumstances (or to not adopt one of the many amazing rescues available). Please help to change this and support our community and pet population by providing funding and access.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

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**From:** adlin polanco <adlin\_pl@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:32 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Stray cats of Washington Heights

[REDACTED]

To Whom It May Concern,

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

I feed the stray cats of my neighborhood and to my surprise they're dumped cats. Owners that can't afford veterinary care, kittens everywhere, people asking me if I can help with their cats in heat, because they can't afford spay/neuter.

Something must be done about the care of animals, they deserve better, they're innocent beings that deserve better.

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Adriana DiGennaro (Harrison & Star) <adriana.digennaro@harrisonandstar.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 8:05 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Affordable spay/neuter and vet care

[REDACTED]

Hello,

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter--and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you for your action on this matter.

Adriana DiGennaro  
Kings County NY

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Adrianna Edgeman <aedgemantherapy@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:23 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,  
As a fellow New Yorker and pet parent,  
I strongly call on the New York City government to dedicate substantial funding toward high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care, ensuring all New Yorkers, including rescuers and pet owners, have access to essential services.

Sincerely,  
Adrianna Edgeman (she/her/hers)  
aedgemantherapy@gmail.com

[REDACTED]

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**From:** ca <capri926@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 2:41 PM  
**To:** NYC Council Hearings  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Dog Overpopulation Crisis

[REDACTED]

Every animal deserves to be safe and well cared for. It is crucial for the city to take common sense and decisive action to get closer to ensuring this.

Dogs, especially pit bull and pit bull mix type dogs, are being dumped at the shelters or left on the streets. People are not taking responsibility for the pets they adopt and to prevent breeding of these dogs.

The shelters are filled with injured untreated dogs, terrified stressed dogs who don't understand where their people are, and poor cage/access to outdoor conditions.

Those who only want to get the dog out of their home aren't concerned with a likely death for their dog at the shelters, so if they are to be persuaded to neuter at least all males (though females must be spayed as well) there must be an efficient high volume - but well done- surgery that is both free and offers rewards.

There must also be a humane education and training program offered by shelters to teach the public the mentality and needs of a dog and humane training. This could deter dumping or at least get people to hold until a decent home is found.

Shelter quality must improve so cages are not like prison cells. Pipe in soothing music and radio show voices. Maybe tv screens where many can see images to occupy the mind. Bones with stuffing yo chew. Volunteers to take them outside and give them loving attention. The killing must stop! Injuries must be treated! Eventually, especially if neutering could be mandated, shelters wouldn't be under constant pressure to kill to make room. And adoption events should be held.

My final point is that dogs, as I've known my whole life, ask very little in return for undying devotion and loyalty and comfort- if we know how to make them feel safe and loved and understand humans training and have patience! It shouldn't be do easy to get a dog. People should have to watch a video, have a chat session and choose a type, if any, compatible with their lifestyle. Set up for success. Give help! And take the dog back if it can't work out. As with child adoptions, there must be follow up to avoid dumping or abusing!

I so hope that this city will take action and actually be the people we are always claiming to be. Let's do the evolved, kind, just and sensible thing and stop being lazy and indifferent, looking away from this misery.

Adrienne Pesin  
Capri926@aol.com

Breeding- after tackling stopping individually owned dogs from breeding, the massive numbers produced by cruel inhumane puppy mills must end. Why are people given licenses to abuse animals, imprisoning them for life in tiny wire crates and no decent care? Many USDA inspectors are, so I've heard, also puppy mill owners! Dogs don't belong anywhere with the word mill in it. This should include backyard breeders who churn out puppies without an eye toward health/temperament or who they're sold to. Pure breed breeders should have strict requirements for licensing and have the number of litters per year limited. Too many pups are born! The numbers are staggering!

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Aimee Gordon <aim.gordon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:20 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Rescue funding

[REDACTED]

I would like to suggest that the city allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, particularly including rescuers.

Regards,  
Aimee Gordon

[REDACTED] 10013

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Alaina Dartt <adartt@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:01 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Sincerely,

Alaina Dartt

[REDACTED]  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

September 5, 2024

Councilmember Lynn Schulman  
Chair, NYC Council Committee on Health  
250 Broadway Suite 1872  
NYC NY 10007

Dear Councilmember Schulman,

I am writing on behalf of the Animal Care Centers of New York. I wanted to share my experience with them, which I am sure is shared by many others in the New York area as well.

I have always known about the ACC of New York, but I became very familiar with the quality of their work, their staff, and their facilities about 5 years ago. My mother had just passed away at the age of 101. An extraordinarily long and wonderful life. She and I were devoted to each other. I was her caregiver and had the privilege of her passing in my arms. The separation was not an easy one, and my therapist suggested a pet to help bridge the gap from caregiver to a life alone.

Having been to the ACC Staten Island facility before, I decided to contact them and figure something out. Whenever I had gone there in the past, the facility has been immaculate, and all the cats and dogs are treated with such love and care: better than most people get in nursing homes. I know this from first-hand experience. The staff there paired me with a senior rescue cat that had been slightly abused, with her own issues, and needed a loving home. I would never have chosen her on my own and did not go in there with a cat in mind to be honest. But the staff there, with their acumen with animal husbandry, knew that a match made in heaven was about to take place. Today, four years later, Sasha and I are inseparable. We travel all over together and she is my constant and true companion. If the ACC did not have the expertise and knowledge on how to match people and cats up, I might not be alive today. I kid you not.

The work the ACC does is without equal in my opinion. I have seen this scenario play out over and over with my own friends and on internet testimonials across the city. The animals are well cared for and the facilities are immaculate, which lends itself to happy and healthy cats and dogs being adopted. And if a mess occurs, it is immediately taken care of by their cracker jack staff. If there is anything that the New York City Council can do to secure their continued work, it should be done without hesitation. I am a true believer in the ACC of New York.

Thank you for your time and for reading this.



Alan Reiff

[REDACTED]  
Astoria, NY 11106

[REDACTED]  
areiff3@schools.nyc.gov

Hello, my name is Alejandro Nunez. I live in Central Harlem. My council district is 09, which I believe is led by Yusef Salaam.

Thank you for taking the time to read my statement. I've been involved in cat rescue and feral cat colony management since 2019. I am TNR-certified. In the past 5 years, I have trapped, fixed and returned 38 feral cats to their colonies, have trapped, socialized and adopted out 23 kittens and have taken in, vetted and adopted out 14 friendly strays. While I am proud of my accomplishments during my short involvement in cat rescue, I'm saddened and disappointed that it has done so little to improve the overall situation in NYC, which is very grim.

The NYC cat rescue community desperately needs a city-funded and city-run spay-neuter program. I have spent many thousands of dollars getting cats fixed. The ASPCA program for spay/neuter is totally inadequate relative to the massive need for free or low-cost services.

The other major problem is that the flames of the feral and homeless cat crisis is constantly being fanned by people dumping their cats outside. Since the vast majority of these dumped friendly cats are unfixed, they immediately start breeding, causing thousands more kittens to be born outside every month. It would be incredibly helpful if the city had a free (or extremely low-cost option) for NYC residents to access in order to have their cats fixed.

Please, please consider taking action on these recommendations. I can assure you that I don't just speak for myself when I say that those of us involved in cat rescue are very tired, extremely financially burdened and genuinely saddened by the current state of affairs. Please help us to improve the lives of all these precious innocent creatures roaming the streets of NYC.

Thank you for reading my testimony.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** pahlpahl@aol.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 10, 2024 3:53 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The Corruption and Failure of NYCACC

[REDACTED]

I would like to submit my written testimony by including a recent email I sent to NBC News NYC Local Desk. It can speak for my deep concern for the inhumane treatment of companion animals at the NYC ACC.

To: [nyclocaldesk@nbcuni.com](mailto:nyclocaldesk@nbcuni.com)

Hello, my name is Aleta Pahl. I am an animal advocate and rescue volunteer living in Rhinebeck, NY.

While shelters across the country held **Clear The Shelters** events for the past two weeks, the New York City Animal "Care" Centers had a week of scandals. My understanding is that NYC ACC is NOT participating this year in the Clear The Shelters campaign, sponsored by NBC. While dogs were being saved from coast to coast, NYC ACC left puppies to sit in filth inside the new \$75 million Queens shelter that just opened. And last Saturday at the Manhattan shelter, they killed a 7-month-old puppy named Sandy only hours before an adoption event. To callously kill an adoptable puppy while people were on their way to meet the shelter's dogs was unacceptably cruel and despicable.

**Sandy**



# Sandy

ID#204301 @ Queens ACC

7 months old  
ACC says  
36 Lbs.

Aced her behavior evaluation

**LEVEL 1 SWEETIE**

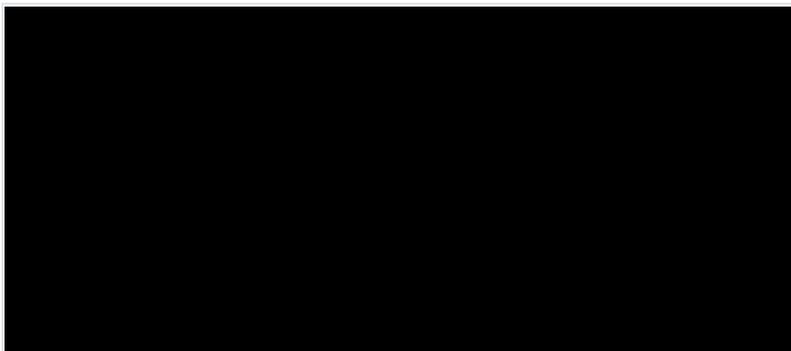
The weekend before they cruelly killed Sandy, there was a shocking photograph taken at the new supposedly "state-of-the-art" Queens "shelter" by someone who came to visit the dogs. What they saw was unbelievable: a 10-month-old puppy named Zamboni, sitting in his small kennel surrounded by urine and feces all over the floor and caked in his fur, amid shredded bedding, garbage, and no food or water in his bowl.

### Zamboni



Zamboni's neglect was exposed in the The New York Post:

[\*Dogs at new NYC shelter neglected inside cramped, filthy cages, council member and whistleblowers say\*](#)



**Dogs at new NYC shelter neglected inside cramped, filthy cages, council ...**

It's a canine crisis.

This photographic evidence of such terrible negligence as well as ACC's refusal to participate in the Clear The Shelters campaign — especially while they claim adoptions have declined — calls for a serious

investigation. And if that wasn't bad enough, last week ACC killed five adoptable dogs in a single day. These dogs were Cookie, Tank, Apple Juice, Cheese, and one year old puppy **Yoshi**, pictured below.



*Yoshi was sweet, sensitive, cute, wiggly playful, good on a leash. He earned 2nd best behavior rating. He loved to walk with the stuffie and was also good with cats.*

The fact that Yoshi was friendly with cats, made him highly desirable to adopters who also have cats. Like Sandy, Yoshi was killed just before an adoption event.

The truth is we need the help of the media to hold ACC accountable for a pattern of inhumane treatment of these animals. I am a member of the advocate group, No Kill Now whose leaders would be eager to correspond with you regarding further evidence of corruption, unacceptable cruelty, neglect and the killing of adoptable dogs and cats at ACC. We are at the forefront of the effort to pass shelter reform legislation in New York State.

The time is now for critical news coverage of NYC ACC while **Clear The Shelters** is underway. Thank you so much,

Aleta Pahl  
pahlpahla@aol.com  
[REDACTED]

\*\*\*\*\*

My email above speaks to the need of accountability for NYC ACC. It is a grave concern when a public agency has no guidelines, no oversight done to insure any Public trust that these "Care Centers" are doing their mission to care for homeless animals, treat their injuries, and find new homes. I do not see that commitment within the walls of NYC ACC. There are countless dogs getting pneumonia after arriving at NYCACC because of squalid conditions; the filth, no ventilation, the lack of water or simply a clean kennel. That particular inhumane treatment of animals is never addressed by the NYC Health Department.

Today citizens In LA have filed a lawsuit with the Riverside County pound who kills more animals yearly than "any other reporting shelter in the United States." It is now being sued for that killing. The lawsuit accuses Pound leadership of negligence and mismanagement, leading to animal suffering and death. "The lawsuit calls for the removal of Animal Services Director Erin Gettis and demands a forensic audit of the animal services budget and data records, questioning the allocation of the department's \$39 million budget."

Animal Services Director Erin Gettis has now resigned.

We are witnessing accountability catching up with this Riverside shelter. Read the full article here at this link and read the article about NYCACC's current Scandal of mismanagement and animal cruelty.

[Lawsuit against the pound which kills more animals than “any other reporting shelter in the United States”](#)



**Lawsuit against the pound which kills more animals than  
“any other repor...**

Nathan Winograd

News and headlines for August 17 - 23, 2024

My recommendation is to fire CEO Risa Weinstock who had touted that \$75 million Care Center in Queens and has mismanaged everything about it starting with the building design that is meant to impress people not adequately give dogs large enough kennels or hiring competent staff who care for these animals.

I also recommend that ACC give these healthy adoptable dogs in their "care" more time to find homes instead of rushing them to a "KILL COMMAND" a status created by ACC to give them unchecked power to kill dogs and cats at will.

Thank you for taking my email under consideration.

Aleta Pahl  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Alexandra Houston Smith <missmatchez@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:56 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funding for Animal Rescue in NYC

[REDACTED]

Good evening,

I am writing to urge the City Council on the State of Animal Rescue to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

When I rescued my cat from the street over 10 years ago, I relied on low cost services to obtain affordable vet services, and to get her spayed. I do not know what I would have done without these services.

More recently, I rescued a street cat who was emaciated and had scabs all over her body. She was in need of care, and only 6 months old. We took her in, but she had many health issues that needed treatment and had not yet been spayed. I struggled to find any affordable providers who could treat her. City services were no longer available to assist. We eventually received a significant discount from the Humane Society, who treated her and provided care, but this was only after exhausting all other available options. There was a massive line at the Humane Society, and they were clearly overwhelmed.

My neighborhood in Bedford Stuyvesant has many stray cats. I regularly see many kittens running under cars. If the city provided funding to spay and neuter these cats, the population would decrease. I wish I could adopt more cats, but I simply cannot afford to do so. It breaks my heart to see them suffering and hungry on the street.

It is time for the City of New York to treat these defenseless animals with compassion and care. To let cats needlessly suffer in our community is upsetting, inhumane, and ethically and morally wrong. Please do the right thing and provide funding so that animal rescuers can have the resources they need to rescue these helpless creatures.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,  
Alexandra Smith

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Aline Marra <acaroline07@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:38 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Allocate Pet & Rescue Funding!

[REDACTED]

Hello!

We URGE city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume, low-cost, spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

We urge you.  
Thank you!  
Aline

Sent from my iPhone

September 13, 2024

Dear Members of the New York City Council,

I am writing to urge your support for the proposed legislation prohibiting the sale of cats and dogs in retail pet shops. This legislation is essential in addressing the root causes of animal overpopulation and the suffering of animals trapped in the commercial breeding industry. By eliminating the demand for animals from puppy mills and backyard breeders, we can significantly reduce the number of animals ending up in city shelters and on the streets.

However, passing this legislation is only part of the solution. NYC shelters are severely underfunded and overburdened, leaving private rescuers and volunteers to shoulder much of the financial and emotional costs of caring for homeless animals. If we want to truly make a difference in the lives of animals and ensure their well-being, it is critical that the city vastly increases its resources for municipal shelters. This includes providing better funding for spay/neuter programs, medical care, shelter space, and staffing.

Rescuers across NYC work tirelessly with limited resources, but this effort is unsustainable without city support. I strongly urge you to enact this legislation and allocate the necessary funding to ensure that NYC shelters can adequately care for the animals in need.

Sincerely,  
Alison Turka

Allen Ying

[REDACTED]  
New York, NY 10001  
[REDACTED]

I volunteer for City Critters, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit cat rescue group on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. We help keep the stray and homeless cats through TNR (trap-neuter-release) and by finding homes for friendly surrendered and abandoned cats.

I have personally experienced the serious need for affordable pet care services and resources for residents of the city. Last year, around March of 2023 City Critters helped TNR around 15-20 cats in a Lower East Side NYCHA complex, Lillian Wald. Although I was not a part of that project, I was, and still am, involved with the care and management of the cat colony there. We feed the cats, provide winter shelters and any necessary vet care needed for these cats. Since that time, we have seen 13 new cats that were either dumped/abandoned/showed up out of the blue but completely friendly towards people.

In one instance, I personally bumped into a mother and son who were on their way to release their 1-year-old male cat, Pablo, outside because they were unable to keep up with his natural instinct to mark their territory with urine. Male cats, when they grow to maturity will develop urine with strong odors that help mark territory in the wild. This can happen as early as 6-8 months. There is a simple solution for this in domesticated cats: neutering. However, this mother and son explained how their personal veterinarian wanted to charge them over \$400 for that service. They had previously already paid almost \$400 for vaccinations and blood work. The mother recognized me as one of the feeders for the Lillian Wald community cats and she trusted me to take their cat from them. I asked them if we could get Pablo neutered if they would reconsider giving him up. While the son held back his tears, the mother told me the damage had already been done and she did not think she could take good care of Pablo, she had not realized how expensive vet care would be, going forward.

It's experiences like these that really make me realize how much the city has failed its domesticated animals, such as cats and dogs. By not having affordable vet care, spay/neuter services, or even more informational resources, families are forced to do the only thing they can: give up their beloved pets outside when they run into financial hardships. I was lucky enough to run into Pablo and his family before they released him outside, but I'm sure there were many more cats that were not so lucky.

Volunteering with City Critters has also shown me first-hand how limited the city's resources are to help our furry friends. From limited low cost spay/neuter appointments, to lack of space for cats to recover after surgery, animal rescue groups all feel the lack of resources to help. Although the ACC exists to accept surrenders, the city needs to do much more to provide for their residents so that it does not become the only option. I implore our city council members to find funding for low cost veterinary care.

Thank you,  
Allen Ying

9/14/2024

Dear NYC Council,

I am an individual cat rescuer living in Bed Stuy, Brooklyn NY. I became aware of the rampant cat problem when I moved here in 2010 and saw cats living in parking lots, desperately needing food and water, and some in need of vet care. I then moved to a different neighborhood in Brooklyn, Kensington, where the yards and streets were rampant with cats. One was a cat who was so skinny, he clearly needed serious help. I would chase away kids kicking him and throwing rocks. One day I heard someone hurt him so bad he died. I was going through my own issues with my rescue cat, whom I spent **\$3,300.00** on getting 6 teeth pulled at Hope Vet in Brooklyn in 2011. I had to put it on my credit card, and well aware of vet costs in NYC, knew I didn't have the means to help that street cat out. Then not too long after I learned about Neighborhood Cats, and sure was wishing I knew about them when that cat was around. I felt so guilty for not being able to help him. But upon learning about TNR and that there was this (almost) underground market of connections of who can help, who does low cost, getting traps, holding spaces, and to get help paying for spay and neutering of street cats...It is intense, almost underground world. It's so sad that there weren't places to go and get this help without these resources, but thankfully there were some resources out there at all. I was TNR certified through Neighborhood Cats and started spaying and neutering the cats I saw.

I then moved to Gowanus area to an apartment where the owner, a man, had passed away and had about 14 cats he took from a hoarder situation. He left his multi-million dollar building to his neighbor and asked that the cats be well taken care of. The neighbor threw the cats out on the street and instructed the tenants that they should starve the cats so that they'd "go away". Most listened. But the cats didn't go away. Some literally starved to death. When I moved in, I was heartbroken about it. I fed the cats with my own money, the few that were left, with great opposition from the newly wealthy neighbor. Through various cat groups, I was able to find a lady who lived around the corner and who told that neighbor that he can not tell us not to feed the cats. They came to an understanding, sort of. She had to start feeding across the street.

I then moved around some more, as rents were soaring. Everywhere I went, sick cats on the street, pregnant cats, many in need of vet care and with teeth so rotted and abscessed that their faces were abnormal and swollen. Then 2 months before Covid I moved to Bushwick, where there are so many cats everywhere, it put all the other neighborhoods to shame. I immediately moved in and started TNR'ing the cats in the back yard. But then Covid happened and this became unnecessary in the eyes of everyone. Funding had stopped in the few places that even had any, pregnant cats were everywhere, sick cats...my landlady was threatening to poison them all, and then there were the many who ate rat baited food, or poisoned rats. So many people were also tossing their cats out when leaving NYC going back to other states. I was overwhelmed, and I wasn't even taking care of colonies at this point. I ended up with 3 cats, one whom was tossed out and he ended up getting 2 full urinary blockages from crystals from the stress of it all. I had to rush him to Verg Emergency Care and each time was **\$7500**. In **less than ONE MONTH, I spent \$15,000 on a cat** I was just helping out. He is happily now my cats, as the other 3 cats that my landlady was about to poison (mind you, she also OWNS two pet stores!!) That's another story, but regular vets don't take urinary blocked cats as they have to have 24/7 care for 2 nights minimum. I was forced out of the apartment during Covid when the landlady raised my rent \$1000 (yes, RAISED IT!) and she could since it was a townhouse and not an apartment building. Now I live in Bed Stuy, where I

TNR and pay out of pocket for vet care for bodega cats as funding still hasn't gotten back to pre-covid funding, as scant as even that was. In the last year alone I have spent upwards of \$3000 on vet care for a bodega cat who was hit by a car after he escaped a small closet he had been locked in for over 8 months with NO water and food. He was only to eat rats. He was starving and sick. I now have this cat as my 4th cat. The bodega got another cat who was mauled by a dog someone took into the store. It died and now they have another cat. Right across the street there is another bodega who I have spent about \$700 on for getting fixed, vetted and having matted hair so bad I've had to take to the vet to get anesthesia in order to be shaved. Most bodegas don't care about cats. They starve them so they'll kill and eat rats. Since cats are illegal in bodegas there can be no checks and balances. Yet every cat has a bodega. There needs to be serious task forcing and rules changes on this! Bodega owners should be made to take cats to the vet once a year for checkups. There needs to be a task force making sure this is happening and to do welfare checks on the animals. So many are locked in basements underground with no light, food or water. It's crazy that NYC is okay with this! Or turns a blind eye anyway.

I spend \$300 per month on food and medication for my urinary crystals cat alone. I spent about \$500 on food and litter for them all. This doesn't include vet visits and mandatory blood work and updated prescriptions that are required every year. This is just on MY cats. I also now feed a new bodega kitten as the bodega gives it crackers and cookies. This kitten was sold to them from a backyard breeder nearby who sells kittens to make money. It doesn't matter who they are sold to. Just as long as they get the money.

Vet costs, food cost, overrun shelters, horrible conditions for bodega cats, spay and neuter costs, places to hold, transport to the vets on wheels and vet offices, and help for caretaker, colony feeders and TNR certified solo people like myself who just want to help the animals. All this needs to happen! If you charge bodegas to register their cats (and fine them if they don't), then all that money can go back into helping more cats! The 3 bodegas next to me have wealthy owners, no doubt. Yet I, a person who can't afford to live on my own and has to have roommates (and I'm in my 50s), is the one paying crazy amounts on food and vet bills for animals that aren't mine. The system is broken and can be helped out immensely if someone will take the time and initiative to do something about it! I'd love to be on the bodega task force or even head it and think it's a brilliant idea.

Sincerely,

Ally Jones

TNR Certified, single woman paying out of pocket  
owner of 4 rescue cats, taking care of 3 other bodega cats currently

C



Hello NYC City Council,

I signed up to attend the NYC Council meeting on animal welfare and rescue meeting on Friday, but couldn't attend because of work.

I work FT in NYC, but volunteer with PuppyKittyNYC and have done my own TNRs across the boroughs for the last 7 years and foster several cats. I've volunteered with NYCACC, Best Friends, Kitty Kind and other local rescues and rescuers.

I'm born and raised in NYC and my mother used to feed and rescue cats in Manhattan, village area in the 70's-80's. I lived in other boroughs during college where I would see stray animals and when I moved back to Manhattan in 2000, I didn't see cats there again until about 7 years ago when I got involved again.

I got involved and stayed involved because I would see hundreds of animals being brought to NYCACC, dumped on the street. I got even more involved when I saw two cats dumped in the village, one who had recently been nursing, yet no kittens were found. Since that day in 2017, I have personally fostered over 200 plus cats. I do this not because I have time or money, but because no one else will, or at least there's not enough of us. I work a full time job at NYU as a department Manager, I have a family, where I've been caring for elderly parents, yet I will get up at 6am on a Sunday to go to Flatbush to try and save a family of kittens in a buslot so they're not killed after getting requests from other NYCers. I travel to Harlem, Throggs neck, east New York to help animals I don't even know because others are pleading for someone, anyone to help them. People in this city care for the animals and how do we keep our humanity alive if we can't help the most defenseless in our city, those without a voice.

I pay for the food and supplies for my fosters so the rescue I volunteer with, Puppykittynycity, can use its donations for needed medical care for injured and dumped animals.

I don't go out to restaurants or spend anything just so I can afford to care for them. But even with all our best efforts, we can't make a dent when unspayed animals are dumped and the numbers climb up again.

The city needs to do more to support the animals and humans who care for them of this city. Whether it's by making much more subsidized spay and neuter available for animals, supporting TNR, providing grants to local rescues, banning the sale and breeding of animals (when we have so many they have to be euthanized), helping families stay with pets, making basic pet necessities affordable - we need a multi pronged approach.

I write to you as a first generation, native NYer, Latina, vegan, animal lover, independent rescuer and volunteer, NYC family with three resident cats, (who cannot afford my recent \$2,700 cat dental bill work for one of our cats) pleading for the city to do something, anything, but really, we need the city to start caring about animals.

You have hundreds of rescuers across the city who will do the work if we have the real support.

Thank you,

Alyssa Leal

Chelsea Resident



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Amanda Barstow <amanda.barstow@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 1:04 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee hearing

[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Amanda Barstow and I have lived in the 38th District for a decade in and in NYC since 2000. I was supposed to have a meeting on this very topic last week with Councilperson Aviles, but her office never sent me the zoom link and has not responded to any subsequent emails.

Like many of my fellow rescuers who testified on Friday, I first learned about NYC's cat overpopulation crisis, when a cat showed up at my doorstep. Despite all of my years in the city and my childhood adoration for cats, I rarely saw them outside and when I did, I assumed they had homes. When a lost cat showed up on my stoop, clinging to the railing, panting and hissing and begging for help, I took to social media to find out if anyone was missing him and if anyone could help. A local rescuer, Vicki Devor, offered to come by to put the cat in a carrier and advised me to take the cat to Sean Casey Animal Shelter to scan for a microchip. As I called vet's offices and the shelter told me they were full, it became abundantly clear that there was no city agency to help me or this cat. I miraculously found a vet to neuter him and hold him over the weekend (this is UNHEARD of) while I was at a wedding, I found a friend who offered to foster him and Vicki followed up to encourage me to take a course to get certified in cat rescue. That warm day in September changed the course of my life as a New Yorker completely. I got TNR certified a couple months later, I joined forces with Vicki and a few other women in the neighborhood, I started volunteering with Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition and my new identity as a rescuer was born.

Since 2017 I have rescued hundreds of friendly cats that were abandoned on the street. I have paid for all of their vet care and found them foster homes and eventually forever homes. I have TNRed (Trap/Neuter/Spay/Return to Their Colonies) hundreds of cats who were too feral to be adopted. I care for 3 cat colonies in Red Hook and Gowanus, Brooklyn that require daily food, water and shelter from inclement weather for over 30 cats. I am also responsible for their on-going vet care when they can no longer eat because their teeth are rotting, or they get cancer and need to be humanely euthanized. I spend approximately \$50K on cat rescue every year and at least 20 hours per week.

As you heard from almost every speaker on Friday:

Free or low-cost/high quality spay and neuter should be a RIGHT for all New Yorkers and I am hoping that the city will get started asap on allocating funds for a stationery clinic at all Animal Care Centers at a minimum. The city should also provide tax incentives and funding to private vets that work with rescues and will provide affordable services to New Yorkers on public assistance.

What I would also like to stress, is that we desperately need oversight of both NYCHA, which does not enforce any of their policies regarding pet ownership, and shops (mostly bodegas/delis) that are

violating Department of Agriculture laws by having cats in the first place. I strongly believe that any business with a "working cat" should need to either have a permit or license to have cats on the premises and the animal should be required to be fixed and vaccinated at a minimum. Both of these entities are responsible for a glut of cats and kittens that eventually end up with rescuers or in our shelter because they are breeding unchecked. How are we ever going to solve this cat overpopulation crisis, when the city isn't enforcing any regulations? I truly believe that most pet owners want the best for their pets and will do whatever they can to make sure they are healthy and safe, however I have not had the same experience with bodega owners or NYCHA staff. Bodega owners often lie and say they do not have cats or are dismissive of offers for free services. Their cats are often denied food and locked in dark filthy basements, where they are expected to control vermin and are not expected to be treated humanely. NYCHA staff, including NYPD, have laughed in my face or been completely dismissive when I report tenants that are breeding cats. I was actually told that unless there is a dead body, they won't do anything, despite a tenant having 30+ cats and kittens going in and out of her first floor window. I eventually had to beg the ASPCA's Matt Goldweber, who you heard from on Friday, to visit the tenant, but out of confidentiality, he will not share with me the outcome. I have already rescued and paid for full veterinary care for 10 adult cats and 10 kittens, all found outside and all originating from this one apartment. Can you imagine how many cats there would be if I hadn't intervened?!

I have a Masters degree in public policy. I am a problem solver. This is a problem that we can absolutely solve! I look forward to more hearings and task forces and public/private partnerships in the very near future, while we have this amazing momentum.

Thank you so much for your time!

[REDACTED]

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**From:** A M <amandalmcquade@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:13 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] No to low spay neuter

[REDACTED]

I am a volunteer with KittyKind and have been for the past 8 years. KittyKind is a 501(c)(3) small, all-volunteer, not for profit, no-kill adoption group. We do not have any paid employees. Everyone spends their own time and often money to keep KittyKind moving forward in our abilities to help cats. Due to dwindling resources, our finances have almost doubled. I myself am a foster home and have also had financial hardship over the past couple years, but because I know KittyKind funding is so low, it is hard for me to ask the rescue even for help with my own fosters. We are all suffering. If we don't have foster homes, we can't take more cats. Ultimately, the rise of pet care with veterinary services and food has not made this sustainable. I have spent thousands of my own dollars over the years on rescue cats. This should not be the way that things are getting done. The government needs to fund free to low-cost spay neuter and low-cost vet services for rescues, rescuers, and everyone in the community in order to take care of these cats. It will help with the rise of cat colonies, people relinquishing their pets, and the community. KittyKinds funding is at an all time low and we rely on donations. This is not sustainable and we could be forced to close our sooner than later. I strongly urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. Thank you.

Best,

Amanda McQuade

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Amanda Neville <amanda@threefuries.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 10:26 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] state of animal rescue

[REDACTED]

Animal care is a hallmark of civilized society and, as with humans, preventative care yields exponential dividends and long-term savings, in addition to improving quality of life.

City government must allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you.

--  
Amanda Neville (she/her)  
Brooklyn resident  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Amanda Yaggy <ayaggy@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 9:37 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Welfare in NY

[REDACTED]

I am a cat/kitten rescuer who has TNR'ed, cared for a feral colony, and fostered many cats and kittens. It horrifies me that in my home of 15 years, New York, which had 100 billionaire residents by recent count, resources for animals are so scarce that the "shelter" turns away animals in need and New Yorkers abandon their older pets because they can't afford vet care. It's shameful, and causes both human and animal suffering.

Please immediately direct funds to supply affordable vet care and free/low cost spay/neuter services for New Yorkers in need.

Thank you  
Amanda Yaggy

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Amy Bennett <amyelizabethbennett@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:55 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee hearing

[REDACTED]

Hello, my name is Amy Bennett. I live in Central Harlem. My council district is 09, which I believe is led by Yusef Salaam.

I have volunteered my time, money and energy in cat rescue for 18 years. Previously I worked with an organization that pulled cats from the euthanasia list at the NYC ACC when it was a kill shelter. Since 2020 I have worked with many other rescuers in Harlem to address the problem of overpopulation and owner-dumped cats in this neighborhood. I vet the cats at my own expense, foster them, and find them new homes. This is a labor of love, but one that is a part of who I am: I cannot look away and do nothing while so much suffering exists. I wish I could do more. I have fostered and adopted out over 150 cats in the 18 years I have worked in cat rescue.

Currently, while working with other single-handed rescues, I have accrued a lot of expense trying to spay/neuter cats that we come across. For example, I have eight kittens now in foster, but there are so many more out there, as a result of owner negligence, lack of resources and no support for TNR in New York City. I have an immediate need of five spay and neuter appointments and I can tell you these are scarce. Within the rescue community we try to share what little there is, but we are feeling an overwhelming tide and it causes us so much despair.

I'm saddened and disappointed that so little is done to improve the overall situation in NYC for the cat community and for dedicated rescuers, which is currently overwhelming.

**The NYC cat rescue community desperately needs a city-funded and city-run spay-neuter program.** I have spent many thousands of dollars getting cats fixed myself. The ASPCA program and others for spay/neuter are totally inadequate relative to the massive need for free or low-cost services, especially as vets now charge upwards of \$1,500 for these services.

A major problem is people dumping their cats outside. Since the vast majority of these dumped friendly cats are unfixed, they immediately start breeding, causing thousands more kittens to be born outside every month. It would be incredibly helpful if the city had a free (or extremely low-cost option) for NYC residents to have their cats fixed, and even programs that help people understand this important responsibility. **I know that more can be done!**

Please, please consider taking action on these recommendations. I can assure you that I don't just speak for myself when I say that those of us involved in cat rescue are very tired, extremely financially burdened and genuinely saddened by the current state of affairs. Please help us to improve the lives of all these precious innocent creatures roaming the streets of NYC.

Thank you for reading my testimony.

Sincerely,

Amy Bennett

[REDACTED]

New York, NY 10027

I am a resident of Washington Heights and have been volunteering with TNR, feeding, and rescuing cats for over twenty years in NYC. This volunteer work has never been as difficult as it is right now. For years, the ASPCA and the Humane Society provided affordable care, but now it is almost impossible to find a reduced-cost spay/neuter surgery or veterinary care in NYC. I believe that the city must do more to help!

Every day I talk to people who would like to have their pets neutered but simply cannot afford to. At \$500-800 for the simple surgery, it's no wonder! And treatment for injured animals is also out of financial reach for most NYC residents. It's painful to think about, but there are countless animals in homes who need medical care, but rising costs of care mean that their guardians cannot afford to bring them to a veterinarian. And many people care deeply for animals and would love to help when they find animals outside, but there are painfully few resources available to them. This causes real suffering, both for animals and for the people who are powerless to help because of the financial burden.

Rescuers are exhausted and in debt. We've taken on extra jobs, spent money and time we don't have, and agonized over not being able to help more. In my neighborhood, the lack of affordable spay and neuter means that people daily abandon companion animals on the street and in the park, bodega cats have litter after litter of kittens, and feral cats are everywhere despite our best efforts. I respectfully urge you to fund subsidized spay/neuter and veterinary care programs, for the sake of both animals and people.

Amy Kauffman



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Amy Swenson <amy.b.swenson@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:38 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of animal rescue

[REDACTED]

I am a Brooklyn resident involved in animal rescue and fostering. Over the past five years I fostered over 30 cats for independent rescuers who spend significant amounts of their own money to try to save street cats from the harsh lives of living outdoors, and to spay and neuter unadoptable cats in an attempt to try to prevent the population of street cats from continuing to explode. I am writing to urge the city government to allocate substantial funds for high-volume, low-cost spay and neuter services and affordable veterinary care for ALL New Yorkers. It is simply unfair that a handful of animal lovers devote so much of their own money and time to address an issue that the city would be far better equipped to deal with.

Thank you,

Amy Swenson

+ Squatch, Brutus and Johnny Bench--the three cats that live in my backyard that were spayed through the assistance of an independent rescuer and the Brooklyn Cat Cafe

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Anastasia Rodriguez <arodriguez31800@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 2:54 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Emergency State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Good afternoon,

My name is Anastasia Rodriguez and I am writing regarding the State of Animal Rescue and it's emergent situation!

We strongly encourage the city government to allocate significant funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter services and affordable veterinary care for all New Yorkers in need, including rescuers and pet owners.

Bronx Community Cats is a nonprofit organization that dedicates their resources to helping those like myself and they were able to get services for my two bonded cats after being on a waitlist for ONE YEAR!

I know 13 people in my neighborhood alone who have been on a wait list to receive spay services. We cannot keep waiting. The Bronx CANNOT wait another 2-3 years for another non profit veterinary clinic! We need funding!

Thank you,

Anastasia Rodriguez

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Andrea <[andrea.varela@gmail.com](mailto:andrea.varela@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 12:05 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal rescue funding

[REDACTED]

To whom may concern,

we urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any new yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. Thank you

--  
Andrea Varela, CPA | Senior | Financial Services  
[Andrea.varela@gmail.com](mailto:Andrea.varela@gmail.com)

9/13/24

Hello,

My name is Dr. Andrew Kaplan, and I am a licensed veterinarian in the state of New York with over 30 years of professional experience. I own a private practice on the Upper West Side where we provide over \$350,000 worth of free veterinary care every year for 35 non-profit animal rescue charities. I am also the founder and president of The Toby Project, a free and very low cost spay and neuter service, operating in Bronx and Queens, servicing low-income pet owners since 2009, during which time we have performed over 190,000 spay and neuter surgeries. The work that we do, alongside grass roots rescuers comes from our hearts. We do it because we care, we are driven and we will continue. However, even if they are not doing the actual work, most taxpayers in this city care as well. Additionally, our sacrifice financially benefits the city. More animals receiving care in my private hospital means fewer tax dollars spent on those same animals in our own municipal animal shelter. The more animals that receive spay and neuter surgeries from The Toby Project, the fewer dollars are spent on those same animals in our municipal shelters and the fewer animals are born to perpetuate the cycle of unwanted births and unnecessary death.

This all works but in order for to be truly successful, it has to scale up, and the entire responsibility cannot fall on the few private entities burning themselves out to prevent this house of cards from falling. If not from a “compassion” point of view, it financially benefits the city to prevent the existence of the very animals that would ultimately need medical care through a massive, well-funded spay/neuter initiative targeting low-income pet owners. This is a proven in the publication by attorney Peter Marsh: *Replacing Myth with Math: Using Evidence-based Programs to Eradicate Shelter Overpopulation*.

With an ounce of prevention, this problem can be solved and ultimately at a huge financial benefit to New York City.

Andrew Kaplan, DVM

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Angela Avila Ramirez <angelaavilaramirez81@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 2:18 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] City Government, Help for animal  
**Attachments:** IMG\_0817.MOV; IMG\_7281.MOV

[REDACTED]

I'm writing to urge your support for low cost  
Spay/neuter affordable veterinary care for pet parents ,rescues.  
Other point a significant stray cats are roaming in my neighborhood often suffering for malnutrition and sick.

Sincerely  
Angela Avila

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Angela Connell <aconnell1031@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 12:20 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] TESTIMONY ON THE STATE OF ANIMAL RESCUE IN NYC. Hearing 9/13/24

[REDACTED]

Good morning, members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my written testimony on the current state of animal rescue in New York City.

My name is Angela Connell, and I run a small rescue in Queens, NY, known as IntiMutt Inc., which was founded in November 2014.

My journey into animal rescue began in late October of that year when I discovered a dog living in a car lot behind my apartment, desperately crying out for help.

Hearing her daily cries of pain and hunger was unbearable. This pit bull had been purchased for \$200 in the Bronx from someone selling puppies out of a duffle bag and was being kept solely to protect the cars in the lot.

Despite my efforts and a financial investment of \$30,000 over eighteen months, I was unable to rescue her. Despite repeated attempts to reason with the owners, she was never spayed or vaccinated. With no shelter, food, or water, she endured severe suffering. I even had a custom dog house made for her, and neighbors in the community filed complaints regarding the neglect, but these cries for intervention went unheard.

In another case, a German Shepherd in Middle Village, NY was left outside in harsh conditions, muzzled with no access to adequate shelter food or water.

For months, I documented and recorded the neglect. Finally, with the help of another rescue organization, we managed to save her after a prolonged struggle. She was placed in foster care, where it was discovered that she was not only unsterilized, but also had a broomstick handle embedded in her vagina. Despite this horrific abuse, the owner was never held accountable.

If spaying and neutering had been more affordable, or if breeding were banned, these tragedies might have been avoided. This experience was so traumatic that I had to step back from dog rescue for a period of time.

In 2020, during the pandemic, I became heavily involved in cat rescue. During this time, I met Meagan Licari from Puppykittynyc, who was running her rescue out of her garage. It was then that I realized the extent of the homeless cat crisis, which the pandemic had only exacerbated.

In 2021, I took over the care of a deceased colony caretaker's cats in the industrial area of Maspeth, NY rescuing more than 150 homeless cats.

We continue to feed and maintain the remaining ones, hoping to rescue them all eventually.

Currently, the state of animal rescue in NYC is overwhelming. People are abandoning their pets at an alarming rate primarily due to unaffordable vet care.

Furthermore, establishments such as warehouses and bodegas are using cats for rodent control. These working bodega and warehouse cats are often not sterilized, leading to overpopulation and, eventually, the discarding of these animals.

Recently, during a visit to a warehouse, we discovered two kittens. We removed them, only to find that two more unsterilized kittens had been brought to the warehouse again. This cycle makes it nearly impossible to address the cat crisis effectively.

Now, in 2024, I am still encountering these heartbreaking situations.

Recently, the mistreatment of a bodega cat in my neighborhood came to my attention. The cat had been hidden away in the hope that no one would find him, but we did. He was found emaciated and in dire condition.

Despite efforts over the past decade, little has changed. The same patterns of neglect and abuse persist, and we continue to witness the same heartbreaking scenarios repeatedly. It is time for meaningful action to alleviate and lessen this unnecessary suffering.

As a community, we should not have to fear walking down our streets or visiting our local stores due to the burden of witnessing animal abuse.

Affordable low or no cost, and enforced spaying and neutering are key solutions.

Therefore, I urge you to allocate substantial government funding for spaying and neutering across all of NYC, to support both pet owners and rescue organizations.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Angela Connell

IntiMutt Inc.

[IntiMuttrescue@gmail.com](mailto:IntiMuttrescue@gmail.com)

[Aconnell1031@gmail.com](mailto:Aconnell1031@gmail.com)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Angela De Leon <angelasarahdeleon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:44 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Welfare Crisis Testimony

[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Angela and I'm a TNR certified independent rescuer.

Having worked in human healthcare and being an independent animal rescuer outside of that, I often compare the similarities of the human patients that come in the hospital that need help, and the cats and other animals found on the city streets needing help as well.

If only animal welfare is prioritized like human welfare, such as being able to walk into a health facility if you need any treatment, and not asking you to pay upfront because the government has you covered. EMTALA. The ER will have to take you in without asking for you to make a 50% deposit on the spot for a life-saving surgery. When you walk into a hospital, you are greeted by the receptionist, nurse, tech. There's a whole team of doctors with specialists that will see you. You have social needs? Don't worry, case management and social workers are there to assist. If a human patient can't pay? Emergency Medicaid is there, circle back to Case Management and SWs being there to assist. They're not going to euthanize the patient just because they can't pay right then and there. It shouldn't also fall solely on the rescuer and donations solicited from the public. We need the city government to step up for its furry residents in this concrete jungle.

They say that the nation's morality is judged by how they treat their animals. I hope to see NYC one day to not only be leading in fashion, arts, finance... let the greatest city also be leading in caring for their animals.

If we have a government-funded year-round pet food pantry that is readily accessible in multiple boroughs, not just the ACC in the Bronx, easy access low-cost-free spay/neuter for pet owners and incentivize it. Year-round, easy access to community low-cost-free basic vet services such as vaccines, micro-chipping etc., .

After listening to DOHMH, ACC and DOH words, I think I speak on behalf of rescuers when we say we are surprised that DOHMH apparently offers spay/neuter services?! None of my fellow rescuers know about that, they need to be more transparent and more proactive with what they offer.

I propose for landlords and property owners to be incentivized when they allow tenants to have pets, instead of adding monthly fees just for wanting to house a pet. This also largely contributes to animal abandonment and surrenders.

To echo what the other rescuers have mentioned on Friday, NYPD needs better training in handling and responding to animal cruelty and abuse calls. Transparency with their SOP on responding to abuse and cruelty cases as well as which orgs and agencies (ASPCA, ACC, DOH etc) that should be responding to calls for help.

Lastly, we absolutely need a separate agency in charge of animal welfare, and not to be under the umbrella of human health. An agency that employs round-the-clock veterinarians, techs, animal behaviorists, animal advocates, round-the-clock and year-round.

I believe New York City can be greater when it also prioritized animal welfare.

Thank you for reading.  
Angela De Leon

Sent from my iPhone

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**Angela Tassone**

Riverdale, Bronx

[Sinestra20@gmail.com](mailto:Sinestra20@gmail.com)

(781) 640-3061

**The Underground Railroad:  
The Path to Affordable Vet Care and Animal rights  
13<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

Dear Committee on Health:

Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to speak on this important issue.

I started my rescue journey back in 2018. Stray animals aren't an issue where I'm originally from, so to say I was shocked when I moved here is an understatement. And every year since then has become progressively worse with abandoned and stray pets.

I've rescued cats that were in such bad shape that they were euthanized instantaneously and I've rescued cats that just needed some time to heal and were adopted into loving homes. (Thankfully the latter happens more often!) The typical scenario of how we got here is this: someone takes in a kitten and provides no vet care. Then the kitten grows into a cat and starts doing what unfixed cats in heat do: spraying and howling. This obviously becomes a nuisance for the household, so the cat is driven to another neighborhood community and dropped off so it cannot find its way back home, effectively abandoned. Because the cats are unfixed, males will fight other males and females will give birth to litter after litter. That's when the explosion of unwanted and injured cats occurs and also when rescuers like me step in.

Us New York City rescuers and foster parents work like an Underground Railroad: transporting, vetting, fostering, then adopting out. I use my own time, my own vehicle and my own money to purchase food, gasoline and spay/ neuter services. This simply should not be. I didn't create this problem; I unknowingly moved and relocated into it from my home city.

Please be aware that the citizens of NYC care about animals for sure. There are many NYC based animal rescue groups and most maintain social media accounts across various platforms. Believe me when I say they have tens of thousands of followers who are absolutely fanatical about animal rights. If a story of animal abuse appears on their social media feed, New Yorkers will be protesting aggressively. If a rescue group asks

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its followers to either email or call out any animal abusers or abusive organizations, New Yorkers will be out in full force, with a vengeance.

A similar situation happened in the Bronx. Over the 2024 summer, the rescue community was alerted that some Gun Hill NYCHA tenants were illegally housing and breeding dogs. Not only that the dogs were instructed to attack stray cats, all in the name of “training” for dog fighting. These individuals then display these horrific videos on their social media, along with other training protocols, such as steroid injections, beatings and finally starvation to activate the pit bulls survival instincts before a fight. When NYC rescues put the word out, anyone that was connected to dog fighting and facilitating the breeding of pit-bulls was called and emailed by thousands of concerned NY residents and furious taxpayers, being that it was happening in public housing.

*(Side note: dog fighting is a felony in New York. Under New York Penal Law § 351, it is illegal to engage in or promote animal fighting, including dog fighting. This law makes it a felony to train, breed, sell, or use dogs for fighting purposes, as well as to attend dog fights. Those convicted of dogfighting related offenses can face significant penalties, including imprisonment, fines, and other legal consequences. Indeed our tax dollars are providing a space for criminals and criminal acts.)*

This didn't stop the actual criminals though, as there are no NYPD officers enforcing the law and there's an abundance of perks with winning a dog fight, namely that the winner's owner can take home the betting money pot, which can be up to \$200,000. NYCHA was very sympathetic to this issue, but their hands were tied, as they are only landlords not law enforcement. And breeding animals for profit is completely legal in New York State. Along with hardly any low cost vet services, that harmful mix makes for a surplus of animals in shelters, who are being euthanized at an alarming rate.

As far as provisions go, I think elected leaders should make life better for the people they serve and their pets are very much a part of that. In the spirit of this being an election year, let's talk about economical vet care and enact new rules and uphold laws for animal rights, health and safety. It's what the people want.



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Bronx Gatos <bronxgatos@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 9:38 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] nyc cat rescue

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I am an independent cat rescuer. I help low income community members and feral street cats with spay/ neuter surgery, vaccinations, and veterinary care. I do TNR in my Bronx neighborhood and get an overwhelming amount of requests for help. The community has nowhere to turn when they are seeking help for their pets or for help with stray or abandoned animals in their neighborhoods.

Independent rescuers like myself work out of pocket, we need help, the City of New York needs help. The burden of animal welfare should not be on independent citizens- with no funding.

I strongly urge you to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/ neuter surgeries, vaccinations, and affordable veterinary care for all NYC citizens and independent NYC rescuers.

The animal crisis in NYC can be solved, shelters can be cleared, and citizens should be able to keep their pets at home with support.

Thank you,

Aniko Horvath

Bronx Gatos Inc, President & Founder  
an independent 501c3 cat rescue

Hello,

I am writing to urge the city to provide funding for spaying/neutering stray animals and vet care assistance. There are so many volunteers willing to help (without pay), however they need assistance with the cost of medical services. I have TNR'd several stray cats and paid for it entirely on my own and it is very expensive; therefore, I can only help so many animals. In addition, I have paid for costly vet care for stray cats such as dental procedures. More people would be able help stray animals if funding was available. This initiative is very important to assist helpless animals with vet care and keep the stray pet population under control.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Ann Coleman

[REDACTED]

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**From:** anntsocial <anntsocial01@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:55 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funds for spay/neuter clinic needed

[REDACTED]

NYC has reached beyond maximum capacity at all shelters, causing animal in need to be either turned away or euthanized. This is a crisis situation. I implore the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you.  
Ann Schoen  
Staten Island, NY

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

My name is Annabelle Nyst and I'm a New York City resident who cares deeply about the welfare of animals. I'm here to urge the city to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs.

Every day, thousands of stray and abandoned animals face hunger, illness, and danger on our streets. Not a day goes by when I don't encounter a scared, hungry cat in my neighborhood. This is heartbreaking to witness. Our shelters are overcrowded, and rescue workers are doing everything they can, working overtime with minimal resources to save the lives of these animals. But without significant support from the city, they face an uphill battle.

Spay and neuter programs, along with accessible veterinary care, are the most effective, humane solutions to address overpopulation and reduce the suffering of animals in our community. They not only alleviate the strain on shelters and rescue workers but also improve public safety, protect the health of our neighborhoods, and save the city money in the long run.

I respectfully ask that you allocate more funding to these vital programs so we can help prevent suffering, support the incredible work of our rescue community, and build a healthier city.

Thank you for your time.

Annabelle Nyst

[REDACTED]

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**From:** aed <anne.addg1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:10 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] TAXES

[REDACTED]

It's hard enough keeping up with vet bills and medications but then to have to pay taxes on top of that makes it even harder. Medications for people are tax exempt. Why isn't it the same for animal meds? Please eliminate those taxes!!

anne davis  
Hell's Kitchen

9 September 2024  
Anne Margaret Daniel

To The Department of Health and Dr. Ashwin Vasani:

“We don’t kill healthy adoptable dogs,” said the NYCACC’s Risa Weinstock, in the last public meeting at which the ACC permitted Zoom attendance, back in 2022. The ACC has killed five healthy, adoptable dogs of all ages, including three puppies barely a year old, in the past week alone. A point that must be addressed is the absolute disconnect between the ACC claiming not to kill healthy, adoptable dogs—and then refusing to make them available except to rescues, and killing them swiftly when rescues do not move fast enough, or indeed have not even been contacted by ACC staff about particular dogs in need. There are good places across New York State with kennels standing open, and local adopters eager to have a dog; the ACC takes almost no advantage of this, and has indeed recently deleted some excellent facilities upstate and on Long Island from their partner rescue list.

One reason for this across-the-board killing (euthanizing is a term of medical science, and does not apply to what the ACC does) seems to be the longtime contract between the Department of Sanitation and the pet crematorium in Babylon. The Babylon crematorium’s was the winning bid in 2018 for a contract that expired in December 2023. Were bids even taken for another contract? Or was the old one just increased to \$36,000 per month? This contract is what I’d have called a contract of adhesion back when I was practicing law, and a particularly nasty one, because in this case, you have to stick to its terms—to deliver a certain number of animal corpses for burning, supplied primarily by the NYC ACC—so that the monthly weight limits are met. Those limits, as you see when you review the contract (and I attach a copy of the old one, the only available via FOIL), are set in the contract for an agreed-upon sum, and have nothing at all to do with numbers of dogs and cats actually in the shelter, or too gravely ill to survive—which is the actual definition required for euthanasia. The “disposal” of dogs and cats euthanized in shelters across New York state is, alas, big business. Do you know where the ash and bone goes? The crematorium has already been paid by the city for burning the pets; they don’t sprinkle the ashes in any remembrance garden, but sell on to various manufacturers. I do not think New Yorkers would take kindly to knowing who those manufacturers are and the products they make.

This is most assuredly not just a New York City problem, though the point of today’s meeting deals with the ACC, but one currently vexing the whole state. For example, the Erie County SPCA, Lollypop Farm in Rochester, and St. Lawrence Valley SPCA in Ogdensburg have particularly high kill rates. Although required by law to respect a hold period for any strays, and check for microchips, they don’t. St. Lawrence Valley is so egregious that journalists have begun monitoring it and reporting on it; other shelters throughout New York state are on the monitoring list as well:

<https://www.wwnytv.com/2022/10/06/animal-shelter-with-high-kill-rate-attracts-local-state-attention/>

It is only decent that any shelter should scan for a microchip, wait a required time period of some days before kill listing any dog, and give rescues and members of the public a required period of time before any kill command is carried out for any healthy, adoptable or rescue-only dog. It is both ridiculous and false to claim that a dog is “unhealthy” because they are nervous in the atypical and terrifying surroundings of a shelter, or because they are behaving abnormally because they are drugged far beyond their body weight’s capacity and any vet’s recommendation on trazodone and gabapentin—a very serious problem at the ACC, where these drugs are used to keep dogs quiet. The NYCACC alone kills hundreds of dogs including healthy puppies, friendly healthy seniors, and dogs who have just come into the shelter and whose owners were not given the chance encoded in New York state law to retrieve them. Nothing like what happened to Leona should happen to any dog, or family:

<https://abc7ny.com/dog-euthanized-nyc-shelter-acc/13027526/>

As it currently stands, New York shelters are using the excuse of fear and “stress” to kill perfectly healthy dogs who simply need room to roam, more than one walk a day, clean kennels, and a proper animal behaviorist to evaluate them. A dog has the temerity to be afraid in a shelter that kills? It would be ironic if it weren't so utterly unfair, and preventable. The Shelter Animals Reform Act, in its revised form, could change this and save thousands of lives a year if Sen. Joe Addabbo would release it for consideration—as his own constituents and a majority of New Yorkers want. SARA’s most important features involve an airtight requirement that shelters must check for microchips and contact a listed owner; increasing the hold period for a stray from three days to five or more; and issuing or posting photos online of recent arrivals so that owners may find their dogs, and so that rescues may be aware of those most in need of help.

Newspapers, television stations, and, most of all, New York state's citizens who adopt, foster, and spend millions every year to help save shelter pets are increasingly noticing the plight of our dogs and cats. The recent story in the New York Post about poor Zamboni and other dogs left in their own feces in the brand-new and very expensive Queens ACC building has generated much outcry, and support and thanks for Councilman Holden, who cared enough to go and see.

<https://nypost.com/2024/08/22/us-news/dogs-at-new-nyc-animal-care-center-shelter-neglected-inside-cramped-filthy-cages-council-member-and-whistleblowers-say/>

Thank you very much for allowing animal advocates to present testimony in your meeting, and thank you for being interested in helping good dogs, and other pets, live and thrive in New York City.

Anne Margaret Daniel

September 13, 2024

Re: today's Department of Health / NYC ACC Hearing

To our NYC City Council:

I waited for a chance to testify via Zoom, but was unable to as so many people came in person to present testimony—which was excellent, and vital to listen to. Thank you all for this hearing, and for allowing us to speak today. To Madam Chair Shulman, Councilors Ariola and Holden, and to the vets who donate their care to NYC ACC New Hope partner rescues, special thanks. NYC vets donating help to ACC dogs directly could save hundreds of lives a year.

There has been much praise of the new NYC ACC buildings this morning, and anticipation of others to be opened, or in the case of Brooklyn, reopened in the future. Large modern buildings with light throughout and medical rooms, are wonderful, but not when they have filthy kennels and untended dogs. The recent issues already reported by the NY Post and other news organizations at the new Queens facility are grave and must be monitored for the safety of the animals as well as people working there. Upgrades and renovations have provided nice public space and office space, but the new Staten Island building actually has FEWER kennels for dogs than did the old crumbling building. This should not be.

I want to commend the ACC foster program and am proud to be a member of it. PLEASE foster an ACC dog or cat if you can. Go volunteer at the nearest shelter building. It literally makes all the difference.

I am also very proud to be an ACC adopter. However, I'd like to tell you about my adoption experience, very briefly.

We saw a puppy named Beauty, a pitbull / lab mix, on the At Risk list in July of 2019, solely because she was shared by animal advocates on the website then known as Twitter. She was to be killed not for any health or behavior reasons, only for being "fearful." All dogs are fearful in a shelter. This cannot and should not be an excuse to kill any animal. The ACC kills healthy, adoptable animals because they are deemed "fearful" every week. There must be a licensed animal behaviorist on staff at every shelter building; and oversight by the Department of Health or another city office of the high amount of powerful sedative and behavioral drugs given to ACC dogs—which have directly resulted in the deaths in their kennels of many dogs.

We reserved Beauty online with a credit card on a Saturday, and we picked her up the following Tuesday. It turned out that Beauty was "fearful" because she was in heat, and being charged at by male dogs every time she was taken out of her kennel, which was once a day, by the way. Only once a day. No one had even noticed this despite the blood on her legs and in her kennel. She was also suffering badly from kennel cough, and I think that every dog upon intake should be given a Bordetella vaccine, along with the required rabies vaccine, as a matter of course. It would save many lives, given the pneumonia plague that has ravaged the ACC buildings, particularly Manhattan, since winter 2022. And an excellent rescue, AMA Animal Rescue of

Brooklyn, has recently had to close intake because of medical bills from ACC dogs they saved who were sick with pneumonia. This MUST not happen. Help them if you can.

As to the overcrowding issue, thank heavens for adoptions, but there MUST be oversight of these adoptions. Yes, make it easier for people to adopt; but don't let anyone without any checking up or oversight take home a dog for \$20. The adoption returns lately to the NYC ACC have been astounding. Dogs are taken home and guess what, the landlord says no. Or a dog does not decompress fast enough for people who don't know how to help them, and so the folks return them to the shelter. A dog uses the floor for its bathroom, because that is what they've had to do at the ACC for perhaps months. People are annoyed, and bring the dog back. (Many of the dogs that end up in the ACC are former household pets and are housebroken. To be taken out only once a day distresses them greatly and harms their health in some cases.) These dogs returned from an adoption almost always go straight to the At Risk list, and that is wildly unfair to these good, healthy, often young dogs.

The ACC must vet people better before letting them take dogs; and there must be follow up. No one so much as phoned to ensure we had spayed Beauty after she was over her heat. Which, by the way, we did. No one followed up at all on our adoption. Our references were not called; that includes our vets, who were not contacted to ask questions about the dog we already owned at the time. There was no site visit, no request for any video tour, or even photographs of our home. That's wrong. This is one of the gravest problems currently at the ACC, and it is easy to solve with even one member of the adoptions staff at each building devoted to checking out the adopters: calling people's references, following up on dogs, and helping people keep a dog, if appropriate, rather than redumping them—but, most of all, winnowing out bad adopters in the first place.

Thank you for listening to what I have to say, and for caring about New York City dogs and other animals in dire need. They have no voices: but please hear them and help them.

Yours,  
Anne Margaret Daniel

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Anne O'Brien <nycaeo@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 11:42 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funds needed for low cost spay/neuter & vetting

[REDACTED]

Dear NYC Council Members,

First off, thank you for the work that you do daily to advocate on behalf of all tax paying New Yorkers! Now I would ask that you advocate on behalf of all New York City's needy pets and their owners. As a long time resident of Middle Village, Queens I would like to say that my family and I see a desperate need out there for help with spay/neuter and low cost vetting for all of New York's dogs, cats, rabbits and all other sentient creatures. Many family's are sadly unable to afford pet care and are forced to give up their four legged family members. In addition, so many small animal rescues are operating on a shoestring budget and limited in their ability to help. We see them try but they just fo not have the funds to help desperate New York pet owners. If we had a choice both myself and my family would prefer more of our tax dollars go to this worthy cause. Please consider increasing the budget allocated to help suffering New Yorkers who live their pets but desperately need help with low cost vetting.

Thank you for considering this appeal,

Anne O'Brien  
Middle Village, Queens

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

TESTIMONY FOR NYC COUNCIL HEARING 9.13.24  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Submitted by Anne Watkins, volunteer with Neighborhood Cats

In 2002 there were 72 cats living in 5 family groups in Riverside Park in Manhattan. We call those family groups colonies.

Neighborhood Cats, an organization of volunteers committed to feral cat colony management, mounted a trapping effort to spay/neuter and vaccinate those cats. It took time, money and medical resources. The Humane Society of New York helped us get them neutered and treated. Friendly cats and cats that needed extra care were adopted into homes. The remaining cats were supported in their locations daily with fresh food and water, and taken to the vet when they showed signs of illness or injury.

Twenty-two years later, only 1 cat lives in the park, supported by us. This method of colony management works.

We are contacted by parks workers when friendly, feral or injured cats show up in the park, and when possible, we remove them. We are reliant on the Humane Society of NY and rescue discounts from sympathetic veterinarians. Corporate take-overs and chain vet practices have driven out so many mom and pop vets. Prices for basic services have sky rocketed and available appointments are hard to secure. Practices who have helped us for decades are struggling to survive, and many can no longer provide the discounts we counted on for years.

*We need low cost or free spay/neuter services for NYC.* We are in one of the richest neighborhoods in the city, but the people who do this work are not rich. The volume of cats on the street and means to address their needs is even more overwhelming in other parts of the city. Given the burden we feel, it is all the more heartbreaking to witness the suffering of outdoor cats and the people helping them in the poorest neighborhoods.

As with many of the problems that face our communities, people want to help, but lack effective direction and support. It is not right or efficient for a city to rely on an army of volunteers to manage this crisis. Please address the inequity of services and inefficiencies of the city agencies to address them and use the expertise of the people who showed up at this hearing to fix this. Thank you.

September 13, 2024

My name is Annie Bishai. I have lived in District 36 for most of the past seven years. I have been rescuing cats as part of NARN for the past year, although I have loved and cared for animals my entire life. I want to share some of what I have experienced and learned as a rescuer, to add to the testimonies of so many of my fellow volunteers, organizers, and compassionate neighbors about why we urgently need **large-scale, affordable or no-cost spay/neuter and veterinary care in our city.**

Since last fall, when I rescued my first pair of young cats from the street in Crown Heights, some of the most difficult and moving cases I have encountered have been friendly cats, not spayed or neutered, that were left outside to fight against the odds and suffer in a way that is heartbreakingly avoidable.

The most memorable of these was Dorian. In June, I was on my way to the subway when I noticed a matted long-haired gray cat huddled next to a building on New York Ave. I got closer and knew he was the cat I'd been sent pictures of from concerned neighbors and fellow rescuers who had seen him and knew he needed help. The cat didn't have the strength to move, and it was going to be 100 degrees that day. I hurried to trap him and bring him inside.

The gray cat was friendly, meaning he most likely had lived as a pet inside at some point. I called him Dorian. He was not neutered. He was emaciated, suffering from an upper respiratory infection, and had clearly lost the ability to groom himself. When I took him to a vet, I found out he had feline leukemia virus, a disease that is fatal but manageable if caught early. In Dorian's case, it was clear that the virus had already taken a huge toll on this poor senior cat's body. After a week inside, he was purring and enjoying being gently petted, but the illness was too much and he gradually stopped eating. I held him, groomed him, and played music for him every day until it became clear that the kindest option was humane euthanasia. My fellow rescuer and I held his paw and whispered loving words to him while he passed.

Feline leukemia virus was a cruel fate that, in all likelihood, could have been prevented for Dorian with basic veterinary care and a neuter surgery earlier in his life. Testing for the virus is standard at most vets, if you can afford a visit, and early detection allows the possibility for FeLV-positive cats to live in good health for several years.

Most of the ways in which FeLV is transmitted from cat to cat—such as mating, fighting, and from mother to kitten—can be prevented with sterilization. That means that being left outside while not sterilized is a huge danger and health risk to a healthy cat. The behaviors they are biologically driven to have the potential to infect them with fatal disease.

And why would a friendly cat like this one be left to fend for himself in the snow, rain, and blistering heat? While it's impossible to know Dorian's full story, we do know how these stories commonly go. Many, many unaltered male cats are dumped—i.e. put outside—by their owners when they reach sexual maturity and start spraying urine, or fighting with other male cats, which are behaviors that would be

prevented by neutering. For female cats, the behaviors associated with going into heat can similarly be annoying to people, and if spaying is not financially possible, the owner is more likely to abandon the animal for their own survival.

Dorian broke my heart because he was such a sweet cat. I admit I'm biased—since adopting my own rescued street cats, one of whom has beautiful gray fur, I have a soft spot for gray cats. But I'm sure I wasn't the first person to love Dorian. Dorian could have kept someone else company for all of his life. It broke my heart that there had been a human for him before, and something had caused that bond to be untenable.

While I waited for a rescuer friend to arrive with a trap the day I found Dorian, I conversed with neighbors who were outside. People were concerned about the cat. One man asked if I was going to call “the animal people” to help. “There are lots of animal people around here,” he said.

That was the first time I realized that I was “the animal people.” The neighbor might not have realized it, but there wasn't anyone else to call. As others have testified, city-supported shelters have been at capacity this year, and this work is falling to rescuers, the vast majority of whom are regular people like me, not paid to do this. It's true—there are a lot of us in Brooklyn, which is an amazing thing, and organizations like NARN make it possible for many of us to work together to fill the gaps in the city's social support net.

Here's the other part of it. Helping Dorian helped me out of a dark place. When I rescued Dorian, I had just been unexpectedly laid off from my job and was starting to fall back into the depression I have known on and off for most of my life. I did not have the funds to cover his vet visits—I was only able to give him the care I gave him thanks to friends and a few strangers on the internet who donated when I asked. (I'm not an influencer, and I only have a few hundred followers on Instagram.) A more rational person might have stopped after this, knowing that continuing to subject myself to the financial burden of helping animals while not having adequate income would be detrimental to my and my partner's future. But at a time when my mental health was liable to spiral into a dark place, doing this unpaid work was restorative and spiritually nourishing. It brought me closer to friends and neighbors. It made me feel more alive and healthy than I had in a long time.

In the three months that have followed, I have rescued and helped some fifteen other cats, and it has been a boon to my well-being. Only because of the contributions of others, and the few vets in Brooklyn that offer reduced-cost vetting and spay/neuter to rescuers, have I been financially able to do this work, and frankly—as I'm still looking for a job (it's tough out there!)—I shouldn't do much more until I start earning a paycheck again.

What I hope you will take away from my testimony is this: companion animals are vital to humans' health; caring for animals is also an essential act of self-care for many of us; and these beautiful parts of life should not be restricted to those with enough personal wealth to afford the cost of veterinary care, which has become exorbitant. Of course, it's about the animals, too—Dorian didn't have to suffer the

way he did, and the thousands of other cats and dogs living on the street or otherwise, without the basic care that humans *want* to give them, don't deserve these hardships. It's about people and animals both.

I implore the Council to take the actions necessary to make **abundantly available, low-cost (or free) spay/neuter services and veterinary care** a reality in our city. We can achieve this, and all of us New Yorkers will benefit if we do. Thank you.



*Dorian looking for food outside. This picture was circulated in my rescue network in February, but we were unable to find him to bring him inside until months later.*



*Dorian in June, just before I brought him inside.*



*With Dorian at the vet, the day we learned his diagnosis of FeLV.*



*Dorian before he passed.*

Annie Bishai

██████████  
anniebishai@gmail.com

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Kitty Loft <kittyloft@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 6:00 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] sept 13 hearing on stray animals

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern:

As a long time trapper doing TNR and rescue in NYC, I feel the epidemic animal abandonment and homelessness has gotten exponentially worse in NYC since COVID primarily due to several issues:

1. the lack of affordable spay/neuter for both the public and rescuers,
2. the proliferation of bodegas and smoke shops (now they are the defacto pet shops) where DOH inspectors look the other way and do not impose fines for these unaltered, unvaccinated animals in violation of DOH ordinances,
3. the large number of unlicensed individuals illegally breeding and selling pets, primarily in low income areas (like NYCHA),
4. NYCHA not enforcing its own requirements that pets be neutered/spayed that residents adhere to a number limit per apartment,
5. NYCHA employees illegally dumping abandoned animals outside rather than transporting them to ACC,
6. ACC pushing back on members of the public for surrender or intake,
7. lack of any city or ACC commitment to TNR to rapidly reduce shelter intake numbers

**1. Lack of affordable spay/neuter for both the public and rescuers**

- Low cost options have evaporated - the previous ASPCA sponsored low cost mobile vans were already over capacity and struggling to fill demand. Now the program has been nearly eliminated. This elimination has led the public, particularly NYCHA residents, to abandon unaltered animals, creating a source of homelessness.
- While doing TNR, I am approached constantly by residents seeking low cost options - demand and desire is there!
- City funded S/N would greatly reduce the epidemic numbers outdoors as well as reduce the number of surrenders at ACC - in the long term, this EXTENDS the DOH and ACC BUDGET.
- Mobile clinics could be city-funded, with per diem vets utilized and trained per a set protocol for high volume S/N, so any "vet shortage" would be eliminated.
- These mobile clinics need to be neighborhood based, as people often cannot travel long distances on public transport with their pet, particularly dogs.
- These mobile clinics should NOT BE FREE. Services should be steeply discounted to encourage NY residents to comply with the law, but NOT FREE. Even nominal fees will be accepted by the public and help fund the program.

**2. Bodegas and smoke shops now defacto illegal pet shops, supplying low income residents with kittens**

- There is a profound lack of any enforcement of current DOH ordinances. We can document known violators reported multiple times to DOH with ZERO fines and ZERO consequences.
- Strict enforcement would both increase REVENUE (which could be earmarked for low cost S/N city-run, neighborhood-based programs) and ensure compliance.
- Compliance would halt the giveaway of unaltered animals to the public, who in turn are unable to find affordable options, continuing the cycle.

**3. the large number of unlicensed individuals illegally breeding and selling pets, primarily in low income areas (like NYCHA)**

- Backyard and apartment illegal breeders are rampant in NYCHA (we can document).

**4. NYCHA not enforcing its own requirements that pets be neutered/spayed that residents adhere to a number limit per apartment**

- Time and again, I have been called to assist with residents who have unaltered animals that have led to large, unsafe, unacceptable numbers in apartments.
- These numbers are unsafe and unhealthy for the animals, huge nuisance in terms of sanitation/smell/noise to neighbors, and damage to the apartments is COSTLY for the NYCHA BUDGET.
- NYCHA is the landlord and must be given legal authority to partner with ACC for solutions to the violations.

## **5. NYCHA employees illegally dumping abandoned animals outside rather than transporting them to ACC**

- Evictions, police actions, movers, and animal abandonment in apartments, hallways, stairwells, basements has become bigger piece of the problem.
- ALL NYCHA managers, superintendents, supervisors and caretakers should REQUIRED to attend paid seminar/workshop on what to do in these situations.
- ACC should not charge a fee to come pick up abandoned animals from evictions/movers, etc. This pick up service MUST be free so managers can reliably protect animals. OTHERWISE, NYCHA must allow a staffer to transport the animal in secure carrier to ACC (as paid work time) and staffer MUST return with proof (the intake form with animal ID) that said animal was indeed taken to and received by ACC.. We have had instances where workers, not being given direction, took cats to other NYCHA properties and simply let them out.
- EDUCATION of staffers IMPERATIVE and clear expectations laid out - staffers can become animal advocates. This helps not only the animals, but also the quality of life of the residents and protects the property.
- Each NYCHA property could have 2 assigned animal liaisons who take charge in each animal-related situation to connect with the correct authorities, whether that be NYPD or ACC to implement the interest of the law and provide protection against cruelty and abuse.

## **6. ACC pushing back on members of the public when they bring in animals for surrender or intake**

- Their policy of refusing intake of strays and advising the public to simply “put the cat back outside” is flat out ILLEGAL, violating NY state law. ACC must intake all these animals, S/N, and put into adoptions if friendly or TNR if feral. As the city shelter, regardless of their numbers, they MUST intake any animal brought to them.
- People have gone to a lot of trouble to help a cat and transport it to ACC - they should not have the doors slammed on them. The current policy has only exacerbated the problem, since these found animals are returned outdoors unaltered.
- ACC policy of refusing intake on pet surrenders, instead insisting on appointments, also can endanger airmails. Sometimes people cannot use an online appointment system. People are already suffering hardship or distress at having to surrender their pet should be given a helping hand, not refused, forcing them to “make an appointment and come back”. Some of these people CANNOT come back and will just abandon their animal outside.
- Ideally, funding for a “Keep your pet” assistance department within ACC could be created - one reason people surrender is lack of affordable S/N and many people would keep their pet if the nuisance behaviors from unaltered animals were resolved.
- Funding to ACC specifically for S/N of owners who reach out AND separately for TNR. TNR greatly reduces the number of kittens and found animals brought into ACC - HELPING EXTEND THEIR BUDGET. Investing up front means much greater savings down the road.

## **7. lack of any city or ACC commitment to TNR to rapidly reduce shelter intake numbers**

- City partnering with rescue groups - currently individual independent trappers, rescuers, and rescue groups are shouldering the bulk of the work and cost and are still unable to get the epidemic homelessness under control.
- Education /workshops/neighborhood meetings focused in low-income areas are ESSENTIAL. The more involved the community, the greater the success. The town meeting to focus on S/N for health benefits and community well being, and then the follow up is to schedule the mobile clinic to come to that location. Flyers can be posted announcing the clinic date with a number to call to register for that clinic day. It's likely local rescue groups can partner with this initiative in each neighborhood, posting flyers, getting people signed up, providing carriers for loan day of, and even picking up and transporting the animal for elderly and disabled folks.
- TNR - in every neighborhood or area I've TNRed, THE DIFFERENCE IS ASTOUNDING. It works, and the colony shrinks over time, assuming colony caretakers trap and S/N the few newcomers who may show up a few times a year
- FUNDING - currently, the city offers ZERO support to individual volunteer trappers who are doing the heavy lifting in NYC - their own time and money. This is not sustainable, as the nearly free ASPCA rescuer clinic no longer provides many appointments, so trappers are having to pay approx \$100 per cat - that adds up quickly when trying to TNR large colonies.
- Like the mobile clinics for the public, local neighborhood based mobile clinics for rescuers and TNR can also be funded - again, NOT FREE, but low cost. As all NYers, rescuers appreciate local access, as it cuts down on transport issues, hence mobile clinics.
- Years ago, ASPCA ran mobile clinics for trappers/rescuers, but moved away from that with brick and mortar facilities. But maybe it's time to bring them back. Im sure there are plenty of ASPCA mobile clinics, just parked gathering dust since they have curtailed the program so severely - perhaps they can be leased and put into use by the city?
- TNR only works if low cost S/N is available for the public, otherwise, those unaltered abandoned pets make their way outside to start the problem all over again..

WE HAVE CIRCLED BACK TO LOW COST S/N NEEDED.

THANKS for your attention!

Best,  
ANnie Sullivan

Testimony from Anthony Santoro

Regarding Animal rescue/spay/neuter funding

The cat population in our immediate neighborhood has increased dramatically. We had a couple of elderly women nearby who take care of cats, feeding and providing some medical attention when possible and when affordable. Recently one of the women passed away and suddenly all the cats she was taking care of both indoor and outdoor were released without any care. There are several other locations as well nearby where cats are assisted with feeding, but there is no follow up with helping get the cats spayed and neutered. I believe this to be a problem that can be controlled with some intervention. Feeding the cats is commendable, getting the cats spayed/neutered to help keep overpopulation down is essential. Unfortunately many of those with compassion for animals do not have the means to have them all medically treated. I implore those that make funding decisions to continue funding if not increase funding to those who actively assist animals (cats) in receiving the care that is essential.

Regards,

Anthony Santoro



Richmond Hill, NY 11418

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Anya G. <bananya5@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 9:47 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Low/no cost spay neuter clinics

[REDACTED]

Hello, please help solve NYC cat/dog crisis. Please help sponsor low/no cost spay/neuter for New Yorkers in need including rescues, rescuers, shelters.  
Thank you.  
We all want the same thing

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Anya Monisoff <anyamon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 12:57 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Immediate Action Needed: NYC's Failure to Address the Cat Population Crisis

[REDACTED]

I am writing to express my deep disappointment and disgust at the current state of animal rights in New York City, particularly the city's complete failure to address the overwhelming and out-of-control cat population. It is both alarming and shameful that the city has made zero effort to implement meaningful solutions to this ongoing crisis.

For years, the issue of stray and abandoned cats has spiraled, and yet, the city has not allocated any substantial funding or resources toward solving it. There has been no significant investment in high-volume, low-cost spay and neuter programs or in affordable veterinary care for all New Yorkers, especially pet parents and rescuers who are tirelessly doing what the city refuses to do. It is unacceptable that citizens are left to bear the burden of a problem that could have been mitigated by proactive government measures.

The city's negligence is appalling. By ignoring the need for widespread, accessible spay and neuter services, NYC has only exacerbated the issue, creating a breeding ground for suffering animals and overrun shelters. This is not just a failure of leadership but a failure of basic compassion and responsibility.

We demand immediate action. The city must allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care for all who need it. If this continues to be ignored, the consequences for our animal population—and by extension, our communities—will only grow more severe. The time for excuses is long past. It's time for the city to step up and take responsibility for a problem it has let fester for far too long.

-Anya Monisoff

[REDACTED]

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**From:** April Goldberg <aprilgoldberg22@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 3:58 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Desperate Need For Low Cost Spay/Neuter

[REDACTED]

Hello, my name is April Goldberg and I have been rescuing cats in Washington Heights since May 2017. When I first started out, it was relatively easy to get low cost spay and neuter appointments through the ASPCA. Since the pandemic, it has become almost impossible to secure appointments, as their services have become greatly diminished. As their services shrunk, the need for low cost spay neuter has increased exponentially. There is a cat crisis in NYC and it's time for the city to take the lead in developing a solution.

I have personally been responsible and have worked tirelessly and voluntarily for the spay and neuter of about 500 cats over 7 1/2 years. This a drop in the bucket, as there are an estimated 500,000 free roaming cats in the 5 boroughs.

At this point in time, low cost spay & neuter is virtually nonexistent. I can no longer get appointments through the ASPCA. For example, someone asked me to get a neuter spot for his male cat back in March. I was never able to accommodate him. He is located in the Bronx. He called me last week, desperate. His female cat just gave birth to 3 kittens. I did not know that he had a female cat. It turns out that he owns 2 males & 1 female, none of which were fixed. He did not fix them, as that would cost approximately \$2400 for 3. Now he has 6 cats. By a stroke of luck, a free neuter spot opened up at the Brooklyn Cat Cafe. He made the long early morning commute from the Bronx to Brooklyn to neuter 1 male cat. He still has 5 cats to fix and may have even more in about 2 months. A nursing mother cat can get pregnant. He cannot afford to neuter 5 cats, and they may end up on the street.

This is just one example of a problem that could occur as a result of lack of low cost spay and neuter services in NYC. It is time for the city to step up. A low cost clinic in Flatbush should serve as a model.

It would be ideal if the city could subsidize low or no cost spay/neuter services at all private vets. The city should also cover the cost of teaching vets to perform high volume spay and neuter, as many are not trained in this procedure.

In the 21st Century, it is time to get the exploding cat population under control.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

April Goldberg

As a person who feeds and has rescued several stray cats in Brooklyn over the years, I have seen firsthand how the absence of any program to deal with homeless cats is leading to an unmanageable situation. It only takes one unneutered male and one unspayed female cat to proliferate into dozens of unneutered and unspayed cats. Ignoring the problem will not make it go away. Add to that the lack of resources for pet owners who are unable to obtain affordable vet care or pet friendly housing and the result is even more homeless cats on the streets. Some sort (any sort) of program that at the very least makes spay/neuter affordable would go a long way in managing this situation. There is a small army of people out there who are willing and able to do trap neuter release on the cats on the street, but there is a severe lack of options for them to get spay/neuter services that are in any way affordable. It cannot be that difficult to put together some program to help with this- just like homeless people, homeless cats do not ask to be homeless and should not be punished for a system that has failed them.

Aron Shevis

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Ashleigh Rashid <ashleighrashid@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 17, 2024 9:24 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Spay/neuter funding

[REDACTED]

Hello,

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Signed,  
Ashleigh Rashid

New York City Council  
Committee on Health  
250 Broadway  
New York, NY 10007

September 5, 2024

Re: City Funding for High-Volume, Low-Cost Vet Care

Esteemed Council Members,

My name is Ashley Carter, and I am a cat rescuer in the Bronx. In 2019 at age 25, I found two sick kittens playing on a busy street. I picked them up without resources or a plan. Afterward, I called three City animal agencies for assistance, none could help. It wasn't until I drove an hour North into Westchester County that I found assistance. I secured medical care and loving homes for the kittens. To this day, I have never *once* been aided by a City-funded animal agency.

I have poured hundreds of hours and \$10,000 of my own money into rescue. In rain and snow, at 2 PM and 2AM, I have been on the streets rescuing the City's coldest, hungriest, sickest, & *littlest* residents.

Here is what it's currently like out there:

- Strays endure blistering colds, devastating injuries, and death by starvation
  - Overwhelmed citizens have taken to poisoning cats as a form of "population control"
  - People keep "breeder cats" and sell their babies for \$20 a pop
  - Reliance on private vetting has pushed many of us into financial turmoil
  - And warmer winters means more kittens and more newborns found frozen to death.
- There's also been an increase in friendly, abandoned cats; Meanwhile, there are less spay/neuter appointments

And this is not just an animal issue. To do our work, we rely on good-hearted New Yorkers who provide food and shelter to strays. Members of the public come to me *desperate* for help; they can't get appointments and can't afford to feed their pets and colonies. Despite wanting to help, I've had to start turning these people away.

As an unemployed person, it shouldn't be on me to expend resources solving a municipal problem—I didn't create the problem. But I am willing to continue doing so because it's the right thing to do and I *know* spay/neuter works—I just need more support. The welfare of these animals *is* the City's responsibility. Why should volunteers carry this burden just because we did the right thing and showed these animals compassion? Without Council interference, NYC will have a massive issue on their hands. Please help us help this City.

Thank You.

Ashley Carter

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Ashley Smouter <ashleydsmouter@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:30 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Allocate funding for affordable vet care

[REDACTED]

NYC council,

I have worked as a volunteer in animal rescue for 5 years. We are beyond capacity and have more animals than we can care for.

The majority of our problems could be solved by helping control the over population with spay and neutering. There are a lot of great pet parents who simply can't afford it, and often end up with litters of puppies or kittens who eventually end up in our crowded shelters.

Another issue is the cost of living that everyone is facing. Many people who love and want to keep their pets can not afford it. By providing affordable veterinary care, these people can keep their beloved pets. That is best case for the human, and the animal whose choice is to stay with their family.

Please provide substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay and neuter clinics and affordable veterinary care to help rescues and people in need.

Rescues provide lifesaving support and the financial burden is huge and depends heavily on donations.

Please help be part of the solution!

Ashley Smouter

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Athena Baer <athenabaer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 11:04 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]

[REDACTED]

I urge City government to fund neuter care for pets of New York residents unable to afford said care.  
A. Baer , retired accountant

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Buff Goddess <buffgoddessathena@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:29 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] New York resident seeking resources for the animals!  
**Attachments:** 20240916\_152623.jpg

[REDACTED]

Let's help the animals please!! They cannot help themselves. They deserve better.

This city helps addicts and non-Americans.

Let's not fall short on helping God's creatures 🙏.

Sincerely,  
Athena Lee New York city resident.

[‘A solvable problem’: Brooklyn’s animal rescuers say city-funded veterinary clinics could help end shelter crisis](#)  
• [Brooklyn Paper](#)

[Why It’s So Hard to Find a Veterinarian These Days - The Atlantic](#)

Dear City Council of NYC,

I adopt strays that originated from the streets of New York, little New Yorkers. As a TNR Certified cat rescuer by training, I educated myself and collaborated sometimes with rescuers informally to help stray cats. What we do as individuals to donate, volunteer and adopt is not enough. We need City funding to increase.

There are many small rescuers that do great work and collaborate with the ASPCA and Humane Society, they need funding to help street cats and kittens to get vetting affordably.

The current situation of stray cats is overwhelming for shelters in part to the high cost of affordable vet care. People surrender their animals because of the costs \*in part. There needs to be more vets and vet tech workers to supply the need for more personnel in the profession. There needs to be some attention here for the years ahead as more vets are retiring than graduating and the situation is increasing, and the shortages and costs will worsen.

Flatbush Cats is an excellent resource and model for what great New Yorkers do to help NY cats.

People would keep their pet if they could afford to Vet them, and adopting would increase if pets were affordable to vet. I know a senior who does not vaccinate her cat because she does not have the money.

Please help by defraying the cost of vetting with services to those that cannot afford, to the nonprofits on the front line and to services they provide to reduce the population and help people to adapt.

There may be exemplary model cat rescue, neutering methods and systems in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles or the like that work with research and modification to fit NYC.

PLEASE HELP with affordable vet care with subsidy to the most in need.

Thank you,

Audrey Epstein, M.S. Ed., MPA

████████████████████ New York, NY 10028  
████████████████████

Dear members of City Council,

I attended the hearing on September 13<sup>th</sup>, and would like to thank you for what seemed to be a sincere concern about the state of animal welfare in New York city. I appreciate your attention to the very dire situation as well as your willingness to listen to the voices of everyday New Yorkers like myself who have found themselves (somewhat unwittingly) deep in the world of rescue, overwhelmed, simply because I could not bear to see abject animals suffering on the street without trying to do something about it.

I would like to first echo the sentiments of all my fellow rescuers who testified in person this past Friday – I agree that the number one most crucial thing that can be done to address the issues at hand would be to provide free or low-cost vet care (specifically spay and neuter services.)

But I also hope this hearing can be the start of a larger conversation, an ongoing dialogue about improving the state of animal welfare in our city – as mentioned, the situation is dire and it will require a multi-faceted response. There are myriad horrible issues that I would love to see addressed in a meaningful way – the plight of carriage horses, dogs (as well as cats/bait animals) used and abused in dog fighting rings, wet markets scattered all over the city that not only keep and handle animals in exceedingly inhumane ways, but also pose real, significant health risks to the (human) citizens of this city - and really the world at large given what we know about the spread of zoonotic diseases.

However, I will focus in this testimony on the stray cat situation in the city, as that is where I have real, first-hand experience. I have rescued animals throughout my life, occasionally, following a mantra of sorts that my mother instilled in me from a young age – if someone/something crosses your path and needs help, you help them. However, at a certain point I realized that this was not an adequate response to what is a full-blown crisis of cat overpopulation and pet abandonment in this city. So I began to rescue in a much more intense and proactive way in 2020, and it has been an eye-opening and honestly life-altering experience (in ways both good and bad). We have seen cats hit by cars, mauled by pit bulls, poisoned by cruel people, left trapped in apartments with no food or water, emaciated cats starving to death on the street, injured and sick cats, kittens frozen to death. It all takes a real emotional toll. The flip side of this is that I have also met countless kindhearted heroes in every neighborhood - rescuers and community members who have been rescuing or feeding the cats on their block and neighborhood - doing far more than I have done, for far longer, people who have devoted their whole lives to helping. I will use a specific example of both the severity of the issue and the extreme dedication and efforts of a few individuals. One group I volunteer with focuses their efforts in the Bronx, and since the beginning of 2022, we have rescued/trapped approximately 150 cats from a 3 block radius in Hunts Point. This has left our small group totally overwhelmed, with some of our rescuers forced to take in 10, even 20 cats and kittens at a time as we have nowhere else for them to go – risking eviction, straining their mental well-being and personal relationships. We have spent over \$50,000 at just one of our vets since spring of 2022 -

which doesn't include many emergency vet visits, or specialized surgeries done elsewhere, or the costs of food and supplies for all our animals. This comes from donations from other kindhearted people but also from our own resources (I personally have depleted my savings and spent at least \$10,000 of my own money on my rescue efforts since I began). Despite our efforts, there are still about 60 cats in this 3 block radius, spread across 4 or 5 colonies. There is one incredibly selfless man named Juan who cares for all of these cats in his neighborhood – he loves them, spends time every single day feeding them, and while we help support him financially when we are able to, has been doing so out of his own pocket for years.

What is perhaps most incredible about this situation is that from the 150 cats, only 5 were truly feral and had to be returned/released - all others we have adopted into homes. These are **friendly** cats, either pets that have been dumped, or their offspring, rescued young enough to socialize. Which highlights a huge issue - pet abandonment in the city. It is not right or fair that Juan, one kind individual, has to work so hard every day to feed them all, that rescuers are burdened to the brink of it taking over their entire life - sacrificing relationships, jobs, etc, because they can't bear to see animals suffering, while others in the community contribute to the problem tenfold. Of course, sometimes it is a heartbreaking decision that comes from a lack of choices when someone gets sick or loses their housing. For this I have deep sympathy (although those who really care usually take the time to surrender their animal to ACC instead of putting it out on the street). But in many cases it is simply the irresponsible dumping cats when they are no longer cute kittens, or when the unfixed male cats begin to mark or spray, or the unfixed females go into heat (because of the owner's resistance to sterilizing their pets initially). Again contributing to the problem exponentially as these young cats go on to reproduce at astonishing rates for years. So I would strongly encourage the ongoing conversation to explore what can be done to educate people, with sensitivity - about spay and neuter, about responsible pet ownership, to discourage and where it is appropriate to hold people accountable for abandoning and dumping of animals, and of course to provide additional support for members of each community who try so very hard to help.

Thank you again for your attention to animal welfare in the city broadly. As one of the independent rescuers pointed out on Friday, this is not simply about the welfare of animals...it has become a question of the welfare of the people living in the city too.

Best regards,  
Augusta Loomis



New York, NY 10021



[REDACTED]

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**From:** azka agha <azkaagha97@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 9:25 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] written testimony to the New York City Council on the State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Hello,

As a New York City resident and pet parent, I'd like to urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. This is extremely important and overlooked. Better care and affordable costs for Neutering would help shelters overcrowding and ultimately be a good thing for the city as well.

Best,  
Azka A.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Barbara Beth <babethsemail@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 6:16 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee hearing

[REDACTED]

My name is Barbara Beth. I help rescue and also care for homeless street cats in District 40. (My council member is Rita Joseph) These precious sentient beings are homeless at no fault of their own.

### **Stray Cats are a Quality of Life Issue**

I can't leave my house without seeing stray cats - starving, injured, maimed, unhealthy cats. I hear them yowling and fighting in my backyard. The problem is getting worse even though there are concerned neighbors who are trying to do something about it. We want to get them spayed and neutered but we can't access adequate affordable services. This is a municipal problem and we need the city to step in and address it. Offloading the problem onto privately funded organizations and private residents like us isn't working. We don't have nearly as many low-cost spay/neuter options needed to solve this problem. Let's make it possible for pet owners to keep their pets instead of abandoning them. Without spay/neuter a cat is not a practical indoor pet - the males spray and the females go into heat. These nuisance behaviors put them at high risk for abandonment. All the abandoned pets I find are unfixed. They don't have street survival skills and we're finding them in bad condition, sometimes frozen in fear.

### **Financial Burden on Rescuers**

As a rescuer, my focus has always been on reducing the outdoor cat population. Most outdoor cats don't have caretakers and their lives can be brutal and short. Stopping that cycle of misery is my mission. Now that vet costs have skyrocketed and pet friendly, affordable housing is difficult to find, people are abandoning their pets in massive numbers. These animals are unfixed and often found in bad shape - sick or injured. Every other cat I find is an abandoned pet that needs medical treatment on top of spay/neuter. And low-cost spay/neuter resources are at an all time low. I can't afford to help every cat in need that I see. I have to tell heart-warming stories on instagram and beg people to give me money, or donate to my gofundme. We're getting into credit card debt, can't save for the future and can't improve our circumstances. The burden of rescue work is physically exhausting and emotionally draining. If the city could fund high-volume, low-cost spay-neuter, then that would help relieve the crushing financial burden we're under.

### **The City's Responsibility**

Aside from a chronically underfunded shelter system, NYC offers no animal welfare services, relying instead on an army of volunteers to solve the public problem of outdoor cats with our own private funds and free time. Hundreds of tiny one-person animal rescue organizations and independent trappers are stepping into this vacuum in city services, to reduce the number of outdoor cats and end the cycle of misery of life on the streets. We do this while our neighbors breed cats to sell kittens, while cat hoarders get evicted and the cats either get trapped inside and starve or released to the street where they can add to the problem, while sadistic people find abandoned pets and abuse them for entertainment. There's so much that needs to be done to create a city that is better for both animals and humans. We have no legal frameworks to address hoarding cases. No

collaboration between city agencies if a box of kittens is found next to a trash can on garbage collection day. No city leadership period.

It's never too late to move from a city that's backwards to become an innovative leader. We can start addressing the root causes of the outdoor cat overpopulation by funding and launching a city-funded spay/neuter program that will provide free or discounted spay/neuter appointments to all New Yorkers, so that residents don't have to abandon their pets, and rescuers won't have to be responsible for spaying and neutering every animal in New York City.

**Rescue Stories - (keep the focus on what the city should be doing)**

I started doing rescue work in January 2020 because a precious pregnant cat, who is now my furbaby, showed up at a colony I was helping to feed. She was very friendly and got pregnant at 6 months old on the street and had her litter at 8 months old. She was a baby herself and more than likely dumped by some heartless human. There were no city services to help outdoor cats so I looked online and found neighborhood volunteers at. I was surprised that a city the size of New York doesn't have any animal services - no spay/neuter program, no access to affordable veterinary healthcare for abandoned cats. We had to hunt around for a program or organization to help this cat.

The city needs to at least subsidize spay and neutering services to make it affordable if not free for people. Also provide health insurance that allows for pre-existing conditions, like human insurance and/or make vet care affordable. Another major issue is allowing landlords to deny pets in rental housing. It is absolutely insane that people can deny pets in housing. Cats and dogs do a lot less damage than human children, who are not denied housing. Pets are family members and people pay rent, currently, extremely high rent and should never be denied housing because they have non-human family members. Cats and dogs are family. Please pass a law to permanently end the landlord's ability to deny pets in rentals.

Thank you,  
Barbara Beth  
[REDACTED]  
Brooklyn, NY 11226

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“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,

Nothing is going to get better. It's not.”

- Dr. Seuss, The Lorax

Barbara Langlois

Spec Ed teacher and

Individual Cat rescue

Dear council members,

I went to the meeting at 10:00AM last Friday the 13, 2024, and saw many people I know and saw the true life testimony. In 2019 I became aware of cats on Fuller Street in the Bronx that were pregnant and two had given birth to kittens and they were skinny and coming down with upper respiratory infections. I got 2 Bronx Women to help me trap the kittens first, and brought them home to begin their care. They all had fleas, worms and parasites that would have eaten them alive from the inside and outside, and all were getting Upper respiratory infections and their third eyelids were showing. I housed them in a pop up tent in my living room, so keep separate from my 2 personal cats and several rescues. Back then I knew Stephen Cameron who worked at ASPCA and sendt him pictures and he made appt to do intake, but 3 were too fearful and Aaggressive to be taken, so I worked on them for another 3 days and they calmed down. We were lucky they were under 2 months old, and all were tken by ASPCA to get homes. That endeavor took time ,money,and a group of 4 friends to help flea bathe and socialize the kittens.. I started an Instagram BronxColonykittens, but got too busy to keep posting. The people on Fuller street were very mixed, Most of the Pakistani families did not like cats, the Superintendents did not like them, and there were kindly lady feeding them where and when they could. One woman, Connie Black really helped and held the traps as we got the 26 cats (we are now friends and she manages the

stable registered colony of 7 to 10 cats) and another cat rescuer, out in Bellerose Queens held them in her garage until the spay neuter van could take them, then we picked them up. It was a complicated process and we had problems. One cat, Poseidon was so terrified he tore out his front nails and we put him with our vet, Dr Painter, to heal for 4 weeks before he was safe to release. One escaped the cage in Queens. Several were fostered and adopted through Anjellicle cats. Only one cat was neutered out of all of them, a gentle black cat we released and we think he was an outdoor housecat. I would go up before work at 6:30 that summer to try to get a pretty pregnant cat on the next street ( cats are fluid) but my efforts were sabotaged several times by a mentally ill woman who roamed all night finding and feeding cats and kittens. She would sometimes take the kittens home for a day then return them ( she said) She continues to be a problem to the trapping of cats because she feeds them before even though she is asked not to. We have a saying “ you cant trap a cat that isn’t hungry”. As responsible colony caretakers when we get a report of a new cat that shows up for feeding, we try to trap them. One such cat is finally coming around and can be petted after a year with a dedicated foster. Another cat appeared sick and was not seen again. Street cats really suffer and I cant turn away.

I have a long and storied past with cats, too many stories to tell here, but I try to help whenever I am asked. I have personally seen the mental stress and suffering of those involved in cat rescue. Meredith Weiss of Neighborhood cats Trained certified me in TNR in 2006 and I have trapped and taught others, in the Bronx and in Brooklyn. Meredith passed away this year and I miss her, she always said I

wish we had more data on cats. I think we do now that the feeders and trappers are sharing info. We need more data and I hope that it will come when the city sets up its free and low cost S/N for cats, (and also Dogs. ) The cat problem is a human problem, we are stewards of our domesticated animals who fall into homelessness through no fault of their own. They are preyed upon too, one Bronx colony had to relocate because someone in a building would shoot them as they ate at their feeding stations at night . I followed up with the aspca and police unit on animal cruelty, I recovered the dead body of a cat who was euth due to a shattered hip because they needed evidence- the bb gun bullets were there. That was an ordeal I had to sneak the body out of the rescuers driveway, she is hated by neighbors, in the dark. In the Bronx. I took an Uber and kept the body on my fire escape until I could drop it off at aspca. Two more cats were limping and we brought them to ACC, yes bb gun bullets again but they are living with them inside their bodies. Both cats were treated for URI and then fixed, determined to be feral and released by ACC at the colony site. We saw them, thank you ACC.

This is one area ,one period of time , I have all the documentation pictures texts vet records and bills. I was able to do Fuller Street Colony because I had ACC and Aspca support. Now that is gone.

When I visit Fuller street colony and see the cats, they have names, I am proud, but Every winter I wonder who will survive, even though we provide food and habitats for them.

To the people who screamed at me for dealig with the cats I say this. Yes, a few cats. Do you have Rats? NO. not a one. Got Cats No Rats.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** BARRY WEINBAUM <barry.weinbaum@verizon.net>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 11:21 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] NYC Animal Shelters in crisis

[REDACTED]

Pets are very much a part of the fabric and heart of New York City. The current overcrowding and lack of resources at our city's animal shelters is untenable.

As a life-long (73 years) New Yorker, I urge the city government to allocate more funding for the shelters and the resources that can alleviate this dire situation. PLEASE make affordable veterinary care for New Yorkers in need (including rescuers, pet fosterers, and pet parents) and high-volume, low-cost neutering programs a reality by allocating urgently-needed, substantial funding.

Thank you for your attention to this,  
Barry Weinbaum

[REDACTED]  
New York, NY 10021

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Info <info@greenpointcats.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:16 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee Hearing

[REDACTED]

My name is Becky Wisdom and I run a nonprofit cat rescue organization called Greenpoint Cats. Like a lot of rescuers, I first started doing this work because I couldn't ignore the many free-roaming and abandoned cats and kittens all living - and dying - within blocks of my home. My inability to turn my back on this kind of suffering, and my commitment to helping my local community is how I became part of New York City's volunteer workforce of animal rescuers.

Sadly, my personal values, compassion and care are not enough to solve this crisis. I am working around the clock , often in response to the many desperate pleas for help from the community, and my work is barely making a dent.

We are now in a full blown animal overpopulation crisis in NYC due to the lack of low cost, city-funded spay neuter services, the lack of enforcement of current laws of spay and neuter of free roaming pets. (including the many cats in warehouses and bodegas and other "working ca" settings )

Ive met too many pet owners and caretakers who want to do the right thing by spay/neutering the animals in their care but simply can't find an affordable and accessible option. I regularly speak with Good Samaritans who thought they were doing a kind thing by bringing home a few kittens or rescuing some local cats, not realizing that without spay and neuter surgery, cats are not great indoor pets. Male kittens grow up to be males that spray, or females that go into heat, and a home with just one unsterilized male and one unsterilized female will inevitably lead to more cats - many of which end up abandoned.

As a rescuer, I have access to a very small number of spay/neuter appointments every month that are intended for stray and free-roaming cats. Allocating those few spots to the thousands of cats needing spay / neuter is like bailing out the titanic with a teaspoon. And yet, I do what I can and also extend whatever appointments I can spare to pet owners who are coming very close to the decision to abandon their pet rather than surrendering to an already overcrowded city shelter.

It's time for New York to recognize this crisis and do its part by prioritizing the funding of spay/neuter services to all New Yorkers rather than offloading the problem to exhausted rescuers like myself. This is a city problem that has been ignored for decades and now it's a full blown crisis that this volunteer workforce can not solve. We ask the city to finally step up and provide essential city funding for this city problem.

Becky Wisdom  
[REDACTED]

██████████  
Brooklyn, NY 11222  
██████████

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**Greenpoint Cats** | [greenpointcats.org](http://greenpointcats.org) | **Adoptable cats & kittens**  
Follow our Instagram for updates on our work **@Greenpoint\_Cats**



**From:** Bella Donna <savingbelladonna@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:54 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue - Testimony

## **I am a volunteer street animal rescuer and I have saved over 2,600 cats and kittens from the streets of NYC since 2014.**

When I started to rescue, I thought I would save a few kittens or a cat here and there. I had no idea the depth of sadness and the breadth of the problem, all over the streets of our five boroughs. The problem is not just unfixed cats making too many more cats...it's also domesticated cats who have been dumped. And dealing with pet owners who run outside to dump their problems on you when they see you carrying traps.

Along with so many lives saved, I have put over 150,000 miles on my car, spent countless hundreds of thousands on food, medication, supplies, vet bills, emergency care.... thousands on spays & neuters to prevent those rescue animals from making more animals. Most of that spent money was collected from my begging on social media for help, and the rest came from my pocket.

We are so proud of all the progress we have made at our main colony in Hunts Point, Bronx. We have rescued over 150 cats and kittens from a 3 block radius and that has taken us 2.5 years because of a dearth of resources and support. We still have 60 animals waiting for help. This does not include intaking animals from other areas like kittens found in car engines and cats who have been hit by cars or are suffering from obvious medical conditions - which we are again, forced to pay for.

We provide food to our many low-income colony caretakers. We help low income families fix their pets and we provide food for them. We also support other small grass-roots cat rescue groups in any way we can.

This morning I spent 2 hours calling vets looking desperately for affordable vet care and spays and neuters for our 23 current rescue felines who need help. I found no help. So I spent full-cost \$350 to help our suffering cat. This is basically every day of a rescuers life.

Every long time cat rescuer I know has depleted their life savings and in some cases, their retirement...all to help homeless cats. What selfless heros.

Without intervention from the city in the near future, we will be forced to close our rescue. The colony which we KILLED ourselves to manage will blow up to over 210 animals by next fall. Without fail.

Please put the suffering of these innocent creatures to an end. They did not ask for this horrible life. This city has stealth, strong, resourceful volunteers like us ready and happy to do the physical work of rescue, transport, fostering, adopting. Help us pay for this all and boy what a magical city it could be.

IT IS OVERDUE.

End their suffering.

Sincerely,  
Belladonna & Friends Rescue

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Narisa Hussain <narisa.hussain@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:15 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony for animal rescue

[REDACTED]

As a pet parent and an independent rescuer in Woodhaven, NY 11421 neighborhood, I believe that it is critical that the city government allocate substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable vet care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Animals deserves to be fed and cared for. They deserve the same justice as every other living being. We must put a stop to animal cruelty and dumping. The current animal crisis in NYC can be decreased if pet owners can afford their pets food and vet care. And rescuers can help a larger number of homeless animals if veterinary care is provided at an affordable cost.

Sincerely,  
Bibi Narisa Hussain

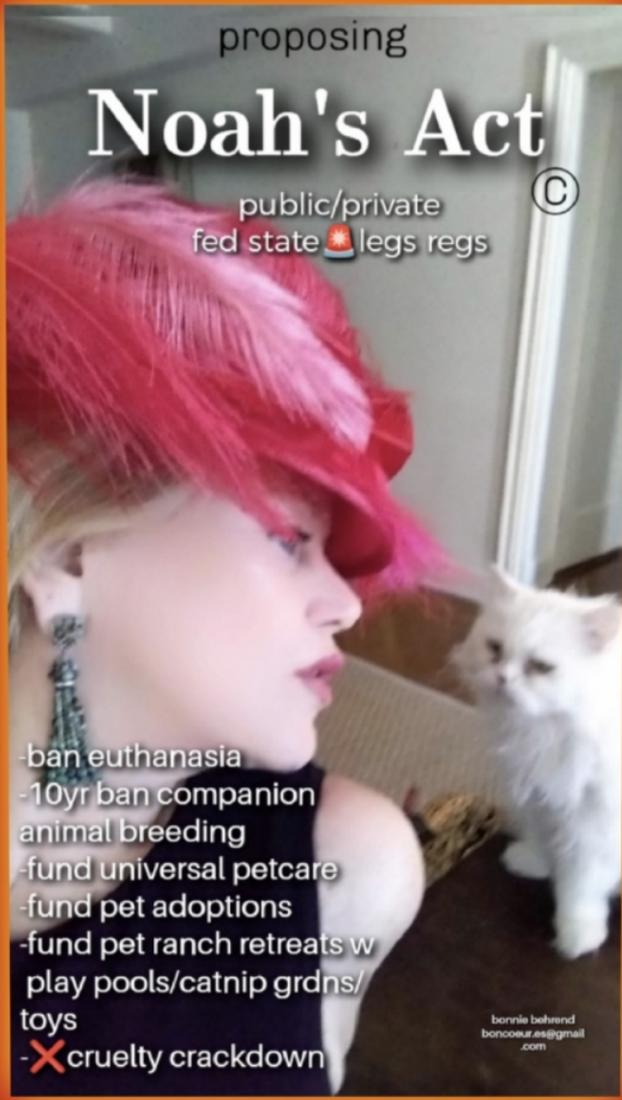
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NYC COUNCIL PROPOSAL  
 COMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
 FRIDAY 9/13 10AM  
 CITY HALL

- BAN EUTHANASIA
- BAN BREEDING 10 YR
- UNIVERSAL PETCARE
- FUND PET ADOPTIONS
- FUND SHELTER@HOME
- FUND PET ACRES
- ~~X~~ CRACKDOWN
- ON CRUELTY WITH
- MORE STAFFING



Donor Pets on Posters

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[REDACTED]

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**From:** BBurns <bridgethelenburns@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:36 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Affordable Vet Care and Spay/Neuter for NYC

[REDACTED]

Hello,

As a longtime Brooklynite and pet owner, I urge the city to consider allocating funding to support the efforts of rescuers, pet owners and those in need. The affection and company of animals knows no income limits and it would be great to provide affordable services to those unable to cover the essential costs associated with spay/neuter... to keep stray populations under control. Thankfully there seems to be a grassroots movement to get stray animals housed, spayed and neutered, and this is very much needed, and we cannot expect this financial burden to fall on those who volunteer their services . It makes sense that there should be funding available to those who are making great strides in animal health. As a pet owner I have experienced the rising costs and corporatization of vet services and it seems to be skyrocketing. Pets and pet owners need help!

Bridget Burns  
Prospect Heights, BK 11238

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Brigid O'Dea <brigidodea@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 7:28 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Support for Funding High-Volume, Low-Cost Spay/Neuter and Affordable Veterinary Care

[REDACTED]

Dear Members of the City Council,

My name is Brigid O'Dea, and I am a TNR certified resident, and (former) pet owner deeply committed to the welfare of animals in our community. I am writing to urge you to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter services and affordable veterinary care for all New Yorkers, including rescuers and pet parents.

As you are aware, New York City is home to a vibrant and diverse population, and our animal companions are an integral part of many of our lives. However, despite the profound joy and companionship they bring, many pet owners and rescuers face significant barriers to accessing essential veterinary services. This often results in preventable suffering for animals and contributes to the overpopulation crisis in our shelters.

Investing in high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs is a critical step in addressing these issues. Spaying and neutering are proven to reduce the number of unwanted animals, decrease euthanasia rates, and enhance the overall health of our pets. By making these services affordable and accessible, we can prevent countless animals from ending up in shelters, where they may face uncertain futures.

In addition, affordable veterinary care is vital for maintaining the health and well-being of pets. Many New Yorkers, particularly those from low-income households, struggle to afford routine and emergency veterinary care. This can lead to untreated health issues, which not only cause unnecessary suffering but also result in higher costs for emergency interventions that could have been avoided with earlier care.

Providing substantial funding for these programs will have numerous benefits for our city:

1. **Reduced Animal Overpopulation:** By increasing access to spay/neuter services, we can effectively manage and reduce the number of animals in shelters.
2. **Improved Animal Health:** Affordable veterinary care ensures that pets receive timely treatment for health issues, leading to healthier animals and fewer public health concerns.
3. **Support for Rescuers and Pet Parents:** Many individuals and organizations dedicate their time and resources to rescuing and caring for animals. Financial support will enable them to continue their invaluable work without the added burden of high veterinary costs

I urge you to consider the far-reaching positive impacts that substantial funding for spay/neuter and affordable veterinary services will have on our community. By making this investment, we will take a significant step towards creating a more compassionate and equitable city for both people and their pets.

Personally, after the death of my beloved cat Taiki on 2023, I cannot afford to adopt again given the cost of veterinary care, as well as the overall inflation and increase in fixed costs that many New Yorkers, and Americans struggle with daily. I would love to welcome another cat into my home, but financially I cannot do it at this time.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to seeing our city take this crucial step towards improving the lives of animals, rescuers, veterinarians, and lovers of animals in this city.

Sincerely,

Brigid A. O'Dea



Brooklyn, NY 11215

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Brittany Feldman <brittany.feldman@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 10:49 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony

[REDACTED]

My name is Brittany Feldman, I live in Manhattan and I run Shelter Chic Animal Rescue, a nonprofit organization dedicated to finding homes for dogs and cats in need. We are a volunteer-run organization, and we've had to slow down our rescue efforts because our vet bills are astronomical and we cannot afford to take in these poor, innocent animals who are in desperate need of medical care. The local government must allocate funding for high volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for ANYONE who is in need, including pet owners and other nonprofit rescues.

The pet overpopulation crisis is so severe, and many innocent animals are dying because there is not enough room at shelters for them. Many people give up their beloved pets because they cannot afford them. They MUST have access to affordable vet care to prevent them giving up their animals. A huge way to prevent this as well is to have massive spay/neuter. The rescue community is trying to get the overpopulation under control, but it just takes two unfixed animals for the numbers to spiral.

Too many innocent animals are dying. Backyard breeding MUST be cracked down on. These poor animals are being forced to have litter after litter and these innocent puppies are ending up in the wrong people's hands. Dog fighting, animal abuse, all is out of control.

Please, DO SOMETHING. Us rescuers are trying our best to help, but we can only do so much. Stricter laws, enforcement of laws, affordable vet care, and a better shelter system for these innocent beings. We as a society are failing. We live in NYC, there is no excuse for dogs and cats to be suffering.

Brittany Feldman

Brittany Feldman  
Shelterchic.org  
Info@shelterchic.org

[REDACTED]

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**From:** theflyingcw@aol.com  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 8:43 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Spay neuter of stray cats in bklyn 90s

[REDACTED]

This problem is not new e.g. stray cats..because the colonies grow so quickly, it takes an army of people to get them trapped and then transport them to facilities that would be willing to spay/neuter. I did that both by myself, and with others in bklyn and queens in late 90s early 2000s. It is an ongoing humane issue that does not go away and requires both funding and personnel. Please consider appropriating funds to humanely take care of this worthwhile cause. I thank you.  
Sincerely,  
C. Watson

Regarding the Urgent Need for Affordable, Spay/Neuter, and Vet Services:

My name is Cally Rieman and I am a NYC resident concerned for the welfare of animals living on the streets of Brooklyn. I reside in District 47 and own a small business in Midtown, Manhattan.

We purchased our house in Bay Ridge in 2020 from an elderly couple who wanted to ensure that the 10 feral cats living in their backyard would be well cared for. We have upheld our promise but were surprised to discover that there were no city sponsored programs to help us care for these cats. We had to use private veterinarians with a rescue discount, which has proven to be extremely costly for a colony of this size. The highest cost being dental health upkeep.

A bigger surprise for us was that these cat colonies continue to grow over time. New stray cats started showing up at both our front and our back doors; mostly unneutered males including dumped friendlies and ferals, to most recently a 6-week old solo male kitten. Neighbors started contacting us every time a new cat showed up on our block. In less than 4 years, we have held 14 cats for recovery in our home. We did not choose this path but as kind-hearted citizens felt that it was a responsibility we must take on.

As a small business owner with a big heart, I have donated to over 20 NYC area based rescue groups in order to support their mission to end the cat crisis on our streets. And sadly, my financial contributions did not make much of a dent in this dire situation. I am one of thousands trying to cover the huge financial burden placed on Independent rescuers & rescue groups.

Every district needs a low cost spay & neuter and vet care facility as well an educational advocacy program. We have heard from so many neighbors that they simply cannot afford to care for their pets anymore or that is the main reason why they do want to help an animal off the street. We have also heard several neighbors state they do not want to spay/neuter their pet because they do not want to take away their ability to produce. Again, this is an educational issue and critical that the city issue proactive laws to ensure all animals are spay/neutered.

Another concern is the lack of enforceable laws regarding Bodega Cats. This is a known issue across Brooklyn that many Bodegas are actually breeding in their basements and giving the excess kittens away without any veterinarian care.

If there are states in the Northeast who have a shortage of adoptable pets, please consider establishing cross-state border programs that can move our excess of adoptable pets into good homes.

Thank you for taking the time to listen.

Cally Rieman  
76th Street/Bay Ridge

## Written Testimony for NYC Council Hearing on 9/13 from Carol McLoughlin

I have been a cat rescuer since 2001. I have been involved in TNR (trap-neuter-return) of community cats, fostering and placing for adoption cats and kittens and taking care of managed colonies for many years providing food, shelters and medical care. I am presently not affiliated with a rescue organization.

I am fortunate that I had the vast majority of cats in my colonies spayed or neutered years ago. I am also grateful to have financial resources.

Free or low cost spay/neuter for feral or rescued kittens and cats has become almost non-existent. It used to be difficult to get appointments at the ASPCA Community Cat S/N Clinics. Since the pandemic, it has become impossible to get an appointment for free S/N.

There needs to be alternatives to the ASPCA for free S/N for cat rescuers. The population of feral cats in NYC will only explode without these services. NYC needs to fund and provide S/N services

I am not aware of any low cost S/N services. Years ago there were discount certificates available for rescuers to use at participating vets for lower cost S/N.

Since the pandemic the cost of cat food has risen dramatically. At first there was a shortage; then there was a permanent huge price increase. I buy large quantities of the most reasonable cat food for my outside cats. The cost of this food has risen an average of 60% since 2020. This has probably contributed to increased surrenders to shelters or abandoning cats outside.

There has never been any provision for medical care for feral cats. I have trapped cats when they are injured or ill and taken them for treatment at vets at my own expense. Cats in managed colonies need access to low cost urgent medical when needed. The Humane Society of NY did an excellent job treating 3 of my feral cats with fractured legs and saved their lives. The HSNY, as a nonprofit, provides low cost S/N and medical services but they are overstretched and it is very difficult to obtain an appointment.

Years ago there were trainings, events and networking for cat rescuers; usually held at the ASPCA offices. But that has dwindled to occasional on-line trainings.

Over my past 23 years, services and city wide leadership from non-profit cat rescue organizations has dwindled due to high demand, a lack of resources and burn out.

It is time for NYC government to provide funding and services for the humane treatment of community cats

Carol McLoughlin, [REDACTED], Whitestone, NY 11357

Greetings,

I have been the caretaker of a feral cat colony in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx for over 12 years. It was only because of the ASPCA's free spay/neuter services that I was able to help reduce the population of stray cats in Mott Haven and improve the lives of the animals served. In addition, I was able to help neighbors and the local Saint Jerome's Church to get animals in their care spayed and neutered, too. Altogether, I've gotten over 75 animals spayed or neutered with the ASPCA. Ours is the poorest congressional district in the country, and many people here could not have afforded to have a pet or help reduce the homeless animal population if not for free or low cost spay/neuter services.

For those in a middle-income bracket (where I'm lucky to be now, though that wasn't always the case), there is also a need for more sliding-scale veterinary services. I have two indoor pet cats, and have had great difficulty finding affordable care for them. A routine check-up for me for a senior cat was over \$500.

Please vote to increase funding for spay/neuter services in NYC!

Thank you,

Carol Zakaluk  
Mott Haven, The Bronx

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Caroline Iz <cari1106@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:48 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Written testimony

[REDACTED]

Please i urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume low-cost spay/neuter, and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need including pet parents !

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Carolyn Everett <cdebythesea@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 10, 2024 1:20 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Stop unnecessarily drugging these animals!

[REDACTED]

NYACC is making them sick with these narcotics.  
Try playing soothing music and get them more exercise if you want them to calm down.  
Who wants to be locked up in a prison cell 23.5 hours a day?  
Have some compassion!  
Carolyn Everett

Sent from my iPad

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Catherine Kim <kim.j.catherine@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:34 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Spay/neuter programs

[REDACTED]

Hello,  
My name is Catherine, I live in Crown Heights and am a pet parent, foster and animal lover. I'm writing to urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for New Yorkers in need, including rescuers and pet parents. Funding spay/neuter programs can save many lives and end the endless cycle of animals born on the street, who often pass painfully from accidents, illness or cruelty. We urgently need these programs to substantially lessen unnecessary and preventable animal suffering.

Thanks,  
Catherine

Dear City Council,

Thank you so much for taking the time to hear from all of the fellow rescues, volunteers, fosters, and concerned citizens who have been affected by the animal crisis in NYC.

My name is Catherine Lopez. I am a pet parent and rescuer.

I have been rescuing animals since 2021. I was sixteen, and a dying stray mother cat trusted me with her litter of ten kittens. I reached out to rescues on Instagram for help. The rescues provided assistance and taught me about TNR.

I am now twenty years old, and I am struggling to help all of the abandoned and stray animals that come my way. I would not be able to save animals without the help of independent rescues and volunteers.

There are over 500,000 strays in this city, and rescuers and volunteers are experiencing emotional and financial burnout due to inadequate resources. It takes a village, and the city of New York is not doing its part. While affordable vet care is the top priority, there needs to be a city-wide TNR policy and program. I have personally spoken to many people in my community about the benefits of TNR. There is an overwhelming amount of people who want to help, but simply can't afford to. I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you,

Catherine Lopez

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Cathryn Swan <cathryn.be@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 13, 2024 1:18 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony - Health Committee Hearing Today 9/13 on State of Animals NYC

[REDACTED]

Hi NY City Council Health Committee,

Thank you for holding this very important hearing today on the state of rescue and animals as well as the Animal Care Centers (ACC) in New York City.

A lot of excellent points were raised, questions were asked, and I appreciate the in depth scrutiny by your committee of the city agencies and ACC.

I am sure animal advocates and rescuers will make many great points. I'd like to say as someone who has often individually rescued outdoor cats (and birds!) over the years and paid for it on my own that a discount rate by vets perhaps subsidized by the city would be appreciated. Or if the vets would do this on their own. I know discounts are sometimes done for rescue groups, but, as an individual, I could have used the assistance.

I think it is outrageous that the Brooklyn ACC was shut down to be upgraded without a temporary holding place IN Brooklyn and thinking that ... voila! ... the new Queens shelter would suffice. This is not only far from Brooklyn but also makes no sense. In addition, the Brooklyn ACC in East New York is somewhat out of the way and having another location in Brooklyn, perhaps downtown Brooklyn, would be something that would make sense in general.

I do think individuals and staff at ACC care about the animals but, still, despite the numbers the management states, far too many healthy animals are being killed. In addition, beautiful friendly animals like Jorj, a beautiful, older cat whose 'owner'/guardian died and was friendly as can be, got sick and was euthanized. We don't know what her care looked like but that's terrible. Same thing happens with dogs who are there too long and are just so scared, too often they are killed.

This city as a whole is filled with people with so much money. Since ACC can also do fundraising, how is there not more money to work with? Of course, the city should be funding this but I am equally surprised that they are not able to get more money to work with from wealthy people.

It was a good point raised by one of the Council Members (I believe CM Brannan first mentioned it) how ACC never asks for additional funding at budget hearings. That's outrageous since clearly they need more but perhaps, because they are under the aegis of the Department of Health, they don't want to state it.

Recently, I had to leave my home of 17 years in Brooklyn after my landlord died. I've been boarding my 3 cats with a cat boarder during this time while I stay with a friend. It's now over six months and the cost of boarding

is more than I can afford now. I contacted the ACC for help as I saw that in Philadelphia there is somewhat of a 'safety net' program where cats can go to foster homes until the person finds an apartment. The person at ACC asked me to call her. I felt hopeful ... I thought maybe they had a system in place that I was not aware of. They don't want people to relinquish their animals so maybe they had a network of temporary fosters, or access to low cost boarding. When I contacted the Community Case manager, all she had to offer was to text ME a list of places to call. When I looked up the first one, they stopped offering services in March 2024. The second one, PAWS, has no such program. Why are they making people jump through hoops? They should at least be sure the resources they are providing, if they can't do more than that, are accurate. I felt such despair when she told me she was going to send me a list because I felt it was going to be fruitless. Of course, it was nice that she made personal contact but that's just sad.

I could write more but those are the main things right now to bring to your attention.

Thank you SO much.

Sincerely,

Cathryn Swan  
Brooklyn, New York

Dear New York City Council,

My wife and I are hard working self employed musicians living in Sunnyside, Queens. For the past four years, we have been heavily engaged with trying to help the stray cat population in our neighborhood. We feed a colony of cats in our backyard daily, at our own expense. We also contribute to feeding an additional colony closer to 39th avenue, and at times a third colony on 43rd street.

Taking care of all these cats is a major financial burden, even with the help of other locals who contribute to feeding the same groups. With the high cost of rent in New York City, we can barely make ends meet here despite working five to six days a week, often for stretches of close to two weeks straight sometimes in the summers. As you can imagine, it is tough to fund the feeding of these neighborhood cats as we barely ever have money for anything more than paying rent and bills.

Despite the efforts of some of our neighbors to get these neighborhood cats fixed, new cats are turning up in our neighborhood constantly. When a pocket of the neighborhood becomes known for a feral cat colony, cruel people often abandon their cats there, often unfixed, exacerbating the problem enormously. On several occasions, we have witnessed cats being "dumped" late at night from a double parked car, leaving the poor animal to fend for themselves among an already overpopulated colony which also competes with other local animals such as raccoons for food and water.

Additionally, the state of local veterinary care is very poor. Reputable veterinarians are rare in Sunnyside and Woodside, the local ones often engage in fraudulent misdiagnosis of animals health conditions for profit, and have also been known to be so incompetent as to accidentally kill healthy pets. Our neighborhood friends who assist us with cat care also work full time jobs, and thus have little time to assist with feline emergencies, which is made even more difficult by having to drive long distances to get the proper health care and spay/neutering services for these poor cats.

In short, if our city council were to allocate some additional funding for low cost veterinary care and spay/neutering in the boroughs, it would be greatly beneficial to our community. These neighborhood cats are innocent, loving creatures with hard lives, and the weight of taking care of them and keeping their population in check should not have to fall entirely on the shoulders of overworked, financially struggling volunteers such as ourselves and our neighbors.

Thank you for your time reading this,

with sincere regards, Charlie Judkins & Lauren Sansaricq

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Charlotte Frunzescu <cfrunzescu@newscorp.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 8:47 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Affordable Veterinary Care NY

[REDACTED]

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume / low cost spay/neuter for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Sincerely,  
Charlotte Frunzescu

Charlotte Frunzescu  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Office of Katie Perdomo, Deputy Head of Human Resources  
Office of Marco Diaz, Global Head of Benefits  
Office of Ruth Altchek, Global Director of ESG Initiatives  
Office of Kelly Holmes, Global Head of Talent Development  
Office of Erin Conroy, Global Head of Compensation

**#IStandWithEvan**

To learn more about Evan Gershkovich, our colleague unjustly detained in Russia, [click here](#).

*News Corp*

O: 212-416-4275

M: 347-563-2634

E: [cfrunzescu@newscorp.com](mailto:cfrunzescu@newscorp.com)

A: 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY, 10036

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Charlotte Rhodes <crhodes203@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:18 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Cats in need

[REDACTED]

To Whom It May Concern,

Please help support and increase funding for spay and neuter programs as well as affordable veterinary care in NYC.

Thank you,  
Charlotte

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Charlotte Rhodes <crhodes203@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:21 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Cats in need

[REDACTED]

To Whom It May Concern,

Please help support and increase funding for spay and neuter programs as well as affordable veterinary care in NYC. Animals deserve dignity too and NYC should be looked at as an example for all major cities.

Thank you,  
Charlotte Rhodes, Upper West Side

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Charlyn Brea <charlyn.brea@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 11:13 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Welfare Hearing Testimony

[REDACTED]

### **Testimony for animal welfare hearing that took place on 9/13/2024**

My name is Charlyn. I am a medical Speech-Language Pathologist working at a large hospital in the Bronx by day and a cat rescuer/foster caregiver by night. Helping animals is a huge part of my identity. It gives me such a strong sense of purpose, but it has also been a source of deep sadness, stress, and trauma due to the current state of animal welfare in NYC, and the cat crisis we face. I am one of the few people in my area of Washington Heights that cares for a special population: neonatal kittens. I have had to face the loss of multiple kittens, all small enough to fit in the palm of my hand, because baby kittens born outdoors have a devastatingly high rate of mortality due to the fragile nature of their tiny bodies and the harsh realities of life on the streets of NYC for cats of any age. These babies kittens are too small to receive most medical interventions available to the common house pet. The only true solution to reduce suffering for this vulnerable population, and for countless other community animals of all ages, is to drastically increase access to spay and neuter services, so that we can prevent these animals from being born into the filthiest and most dangerous of conditions.

In doing so we will need to make big, but entirely attainable changes to the way we approach animal welfare in NYC by:

- Creating a separate department of animal welfare to properly resource and manage our city's animal shelter system. The DOH cannot continue to do this work; this was apparent during the hearing on September 13, 2024.
- Creating new city-funded vet clinics in all boroughs with a focus on free and low-cost high-volume spay-neuter and low-cost basic vet care for animal rescuers and pet parents.
- Incentivizing vets to work at these clinics by offering whole or partial loan forgiveness, access to the typical benefits of government jobs such as commuter benefits, job hour flexibility, 401K matching, etc.
- Incentivizing private vets to offer free services in exchange for tax benefits.
- Empowering good-hearted everyday citizens to take action when they see a community animal in need by giving those citizen easy access to affordable education, services, and equipment (i.e. rented cat traps, animal food vouchers, free and low-cost vet care).
- Staffing and training a city-employed team that answers calls regarding animal cruelty. This is so important; we need to get our act together here. Witnessing animal cruelty is one of the most harrowing experiences you

can imagine and anyone that works in animal rescue has been subjected to it. We need to support community members that care enough to say something about these lewd acts by answering their pleas for help and action. We need trained police staff that understand their responsibility to the animals and community advocates. We can't have multiple agencies saying 'I don't know. You gotta call so and so.' and giving people phone numbers that lead them to a dead end.

-Outlawing horse carriage rides. This one is that simple. We need to put an end to this cruel industry. Exploitation of animals for monetary gain and animal ethics are in direct opposition to one another. We cannot care for animals whilst also making money off of their physical labor; it's not possible.

The animal-rescuing-and-loving community of NYC urge you to allocate resources to veterinary care and to true oversight of animal welfare. Do we want to be the kind of city that allows the kindest and most tender of its citizens to continue to be emotionally, physically, and financially beat down because they are blindly committed to solving a problem that they most certainly cannot make a dent in without city support? The animal rescue community cannot continue to do this on our own; WE NEED YOU! We are more than willing to put in the back-breaking work of caring for these animals,—I mean, don't temp us with a good time,—if you are willing to meet us there with scalable resources and financial support. With your help, we can all work toward a world with less suffering for all living.

Thank you so much for hearing our concerns on this bipartisan issue that reflects the wellness of not only animals but NYC humans alike. I care so deeply about the animals of this city, and I care equally about the wonderful, magical, talented, tireless humans that love them; let's take care of both of these groups. Lastly, THANK YOU for all of the work you have already done to crack down on the selling of animals at pet stores; these are life-saving policies that we have you to thank for.

Sincerely,  
Charlyn Brea, MS CCC-SLP

September 16, 2024

To whom it may concern,

My name is Chloe Lazarus - I am a New Yorker, a pet owner, and occasional cat rescuer. I am writing today to urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

I know from first-hand experience that proper veterinary care in NYC is 1) hard to find and 2) extremely unaffordable. I have one cat (rescued from the streets in East Harlem) and four chickens in NYC. I have also rescued 5 other cats (including 3 approx 3-week old kittens) that were abandoned outside and I was fortunate enough to have found them homes with friends. Care for my own pets has cost hundreds and even thousands of dollars at times. Care for the animals I have rescued has also cost over a thousand of dollars. So many of us want to help the animals we have and the animals we see in our city, but it is too expensive. Just entering a vet's office with an appointment can start at \$150 or \$200! We love our animals, but we aren't made of money. We do not want animals to suffer and we do the best we can, but it is unrealistic to expect this to be sustainable. The growing number of abandoned animals, overcrowded shelters, maxed out rescuers is baffling. The burden simply cannot fall on individuals and organizations in the city. We need City support. The current system is not working, and the issue is only getting more dire. Please consider this testimony and please support the allocation of significant funding for affordable veterinary care for all New Yorkers immediately.

Thank you for your time,  
Chloe Lazarus

Harlem, NY 10027

[REDACTED]

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**From:** christine Scheiner <chrischein@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:54 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Please help us manage the animal population in NYC which is now EXPLODING with cats who have been thrown out into the streets by a largely transient and uncaring population. We had in Queens an ASPCA low cost spay and neuter which is no long...

[REDACTED]

This problem SHOULD be fixed by the city. Instead, caring residents are attempting to shelter and help these rejected animals themselves. Please help us do the city's job then.

Chris Scheiner

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Christ Ramirez <christ.m.ramirez@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 17, 2024 1:21 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]

[REDACTED]

I am writing to ask that you assist in allowing affordable vet options for pet parents and rescues. We are in desperate need of more neuter and spay programs as well. Part of the reason ppl are dumping their pets in shelters is because they can't afford the care they need. Countless animals are being murdered at acc, with their only fault because they they are homeless because of said ppl. We need stronger enforcement and sentencing for backyard breeders, fighters, and abusers.

Ppl are doing their best to help animals bit we need need access..it's simply too expensive at this point and we need intervention. Please help New Yorkers with these issues; this is why we voted you in. Thank you for your time in this manner

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Christian Maetzener <maetzener@msn.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 10:12 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Tomorrow's vote

[REDACTED]

Dear honorable council members,  
You will have a vote tomorrow about matters relating to animals and animal rescue. I urge you to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you for your consideration,

*Christian Maetzener, M.D.*

[REDACTED]  
*New York, N.Y. 10028*  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Christina Garcia <cmg10473@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 2:04 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] We need help! Rescuers and Pet owners!

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

The city of New York is over run with cats dogs etc, Our shelters are full and funds are very low.

We the people the rescuers the owners are doing everything we can do to help with the curve.

But we need funding to help more than we are doing right now.

Rescues are in debt trying to help the helpless animals that are in need, owners are being forced to put their beloved animals down because the cost of vetting their pets.

Please We need low cost veterinary care, more options for free vaccines and low spay & neuter for our rescues and pets.

We urge you to please allocate funding for everything that'll help rescues to continue rescuing and every pet parent get the help they need.

We need funding and we need it now.

Christina G.  
Bronx Ny 10473.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Christina Ha <christina@meowparlour.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:57 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue: A Letter from NYC's first Cat Cafe

[REDACTED]

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Christina Ha and I founded Meow Parlour, NYC's first cat cafe in 2014. We came up with this idea after a grey and white kitten showed up outside of my apartment building in Chinatown in 2013 and changed my life. As a second generation Korean American, I had never even known about adoption or shelters until that year – which was the same year I turned 28.

7 years ago, Meow Parlour started its own nonprofit and in October 2017, we took in our first kitten – a 2-week-old named Tyra from ACC. I fed her around the clock and she was adopted by a friend of mine. Since then, we've taken in thousands of cats and one of our biggest bottlenecks is access to care, especially after the pandemic.

The cost of care has risen and I'm sure there are many factors that contribute. Some may say that pet owners are driving the demand for veterinarians to provide more care and to extend the lives of our pets at any cost, which in turn makes it so their overhead grows as they stock more supplies for treatments that used to be more exotic. Others may say it's because private equity firms are buying up private practices and squeezing them for profits, which pet owners are paying for. But whatever the reason is, I've noticed that New Yorkers love their pets. Many are struggling on many different levels, but it doesn't mean that they don't deserve to be pet owners.

Vet care is very expensive and the senior cats that I see surrendered to the shelter are very very sick. I have friends all over the country and the level of illness of the senior cats and dogs at the Animal Care Centers of NYC are beyond what my friends see. It is beyond the capacity of ACC, who is already burdened with tens of thousands of animal per year, and they have to rely on small specialized rescues like mine or kind hearted people with big pockets to step in and help.

The tragedy of these sick pets is that based on the surrender notes and the evidence of the cats themselves is that they aren't sick because they aren't loved, they are probably sick because their owners had to make difficult choices. They could put money towards that vet visit or they could put the money towards their rent, but certainly not both. To keep a roof over their head a little longer, they may have had to make sacrifices and over years, those sacrifices accumulate. My theory is that these people are holding onto their pets for as long as they can. They want to keep their family intact because they love them and because they understand that they made a commitment to them.

But when a pet ends up in the shelter, I suspect that it had all become so overwhelming that their owners had to surrender their pet. They didn't do it because they wanted to, they did it because they ran out of choices. Sometimes, it's because they knew they couldn't provide the care their pet needed and so they made the heartbreaking choice to give them up with the hop that someone else could take over. Sometimes it's because they have to move to housing that doesn't allow for pets. Sometimes they end up in a shelter themselves. Sometimes, they've also gone so many years

without taking care of themselves that their pets outlive them. When there's a social problem that affects humans, it affects pets, too.

Imagine if a person didn't have to make those choices for their pets. This opportunity may not be about solving a human crisis, but let's talk about what could happen if we could help pets.

In our ideal world, every animal would come from a rescue or a shelter. They would go home with a microchip, some vaccines, and either already be spayed or neutered or have an appointment to do so when appropriate. In reality, not every animal finds their home that way. Some may find their cat on the street like I did and some may get their pet from a friend or a neighbor or Craigslist – which means there are animals who are not going through a system where they even have the opportunity to access low cost or free care. So there's an entire population of pets who are missing out on these opportunities because they don't know the same information one would get if they adopted through ACC or a rescue like Meow Parlour.

The easiest low hanging fruit is to provide easier access to care for the basics – vaccines, a microchip, spay/neuter surgery, and for dogs, a collar and leash. This doesn't have to be free, but I know there are many smaller organizations who would be willing to impact more communities if they were able to get access to funding that would allow them to bring on more help – not just veterinarians and techs, but also people who can help organize it and handle the administrative end. Funding that goes into making signs, translating them, and finding ways to share them.

Last year, I paid \$600 for a private neuter on a 20-year-old cat that took 5 minutes and this was the price after my 30% discount. I had the luxury of being able to afford it. His previous owner did not and this cat's urine smelled so bad that he was likely damaging the floors of their home because he was spraying, too. Imagine if that cat had gotten that care 20 years ago. Imagine if he didn't ruin floors for 20 years and his owner wasn't breathing in that smell. Imagine if that person had been able to take him somewhere every year to update his vaccines for under \$50 and get his ear cleaned before it had become so damaged that it created an abscess in his brain that burst the week after his neuter, leading to seizures, where he became blind and deaf and we had to make the hard decision to let him go.

Imagine all the people who would show up if they could get their pets fixed and vaccinated for under \$100. I bet they would love that opportunity. They wouldn't have to make a choice between paying \$1100 for the surgery and vaccines, the price I would have paid without my rescue discount, and paying for their rent. Maybe more buildings would allow pets if they realized that a lot of damage can be mitigated if their pets were fixed and no longer have hormone related behaviors or smells. People would be able to stay in their homes for longer. Their pets would live longer. Their homes might smell better. Maybe the people will live longer, too, without those worries.

Eventually, rescuers would be able to focus on helping their targeted niche instead of feeling responsible for all the pets in their zip code. This is a solvable problem.

#### Solutions:

- Subsidize nonprofit organizations that are setting up low cost and affordable access to care. This does not mean further subsidizing organizations like ASPCA, which already seems to have hit their ceiling, it means subsidizing smaller organizations like Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition because they can do surgeries for under \$150 and organizations like Muddy Paws Rescue, which uses space in our basement to provide surgeries for cats and dogs under our rescues.
  - o Explore new opportunities by subsidizing organizations that already do surgeries so that they can provide their services to other rescues and ACC at a discount.
  - o Subsidize organizations to provide services to people in their neighborhood. Allow them to hire another part-time veterinarian and tech to help so we can tackle this together.
- City or state led initiatives:

- Hold a training program for high-volume spay/neuter surgeries for licensed veterinarians in NY. Bring Dr. Julie Levy from University of Florida and one of the leading voices in this field to come in as an outside expert (to avoid any sign of playing favorites in this city) to train veterinarians in high volume spay and neuter surgeries. Most veterinarians are not trained in how to do this, especially those who are not recent graduates. Allow all veterinarians to participate. Training veterinarians to do this will do the following:
  - Reduce the time that an animal is under anesthesia.
  - Reduce the size of an incision, which for spays, can really help an animal recover faster.
  - Allow veterinarians to do surgeries on younger animals, who tend to recover more quickly.
  - And as they get faster, they should be able to eventually do more surgeries per day and reduce their own overhead and hopefully pass those savings to their clients, whether it be rescues like mine or privately owned pets.
- Allow Licensed Veterinary Technicians to do dental surgeries. When I asked one of our vets why it was so much cheaper to get dentals in the South, he said it's because techs are able to do it in the south and vets have to do it here. To justify the amount of time a vet may spend on this procedure and the opportunity cost of doing a dental instead of seeing multiple paying clients in the same 4 hours it may take to do a full mouth extraction on a dog with serious dental issues, the client ends up paying for it. I saw a cat take a ride down to Alabama to get a \$100 dental because the rescue was quoted \$2,000 here. So many pet parents forgo the dental and it is not their fault.
- Reach out to the community. I live in Chinatown. I'm not Chinese, but my husband is and ever since we started being able to do spay/neuter surgeries at our space, he started going out and asking businesses if he could fix their cats. Every single Cantonese speaking person he has met has said yes. They just didn't know where to go or how to get started. A language barrier made it hard for them to understand what they need and a price barrier kept them from making appointments for that service before their cats were of reproducing age. Find someone who's already doing the work and speaking the language of locals to search within the communities to find how the pets who are not going through the rescues are being born, where they are coming from, and help end that cycle.

Thank you for this opportunity. I believe these small solutions would make a big impact and that there is hope within our reach.

Christina Ha



MEOWPARLOUR



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Christina Liew <christina.liew1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 9:01 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fwd: Testimony - Funding Low Cost Spay & Neuter Services

[REDACTED] phishing emails with the Phish

Members of the City Council:

My name is Christina Liew and I am an independent rescuer and colony caretaker from Gravesend, Brooklyn in District 47. During the pandemic, I noticed an alarming number of stray and abandoned cats on my way to work on one single block. More cats than I had ever seen prior to the pandemic. I counted at least 30+ cats from that one block alone. It wasn't until late November of 2020 that I felt the need to take action. That's when I joined a community of fellow cat rescuers who provided me with the guidance to start rescuing.

What began as a simple effort to help has become a significant part of my life, but it's important to emphasize that this is volunteer work, not my full-time job. Like many other individual rescuers, I do this out of compassion, on top of my other responsibilities of working a full time job.

While the city has made strides in animal welfare, the reality is that there are limited low-cost spay and neuter programs available. This gap leaves rescuers, many of whom are working on their own and paying out of pocket, with an overwhelming financial strain.

As an individual rescuer, obtaining low cost spay/neuter appointments at the ASPCA was the best option. Unfortunately, with the competition with other rescuers who are also trying to spay/neuter their animals, these ASPCA appointments disappear within seconds of being posted. Without these subsidized appointments, I have relied on a low-cost spay-neuter vet in my neighborhood, and on average, the vetting roughly costs \$150-\$200 per animal. Although Flatbush Vets and BBAWC have provided low cost spay/neuter for independent rescuers, finding transport to those areas from Gravesend Brooklyn is not easy.

Since rescuing, I have acquired a lot of debt. From veterinary bills, food and supplies to feed my rescues and colonies, transport, and donations towards the rescues who have helped intake friendly cats and kittens from me (as I know they too, are struggling) -- this has become a financial burden to the point that I have found myself struggling to pay for my own cats veterinary bills and having to open up new credit cards leading myself in more debt.

Spaying and neutering is essential to managing the population of community cats, but without affordable resources, it's difficult to keep up. The costs for procedures, medications, and ongoing care quickly pile up, leaving rescuers like myself, financially strained.

In addition, we are taking responsibility for the care of abandoned friendly cats—former pets left behind to fend for themselves. These animals require urgent help, but the financial burden of caring for them falls heavily on individual rescuers, like myself, with limited resources. And unfortunately, many of these friendly abandoned adult cats that I have rescued, were all unaltered.

I urge the council to fund high volume, no to low-cost spay and neuter services and provide more support to rescuers and pet parents in the city. Community cats and abandoned pets need care, and individuals like myself who are stepping up to assist are doing our best, but we need more support. This would not only help individual rescuers but also improve the overall quality of life for both the animals and our communities.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Christina Liew



Brooklyn, NY 11214

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Christina Parisi <clp110388@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:11 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony state of animal rescue nyc

[REDACTED]

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents

Sincerely,  
Christina Parisi, Bensonhurst Brooklyn

As I have been unable to work, undergoing cancer treatments, and moved to one low income neighborhood after another in the Bronx I have been seeing more and more cats.... I do what I can, thankfully finding others to give a hand as they can but now I find I can no longer get the cats spayed/neutered as the cost is completely out of my range.

It seems people in these neighborhoods do not know what to do with pets they no longer want, can afford or are allowed to have so they put them on the street, often not spayed/neutered.

I know how much having my cats is a great comfort and has helped me through probably the most challenging time of my life...they are the best antidepressants and make us more humane...please, lets find a way to make this more possible for more people.

Christine Kenneally

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Christine O'Reilly <christine.l.oreilly@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 12:50 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Christine O'Reilly. I am a Manhattan resident and a regular volunteer at the Manhattan ACC, as a dog companion.

I am writing to please urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay and neuter services our city DESPERATELY needs. The shelters are overflowing and it is incredibly cruel for these animals, many of whom lose their lives as a result.

Affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need would also be an excellent addition.

Yours truly,

Christine O'Reilly

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Christine <christinemrusso@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 9:59 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal welfare in NYC

[REDACTED]

Hello City Council,

I am a Manhattan resident, writing today to strongly urge the City Council to allocate substantial funding for low to no-cost spay and neuter and veterinary care in all NYC boroughs.

I work as a receptionist at an animal hospital on the Upper East Side. I receive many calls from people who cannot afford to properly take care of their pets. They want to do the right thing, but veterinary costs are extremely, often prohibitively high. I wish I could offer these people who call a low cost alternative. As it is, I may suggest The Humane Society of New York, but I am well aware that they are likely to be unable to get an appointment anytime soon.

The need for affordable spay and neuter services as well as veterinary care in NYC is desperate. It doesn't have to be this way. NYC is a very wealthy city but the amount of funds allocated towards animal welfare is very low. We can and must do better.

Best,  
Christine Russo  
[christinemrusso@gmail.com](mailto:christinemrusso@gmail.com)

[REDACTED]  
New York, NY 10010  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** cindy kynard <cindy@mysoulfulfilled.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:27 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony to Save Pets

[REDACTED]

Dear City Government Leaders -

We have a pet care crisis specifically for dogs and cats, at our city shelters. Their euthanization due to overcrowding, poor planning and under resourced care is **inhumane**. They are not objects to be exploited for mass gain then destroyed when inconvenient. They are often members of family, providers of companionship and therapy for millions of NYC citizens who need them, but cannot afford them for various reasons the city government can impact to resolve **now**.

Please allocate substantial funding to

1. **safely spay/neuter dogs and cats** at scale, across shelters rescues and veterinary care. Access to proper care is a major barrier
2. **create more affordable vet care**. Veterinary bills often are the reason pets languish and die in shelters. No one can afford.
3. **manage the downsizing of pet stores and breeders**. They exacerbate a pet population problem where too many are euthanized unnecessarily
4. **create affordable housing for pet owners with their pets**. City landlords exploit renters by making rents too high and/or not allowing pets. This forces owners to put pets in shelters, where they are euthanized
5. **create pet friendly workplaces**. Incentivize companies to support by providing space, insurance and/or pet care monies.

These are just a few suggestions but I'm sure you have many experts who can help you create solutions that get to the root of the problem.

Forcing many workers to work onsite after being virtual or hybrid post Covid, is another huge cause for increased pet population at shelters. Make the workplace a safe space for pets too.

All spaces need to be inclusive.

Thank you,  
Cindy

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Claire C <claire@brooklynanimalaction.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:20 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Hearing on Health

- [REDACTED]
- As a rescuer for 18 years and a founding member of Brooklyn Animal Action I believed all our hard work would help things get better for cats after a decade or so not worse. Since Brooklyn Animal Actions founding in 2010 we have adopted out 600-1000 cats year (not including deaths or TNR), our costs in 2010 were 100K and are now over 350K, tripling in 14 years without an increase in capacity. We are all volunteer-run non-profit who is always in the red and we are all working full time jobs.
  - Lack of funding to ACC means they are constantly asking rescuers to cover bigger vet bills that the city should be covering.
  - There is no Animal Cruelty Committee or help of any sort in nyc despite testimony to the contrary by DOH and the mayors one animal advocate.
  - ASPCA appts can't come close to filling the need and offer nothing on weekends requiring rescuers to take off from work to get animals fixed if they can get an appointment. The city needs to step up and offer free and accessible Spay/neuter for all pets.
  - There is no city agency that helps with hoarders, cruelty, animals locked in empty apartments, or closed stores. No one to call, no one to help and rescuers have to call and try to convince police and and missing landlords to let them in before animals starve to death
  - Onerous rules for all landlords meant to help renters are forcing small landlords to sell their properties-which are then purchased by LLCs who increase rents and institute no pet policies.

**There are Solutions to these problems:**

- \* To increase pro pet policies for landlords : tax breaks to landlords if the allow pets- larger for big dogs or multiple pets, etc
- \* Onerous laws (parapet inspections, trash laws that change every few months, fines for a sighting or rat feces when the city construction is causing rat displacement, lead laws [that are impossible to adhere to given lead being tracked in from the street] should be adjusted so small landlords don't sell their properties because they can't keep up with cityrules and regulations
- \* DOH should have nothing to do with ACC or any animal welfare since they do not care
- \* ACC needs funding to do their own spay/neuter which they do not do, they send the animals to ASPCA
- \* More money that goes to the rescuers going broke trying to save animals the city ignores
- \* Effective city agencies who are well funded to do the work

**Solutions for scarce vets:**

Scholarships and debt forgiveness for veterinarian and vet tech graduates willing to work for rescue friendly vets or shelters in nyc for a minimum of 5 years

Thank you for listening,

Claire

--

Claire

Rescuer, Foster, Volunteer, Co-founder

See 2 of our Rescuers in the film, [The Cat Rescuers](#) which you can now stream on Google Play, Amazon and Vudu!

See our adoptable pets:

<http://www.AdoptaPet.com/shelter79002-cats.html>

Follow us on Instagram!

[@brooklynanimalaction](#)

BAA is a 501c3 Non-profit All-Volunteer Animal Rescue – Certified TNR and Rescue

<http://www.brooklynanimalaction.org>

"Not being able to govern events, I govern myself."– Michel de Montaigne

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Clarisel Gonzalez <kittydoggienews@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 1:44 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Cc:** woof@vfar.org  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animals in NYC Testimony  
**Attachments:** Kittydoggie1.png

[REDACTED]

I am a NYC native and a lifelong pet lover. I was fortunate to grow up with Cindy the poodle in my family.

Currently, I am a proud human to Shalom, a cockapoo, and Blessing, a black and white Maine Coon beauty, I adopted at the NYC Animal Care Center in Manhattan; Esperanza, calico beauty I rescued from a lot in the South Bronx; and two chirping budgies, Peace and Lovely. I love our sanctuary. Our home. I can't imagine my home without pets.

I am the editor and publisher of my pet media and marketing project, [Kitty & Doggie News](#), part of [Clarisel Media](#), a registered business in the Bronx. I am a NYC ACC ambassador promoting adoptions/fostering, pet vaccine clinics, pet-friendly events, spreading the word on lost and found pets, fighting animal cruelty, and spaying and neutering services with my online networks. I am also an elections team member of the Voters for Animal Rights.

We need the City Council to step up and allocate funding that NYC desperately needs to cover the real costs of spay/neuter programs and veterinary care for those in need, to alleviate the financial pressure currently placed on individuals and organizations doing the work, and to address the abandonment of animals at the NYC Animal Care Center shelter crisis (especially relating to pit bulls, huskies and other big dogs as well as cats).

With the building of new housing (of different income levels) throughout the city, please push, support, and encourage landlords to allow pets and lift discriminatory pet weight requirements and bans. We need more pet services including vets and businesses in the Bronx. New Yorkers should not be forced to give up their pets at the shelter because they won a lottery to get a new apartment. Pets are family too!

Please make NYC more pet-friendly and healthier for everyone no matter the income. New Yorkers love their pets, and we need politicians who help promote pet-friendly legislation and animal rights causes to make our city more liveable.

Thank you for your attention.

--  
Clarisel Gonzalez  
Editor and Publisher  
Kitty Doggie News, a project of Clarisel Media  
#kittydoggienews

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jonlyn Freeman <jonlynfreeman@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:13 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Cc:** clelia ramos  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for Health Committee Hearing on 9/13

[REDACTED]

I'm submitting on behalf of Clelia Ramos, a rescuer in Jamaica Queens:

My name is Clelia Ramos, I'm an immigrant from El Salvador who moved to NYC when I was 12. I've loved animals all my life. Jamaica is a challenging neighborhood because there are a lot of outdoor cats and not many rescuers. When you start helping cats then you become the person everyone goes to when they hear about someone's backyard cats, a super's basement cats, hoarding situations and any kind of situation where there are unfixed cats reproducing.

We don't have laws or enforcement to make people responsible for their actions and their environment. We could have laws that require people to spay and neuter the cats on their property, or at least protect me when I'm trying to get the outdoor cats spayed and neutered. Sometimes I feel like I'm trying to make things better and everything is working against me.

I feed many outdoor cats everyday because people take advantage of my kindness. When I spay or neuter a colony, the person who asked me to help may say that they don't want to take care of them, and so not only did I do the work to get them spayed, now I'm feeding them every day too.

I feed 13 cats in a building basement. A previous super had put 2 cats there to catch mice. In a year there were 20 cats. The new super wanted to throw them all on the street. We talked him out of it and we got them all neutered and removed some for adoption. But I still feed those 13 cats and even clean the basement and bribe the super's assistant so no one harms the cats. It's ridiculous that I did something to help the building and help the cats and now I'm stuck doing this work endlessly.

I have a job that pays \$20 an hour. I spend all my time and extra money helping cats. I'd like to spend more time with my family and my boyfriend. I'd like to spend money improving my life or saving for the future. It feels like a crushing weight sometimes and I don't know why the city doesn't provide some support like providing free spay & neuter to people like me who are improving their neighborhoods. The city spends money on all kinds of services, why not this?

We need not just spay/neuter, but systems that make people responsible for their own behavior so the problems they created don't fall on me to fix.

Thank you for listening to us.

Clelia Ramos

[REDACTED]  
Jamaica, NY 11435

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Colleen Jaskot <cmjaskot@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:10 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony 9/13 Committee on Health-State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Dear Council Members:

My name is Colleen Jaskot, and I am a resident of Astoria, Queens. I'm a pet parent and foster cat caregiver, and I've worked in the animal welfare field for nearly a decade. I'm writing to urge the city to allocate funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter clinics and affordable veterinary care.

As a shelter staff member, I see firsthand the effects of the lack of access to these critical services. As recently reported in the Brooklyn Paper, the cost of veterinary care is not only a main cause of pets being surrendered to shelters, but also a factor that influences adoption decisions.

New York City's shelters and rescues can't fix this problem alone. The city owes it to its residents--to pet parents and to dedicated shelter/rescue volunteers and staff, as well as individuals (like community cat caregivers who often exhaust their own time, money and resources)--to step up and help care for the city's animals.

Thank you for your time.

All views expressed in this testimony are my own and not necessarily those of my employer or affiliated organizations.

Sincerely,  
Colleen Jaskot

[REDACTED]

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**From:** peterseng@optonline.net  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:52 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony - State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Dear NYC Council Members,

As a cat parent and rescue volunteer (foster and driver) it has become increasingly difficult and nearly prohibitively expensive to provide medical care to any cats rescued. Here are just a few of the selfless individuals I have helped with food and transport to vet appointments:

Karina (Brooklyn feeder) - a full-time teacher also caring for her sick father while solely managing 100+ community cats. Wakes up daily at 3am to avoid the hostile neighborhood residents that don't want her to feed and help get cats fixed to control the population. Has limited options for spay/neuter due to finances and work schedule.

Juan (Yonkers rescuer) - has to crate any rescues in a cramped, dusty basement for extended periods while waiting for available spay/neuter appointments at ASPCA or taking time off from work to travel upstate to a more expensive clinic.

Iris (Bronx foster) - devotes endless hours and personal funds rehabilitating the smallest and sickest kittens.

There are many more caring individuals donating their valuable time and effort, but it is not sustainable financially nor emotionally and mentally. Most of these volunteers who are often on fixed incomes cannot continue shouldering this massive financial burden and crisis. **Please provide more substantial on-going funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, especially rescue individuals.**

Sincerely,  
Connie Petersen

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Courtney Crosby <courtneycrosby9@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 6:00 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** craig.antini@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 1:45 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony to the New York City Council on the State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

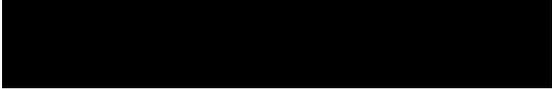
Dear Sir's,

I urge the NYC government to allocate substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay / neuter, as well as, affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. Thank you!

Yours truly,  
Craig Antini

Sent from my iPhone

**Craig Seeman**  
**Council District 34**  
**email caseeman@icloud.com**



## **The NYC ACC and the NYC DOHMH fail to address the animal crisis**

The ACC incorrectly gives the impression that intake is up. Compared to the last pre-COVID year, 2019 intake was just under 21,000. Intake for the last complete year 2023 was just over 15,000. That's a decrease of over 25%.

Yet nearly 3200 animals were euthanized in 2023 which is slightly higher than the about 3000 in 2019 despite now having significantly lower intake. While intake is down adoptions and rescue pulls are also down. Just over 8000 were adopted and just over 9000 were pulled by rescues in 2019. In 2023 about 6000 were adopted and another 6000 transferred to rescues, roughly 80% of intake compared to about 81% in 2019

Yet by their statistics, the live release rate was 93% in 2019 and dropped only slightly to 91% in 2023. These numbers are from the ACC's statistics published on their website. With a significant decline in intake and only slight declines in adoptions and transfers, the overall live release rate hardly looks to be the crisis they paint.

But a crisis is apparent when you look at the increase in euthanasia rate including owner-requested euthanasia which they exclude from the live release rate. Including owner request euthanasia 2019 Intake was just over 22,500 with about 3000 euthanized which is just over 13%. In 2023 with owner-requested euthanasia intake was about 17,000 and about 3200 euthanized that's just about 19% which is a considerable increase. It's interesting how their calculations can either mask or reveal the problem While intake is most certainly down, raw numbers of adoptions and transfers are down and euthanasia raw number remains constant which means the percentage is way up.

By refusing intake do to claimed overcrowding they've suppressed intake so the decline in adoptions and transfers don't look proportionally severe. The increased euthanasia rate, not the nearly constant live release rate reveals the problem.

Certainly, the DOHMH could have done a deeper statistical analysis but doesn't. They do not provide any meaningful oversight.

Despite this, the NYC ACC claims they don't euthanize for space. That's somatically deceptive because the longer stays and decline in care results in both behavioral and media decline of the animals and, given the greater expense and overstretched New Hope Rescue partner resources, those animals are killed. Many of these may be either treatable-manageable or even treatable-rehabilitatable. This is why so many animal advocates have reached out to their council members. This is the issue that neither the NYC ACC nor the DOHMH addresses.

The solutions are manyfold and complex but are, in part distilled to a lack of adoptions possibly due to both economic circumstances and inadequate outreach and marketing by the ACC and lack of transfers due to New Hope Partners overstretched resources. In addition the many non-partners who are dealing with animals on the street due to abandonment and increasing population due to the city's lack of neuter and trap neuter release support services, given the ACC suppressing intake.

Thus the solutions include addressing:

- Pets in Housing which would not only increase adoptions but also increase in available fosters which could address the behavior declines (animals do much better in foster than in a shelter environment). This would also decrease abandonment which never shows as an intake statistic and owner surrenders as well.
- City support for affordable spay neuter for owned animals and TNR for community cats which would more organically decrease shelter intake.
- City support for affordable vet care which may have the backend financial benefit of decreasing the cost of intake of animals due to medical issues.
- Requiring more accurate and detailed statistical reporting which may more readily reveal some of the underlying problems.
- Creating a proactive Community Animal Advisory Board that has the human resources to gather information and provide reports with oversight from a small to purpose Dept of Animal Welfare that does the work the DOHMH doesn't do, to identify issues and recommend solutions to a City Council Committee that can focus on policy or legislative solutions as necessary.

Following this i make a list of recommendations although far from complete should be a good starting point to discuss legislation within the City Council's prevue to address these issues. Please do feel fell free to contact me and I can work to garner support from the animal advocates and encourage the local politically active organization to help organize.

## 1) Pets in Housing Crisis

Landlords with No Pets Allowed leases may well be one of the largest causes of companion animal euthanasia and abandonment. These exclusions put an undo financial burden on the city. It drives up expenses for the NYC ACC as well as the rescues who are not only pulling from the ACC but pulling the abandoned animals directly off the streets.

While Justin Brannan's [Int 0528](#) *The waiver of covenants prohibiting pets* deals with standardizing tenant protections when harboring a pet for three months with no pets allowed leases is a good step, tenants should not have to face such vulnerability, to begin with.

Encouraging the creation of pet-friendly housing not only can mitigate some of the financial burden on the city but may allow even the more transient tenants to foster pets when they are unable to adopt.

Renters under economic pressure are forced to move and, with inadequate affordable pet-friendly housing, abandon or surrender their companion animals and may well risk their own homelessness.

It is incumbent on the city to shift the financial burden back to those landlords. The city needed to address this creatively given the current state regulations short of pushing their state legislatures to proactively end companion animal landlord discrimination.

### **Provide city tax incentives to make rentals pet-friendly**

Consider requiring landlords to pay a fee for each unit with a no-pets-allowed lease. Creatively use the current Emotional Support Animal laws for tenants forced to move. The city can create an ESA program through the NYC Health & Hospital systems to allow financially vulnerable renters to receive ESA status for their companions. The NYC DOHMH (Mental Hygiene after all), the City gov't itself, and the ACC should vigorously promote such programs so that all renters are aware of the protection this provides. Such status allows tenants to retain their companion animals reducing surrender and abandonment. While there may be a cost to promotion and implementation that would be offset by reducing the city's financial burden of caring for these animals.

## **2) Affordable Spay Neuter Access**

A large number of animals surrendered to the NYC ACC are not spayed/neutered.

Four components of this are:

- Access for the general public.
- Abandoned stray dogs and cats as well free-roaming (community/feral cats) which are usually handled by rescues
- “Bodega” cats that are used for pest prevention.
- “Backyard” (home) breeders.

Each of the above requires specific programmatic solutions.

### **a) Public Affordability and Accessibility**

The problems facing the general public are a combination of affordability and access. Even if spay neuter services are affordable they may not be accessible. Pricing may be sliding scale with those tenants receiving any kind of public assistance including Section 8 and NYCHA housing being free. Access is a big issue because people are faced with the need for a car, the use of a car service, the ability to take their companion animal on public transportation, and possibly the loss of income and time to take off from work. Even if free it may not be accessible. Spay Neuter must be mobile so there are times it is available within walking distance. Otherwise, people may need a way to be reimbursed for their expenses. Perhaps an equivalent of an EBT/SNAP benefit program to cover such costs would be possible. The city should consider that although there's a cost for such a program it may be mitigated by reducing the costs to the city by the reduction in the care of offspring of un-spayed, un-neutered animals. In any case for a spay-neuter program to be effective, the city has to consider the cost of time and transportation vs developing a local mobile access plan. Perhaps each city council member can use part of their discretionary funds to provide access throughout their districts several times a year.

### **b) Rescue Affordability and Accessibility**

Rescues take on the burden of strays and free-roaming animals. Ideally, they would have lost cost access in each borough commensurate with the demand. Currently, even when such services are provided by the ASPCA the number of appointment slots available are grossly

inadequate. The NYC DOHMH may need to budget to provide these services. This may need to be done outside the auspicious of the already overburdened NYC ACC. As a separate budget item for the DOHMH, it may be better managed.

### c) **Bodega Cat Program**

Cats have always been a good, affordable, and ecological form of pest management. Although the state and NYC DOHMH may consider them illegal. Unfixed, they are a source of community cats or otherwise the kittens are freely given away. Neither the bodega cats nor their kittens are spayed neutered further compounding the problem. Both requiring and providing spay-neuter services to such businesses may eliminate the source of “free” kittens adopted outside the shelter and rescue system. Given that such businesses are not likely to have people take time off to take care of such cats, a “pickup and delivery” service needs to be provided, and some agency or not-for-profit needs to provide the service. A functional NYC DOHMH should do this but the city would have to change local law possibly in conflict with state law. The city may want to take up the legal challenge given the grave health issues pests present to food-related business otherwise the city may need to enlist the services of an independent not-for-profit to address this. Any challenge may include that local regulation may better manage both the health-related issues and cat population issues more effectively than continuing their illegality. You certainly could get support from local businesses who may welcome spay-neuter regulation requirements rather than risk fines. See this [Call To Action](#) on the issue.

### d) **Addressing “backyard” (home) breeders and “accidental” litters**

“Free to good home” posts are rampant on social media platforms including Craigslist and Nextdoor.com. Additionally, those who understand the problem of “free” (putting the animals in jeopardy to dogfighters, abusers, and sales to research facilities) independently offer adoption fees and may do so to get around breeders laws such as Justin Brannan’s [Int 1018](#) which states (§23 a) *Animals shall not be sold or held for sale in a dwelling in which a person lives*. It’s a good intro supporting the pet dealer limits on selling companion animals but there may need legislation to enforce spay-neuter of companion animals having “accidental” litters put up for free adoptions independent of 501c3 rescues. Such offers need to be tracked down and the guardians be required to spay and neuter their animals to prevent future accidents. Related are also methods getting around puppy mill bans as [being experienced in California](#).

While the independent rehoming of companion animals alleviates some of the burden as an alternative to surrendering to the NYC ACC or further overwhelming the resources of rescues, the city must ensure that those asking for adoption fees are not home breeders and are not skirting spay neuter requirements. There certainly needs to be enforcement of regulated spay-neuter and that puppies and kittens are not being bred and “re-homed” by profit motives. This may require additional legislation regarding re-homing adult companion animals and they spay neuter vs puppies and kittens.

## **3) Creating a city-wide Animal Advisory and Review Board**

As witnessed during this and previous City Council Health Committee hearings related to companion animals the plethora of issues, the magnitude of interest, and in infrequent hearings given the committee’s health-related responsibilities show that adequate resources are not currently available to address the diversity and complexity of issues. As witnessed, the NYC DOHMH is not adequately capable of handling this and certainly not the Mayo’s Office of Animal Welfare. While advisory boards are common in NYC the scope and size of this would necessarily be larger.

### **This construct would be closer to a city-wide Community Board.**

Borough Presidents who would have an interest in handling their county-specific ACC as well as city council members would each be able to appoint a local animal advocate.

For such a board to be independent, no one working for or contracted by any city agency or elected official would be eligible. This would prevent conflicts of interest by such entities like the NYC ACC or the ASPCA which may have city contracts for example from having direct influence.

- Each Borough's members would operate as a "sub-board" responsible for their specific borough interests.
- The Board or the Borough sub-boards would hold periodic local meetings in each borough to facilitate local participation. This would allow much greater interaction and far more complete testimony than an infrequent and overwhelming City Council Health Committee hearing. The gathering, cataloging, and summarizing of input would allow for reports to the Health Committee in a much more digestible and efficient form.
- The city-wide Board would have a Committee structure that can focus on specific issues ranging from spaying and neutering, pets in housing, community cats and strays, NYC ACC evaluations, etc. Each Committee would have the power to make public member appointments much as a community board does, further extending the ability for animal advocates and rescues to participate.
- The Advisory Board would have the ability to have surprise inspections of the NYC ACC and perhaps any brick-and-mortar rescue as well, keeping in mind that any evolutions are advisory and go to the City Council Health Committee.

### **4) A Dept of Animal Welfare as an extension of the Advisory Board model**

Given that the NYC DOHMH does little to address animal issues and provides weak oversight to the NYC ACC, it's still critical to create a separate Department responsible for such issues. The DOHMH inspection of the NYC ACC has historically been little more than assessments of the physical facilities and doesn't seriously evaluate performance as fulfillment of their 34-year \$1.4 Billion contract should warrant. Medical treatments, behavioral issues, New Hope Rescue evaluation, and outreach for foster and adoption evaluations aren't done in such a manner that notes success or recommends needed improvements.

They've shown at council hearings that they are ill-prepared to answer basic questions. Nor do they participate in evaluating both their animal and public services. This speaks to the need to have a Dept. that will address such issues and such a newly created department, in conjunction with the aforementioned Animal Advisory Board may be better equipped.

A cause for concern for the city is the budget, scope and maintenance of such a Department. Rather than a fully populated with staff and responsibilities, this Department can operate on a much smaller staffed scale whose primary concern would be the management of the aforementioned city-wide Animal Advisory Board.

The Dept of Animal Welfare would provide one manager per borough sub-board and one overall manager. As such that would be six staff members plus the Department head. The Animal Advisory Board, with the help of the managers, would provide the human resources

for gathering and collating reports.

This could well allow for a better budget needs analysis for the NYC ACC as well as other such programs the city pursues such as affordable spay-neuter programs, community/feral cat issues, programs related to pets in housing etc, whether implemented by the city or whether assistance is sought outside 501c3 who can provide such services.

This Dept, with the public Advisory Board would have far more human resources than the current Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare, would have greater independence than such office, provide more resources and support than the current NYC DOHMH yet be smaller in scale and narrow in scope by depending on the Animal Advisory Board and, therefore a smaller budget than the DOHMH's nearly \$2 Billion budget.

## **5) City Council Committee on Animal Welfare**

Given the overwhelming amount of work on animal issues including companion, working, and entertainment animals, the Council Speaker should create a Committee on Animal Welfare. The attendance at hearings on animal issues has been extremely high yet the frequency is low compared to the many other issues the current Health Committee must handle. Creating a separate committee would mean members appointed have a specific interest in this issue and have a much more reasonable workload in handling such issues.

## **6) Statistical Reporting by the NYC ACC**

Keith Powers [Int 386](#) *Monthly reports on animal shelters that are in contract with the city.* goes a long way toward codifying such reporting. Additional reporting would help analyze potential shelter or public issues.

The following should be included:

- The number of animals euthanized before being made available to the public or rescues. Animal advocates refer to these as "silent" kills. In some cases, these animals have been microchipped or otherwise have been contacted by owners. This may indicate problems in outreach and, in some cases, the euthanasia of animals that are Treatable-manageable by their owners.
- The number of euthanasia from owner requests and the reason. Some animals may have chronic treatable manageable conditions but may be difficult to adopt due to such conditions. They may be Treatable-rehabilitatable but the ACC doesn't want to incur the medical expenses. The ACC may be motivated because such animals, when listed as owner requested are included in calculating intake vs live release rate. Organizations such as Best Friends believe such numbers should be included because it's still a decision and outcome for the shelter. Additionally, any owner requested euthanasia to the ACC may be indicative of a financial hardship given they are not going through a private DVM. This may also indicate the owner couldn't afford probably veterinary care preceding the request and is a community-related animal health care issue that needs to be assessed and addressed.
- Requiring a Pet Evaluation Matrix to define the terms used in the intro Healthy, Treatable-rehabilitatable, Treatable-manageable, Unhealthy-Untreatable. Such terms have specific qualifiers that come from a Pet Evaluation Matrix which is usually developed with community input (Rescues and general animal-owning public). The last Chief Operating Officer (a position no longer in existence) had promulgated such a Pet Evaluation Matrix for evaluation

but the ACC never followed through on adopting and making it public. See attached for the Draft ACC 2019 Pet Evaluation Matrix, an example from Maddie's Fund as well as their recommended prices for creating one.

- Breaking out behavioral and medical euthanasia which may better reveal underlying problems in both areas. The behavioral decline in the shelter or the lack of medical care for treatable conditions are the leading causes of shelter euthanasia yet both are addressable. A functional DOHMH would identify the specifics and make recommendations whether procedurally or through budget requests to address these issues.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Cristina Fuser <cristina.fuser@buzzfeed.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 11:26 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funds for high volume/low cost veterinary care in NYC

[REDACTED]

I urge city government to allocate substantial funds for high-volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thanks

Cristina Fuser  
Brooklyn, NY

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Cristina Gomes <rpicristina@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 6:43 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funding Veterinary Care

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council:

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

As a cat mama and animal lover, I support many of the small local NYC cat rescues that testified this week, in addition to Flatbush Cats which is on a mission provide low cost spay/neuter services and affordable veterinary care. If these organizations have the funding, backing, and support of the city, their reach could be exponential — Eventually decreasing the shelter overpopulation and making having a furry family member not a privilege but affordable for all.

Thank you for listening and your consideration. We hope you will support us!

Thank you,  
-Cristina

# Feral Cat Crisis in South East Queens (Rosedale, Springfield Gardens, Laurelton, and Jamaica)

## Testimony by Crystal Hayes

9/12/24 - Email: [ch212nyc@gmail.com](mailto:ch212nyc@gmail.com) - Instagram: [@peppercatnyc](https://www.instagram.com/peppercatnyc)

### Introduction

As a rescuer residing in South East Queens since 2018, I've firsthand witnessed the plight of feral and community cats in the neighborhoods of Rosedale, Laurelton, Springfield Gardens, and Jamaica. Through my experiences, I've identified a significant gap in resources and support for those seeking to aid feral and community cats.

### Part 1: Community Engagement and TNR

My journey began with a deep-rooted desire to assist the feral and community cats I encountered in my neighborhood during my daily walks. Over the years, I've connected with many compassionate neighbors who sought guidance on how to help feral and community cats. I've played a pivotal role in bridging this knowledge gap, offering support and seeking resources for those eager to make a difference.

Through my efforts, I've collaborated with other rescuers to secure resources and provide assistance to neighbors in various ways. This has included helping them TNR feral colonies, rescuing mother cats and their kittens, and finding suitable placements for friendly cats. Additionally, I've sought support from veterinarians, rescue organizations, and my personal network to provide medical care to feral cats in need.

Even though I have been able to help some cats and kittens (40+), my efforts and those of others have been hampered by a lack of accessible resources and support. Many well-intentioned residents are unsure about how to proceed, from trapping techniques to post-surgery care.

### Part 2: The Root of the Problem

The feral and community cat crisis in South East Queens is a multifaceted issue with several contributing factors:

- **Lack of Low-Cost Vet Services:** The absence of affordable veterinary care for both pet owners and rescuers has made it challenging to provide essential medical treatment such as spaying, neutering, vaccinations, dental care, and illness care.
- **No Accessible and Effective Shelters for the Community:** There is a need for no-kill community shelter(s) that are "cat-centric" as they cater to the specific needs and behaviors of cats, which can significantly improve adoption outcomes for friendly community cats.

- **JFK Abandonment:** The proximity of JFK Airport has led to the abandonment of pets, including cats, by travelers who don't live in South East Queens who fail to make proper arrangements. Thus, the burden of caring for the cats falls upon my neighbors, who want to help.
- **Insufficient TNR Infrastructure:** There is a need for a more robust and accessible TNR infrastructure, including TNR training and helpful support planned around cultural understanding.

### Part 3: Proposed Solutions

To address the feral cat crisis, we must implement a comprehensive and sustainable approach:

1. **Structural Pathway from Street to TNR Action:** Establish a clear and accessible pathway for individuals to learn and initiate TNR efforts on their blocks and within their communities, including TNR education, training, and support resources.
2. **Pathway from Street to Sanctuary:** Provide a safe haven for feral cats who cannot be returned to their original territories due to unsafe conditions (such as construction and demolition) or health concerns (such as FIV).
3. **Accessible Vet Care and Resources:** Ensure affordable and accessible veterinary care for pet parents. Plus, neighborhood resources for TNR efforts such as loanable traps, easy drop-offs, recovery locations, easy pickups, and organized support networks, as my neighbors welcome the opportunity to work together to solve this crisis.
4. **Community Shelter(s) that are planned around typical cat behaviors:** Community shelters that are designed with cats' natural behaviors in mind can significantly improve adoption outcomes. By minimizing stress, facilitating accurate behavioral assessments, providing stimulating enrichment, and educating adopters on feline care, these shelters can reduce the number of adopted cats that are returned, as these environments help cats to be successful in their new environment. This ultimately leads to more successful matches between cats and their new homes, creating a more positive adoption experience overall.

By implementing these solutions, we can significantly reduce the feral cat population and improve the well-being of not just our outdoor feral and community cats but that of our household pets to create a more compassionate community.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Daisy <mom.dg1992@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:13 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Thank you for caring for our furry animals

[REDACTED]

To whom this may refer to, I am a pet parent of 6 cats  
Along with my senior dog. I rescue and fed animals in the street with money from my pocket. I cannot pretend  
there isn't animals in need of food and shelter...  
If NYC offer low cost spay and neuter, it will make a difference in the lives of people and animals.  
Affordable vet care would meal a lot as well...

There is a lot of good people but it's hard to move forward when everything is expensive

Please help us help them, together we can make a difference ♥

TESTIMONY FOR NYC COUNCIL HEARING - COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Date: September 13, 2024

Submitted by Dale Mackey

In 2018, I worked for an organization with its own office cat, Henry. I never considered myself a “cat person” before I met Henry, but I found myself looking forward to going to work each day just to see him. During the 2020 lockdown, I took Henry home. Eventually, Henry became mine permanently. My love for Henry has opened my heart in a way that I never expected. He has made me a more compassionate, loving person. This is the effect animals have on us, which is why we as a community must ensure their protection and safety.

Last year, my husband noticed a cat near our apartment struggling for food and looking sick. He tried to approach the cat, but she ran away in fear. We started leaving food for her and tried to get help from local animal rescues. The responses I received were all variations of, “We would love to help, but we do not have the bandwidth. What can you do to help us?”

Determined to help this cat, my husband and I took a course on Trap Neuter Release (TNR) and were connected with a local rescue group, Harlem Animal Rescue. My husband and I worked with Harlem Animal Rescue and were able to trap this cat, who neighbors told us was nicknamed “Shai” and had been alone on the street for at least nine years. Harlem Animal Rescue found a person willing to adopt Shai, and she is now safe in a new home.

The dedicated volunteers with Harlem Animal Rescue told us that our experience with Shai would make us more aware of the hundreds of cats living on the streets of Harlem. More true words have never been spoken. There is an epidemic of abandoned and homeless cats living in New York City. Something must be done to support these cats and all the other animals who suffer from abuse and neglect.

New York City needs to support the people who perform animal rescue, usually at their own expense and in addition to working a full-time job. New York City needs to hold accountable the people who abuse and neglect animals. New York City needs to help animal welfare groups educate the community about the need to spay and neuter pets. New York City needs to help make spay and neuter services affordable. These tasks can no longer fall solely on the overburdened shoulders of animal rescuers.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

My name is Dana Jacobs, and I am a resident of Bed-Stuyvesant Brooklyn, in Chi Osse's district 36.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the NYC City Council today, to speak about the state of animal rescue.

I am here on behalf of [Neighborhood Animal Rescue Network \(NARN\)](#). We are an organized group of 75 animal rescuers living in Central Brooklyn, spanning your districts Councilmen and Councilwomen Chi Osse, Darlene Mealy, Sandy Nurse, and Crystal Hudson: Bed-Stuy, Ocean Hill, Crown Heights and some neighboring areas. We focus on

1. spaying and neutering cats to lower the overall population of feral cats, giving them healthier lives
2. rescuing abandoned pets
3. assisting community members who ask for help getting vet care for their own pets

Most members of NARN, including myself, got started in rescue the same way: we noticed cats suffering in our neighborhoods. We researched what agencies and organizations we could call for help and all discovered the same thing: No public service exists to help these cats.

In the last 5 years, NARN has rescued, spay, and/or neutered about 1,500 cats. A drop in the bucket, but something to be proud of.

Consider that we are not a traditional, public-facing nonprofit — rather, we are a network of regular New Yorkers and some formal rescue organizations who operate like a mutual aid group. We are bakers, policy advocates, artists, operations managers, sales professionals, and youth education professionals. Rescue is not our full time job and in fact often takes time away from our full time jobs. Many of us are self-funded, so we pay out of pocket and crowdfund money to cover the costs of rescue. Our collective was formed to help the many many cats struggling to live outside in Brooklyn, a population which is growing exponentially.

Widespread access to affordable spay, neuter, and basic vet care can be hugely consequential in decreasing the number of stray cats and improving the lives of pets across New York. We know it firsthand in Brooklyn: [Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition](#) and [Flatbush Vet](#) have been pioneers in low-cost vet care, and the [ASPCA Brooklyn Chapter](#) has underpinned the efforts of the animal welfare community for years. We need the city to fund high volume, low cost spay neuter and vet care for all pet owners and rescuers.

I'd like to highlight one particular issue: dumped pets. Nearly a quarter of the cats we rescued in the last 2 years were abandoned pets, almost none spay/neutered. Finding themselves outside suddenly, these abandoned pets lack the skills to find food and shelter, and we find them huddled in cardboard boxes in horrific condition. We often find 1 year old male cats — kittens who were

never taken to the vet and were not neutered, who grew up and began displaying normal yet undesirable behaviors, including vocalizing and spraying. Brooklyn's cat population needs food, shelter, and good health, just like all living beings.

Lastly, I'd like to say this work can't be done alone: Some of us have traps, or cars, or recovery space, or time, or social media skills, but very few of us have all of these pieces. Working together helps us cope with the tremendous stress and painful moments that come with animal rescue. The city should take care to integrate and support existing rescuers who are already running and need more resources to reach more animals. Perhaps you already know some of these organizations, for they are doing incredible work in our neighborhoods and I would be wrong not to name them today: Brooklyn Animal Action, Eccentric Kittens, Heidi Wrangles Cats, Ocean Hill Cats, Backyard Cats of Bedstuy.

Animals are suffering. My hope today is that this hearing is the beginning of a paradigm shift at the city of New York that improves the lives of animals and pet-owners across all five boroughs.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dana Jacobs', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dana Jacobs  
Neighborhood Animal Rescue Network (NARN)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Dania Simoun <daniasimoun@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:31 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony about the Animal Crisis

[REDACTED]

Dear Members of the Health Committee,

Thank you so much for holding the hearing last Friday about the state of animal welfare in New York City. This topic is very personal for me as I have been involved in animal welfare, working with the animals hands on, since 2012, including working full time in the shelter system in animal care/adoption/intake/behavior. I am a certified dog trainer and am currently a dog foster and volunteer for Queens ACC (previously at Brooklyn ACC). Put simply, we cannot adopt our way out of this crisis, adoption is just putting a bandaid on rather than addressing the root issues. Putting a stop to backyard breeding is imperative to stop the overflow of dogs, especially pitbull-type dogs, from entering the shelter system. The amount of large dogs entering the shelter system and sitting there for months and months with no adoption interest is skyrocketing. It is so heartbreaking to see that in one of the wealthiest cities in the world, dogs particularly, are receiving such poor quality of care in shelters. The shelter system needs better oversight as to the quality of animal care they are providing and more qualified staff to be able to provide the lawful standard quality of care.

Additionally, it is crucial that a bill regarding the end of breed specific legislation in NYCHA is passed - it is so difficult to find not only pet friendly housing in NYC, but almost impossible to do so with certain breeds. One of the main reasons for surrendering large dogs is because of landlords and housing policies regarding certain breeds and sizes - this ends up costing countless dogs their lives as they spend their last days in a kennel in a shelter rather than with their families who had to surrender them.

Lastly, I strongly believe, as others have stated, that ACC should not be controlled by DOH - as we clearly saw in the council meeting, DOH does not have the best interest of homeless animals and their communities at heart. A new Animal Welfare Department should be created to oversee ACC with individuals who have a background in animal welfare. I want to emphasize the importance of hiring individuals who have a background in canine behavior in shelters who are *certified* dog behavior professionals who strongly believe in force free and positive reinforcement training methods in accordance with the most current and ethical science.

Being on the front lines in sheltering is an endlessly heartbreaking, emotionally and physically draining experience - but we keep showing up for the sake of the animals. I sincerely hope actions are taken quickly for change as the intake numbers for shelters and the stray population of animals in this city is only going to keep increasing.

Thank you,  
Dania

My name is Daniel Teachout. I am a 15 year resident of Inwood and am a certified TNR person who became active in this program during the pandemic. In the summer of 2020 a feral cat that my mother-in-law had taken in had 6 kittens. When it came time to vet, spay, and neuter I was horrified of what the costs would be with no accessible low cost veterinarian services available. For all 7 it would be several thousand dollars at my local vet.

This was not an option. I was unemployed because of the pandemic, with no money available. But then the extra Federal Pandemic Unemployment compensation kicked in and I suddenly had the funds to take care of these 7 cats, which I did. And now after the Pandemic to this day there are still few low cost vetting, Spay/Neuter options as I am sure you know. The effort that a person needs to go through to help stop this needless cycle of misery by finding affordable services is almost impossible to achieve in this city. This should not be so hard. It should not be so difficult to do the right thing. We created this problem and we certainly can fix it.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Danielle Bello <belld1995@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:37 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care

[REDACTED]

To whom this may concern,

As a resident of Chelsea I strongly urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay and neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. The shelter crisis is out of control and the city has an obligation to help and this is how to break the cycle.

Regards  
Danielle Bello

[REDACTED]

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**From:** DARIA AUMAND <dariaaumand@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 2:02 PM  
**To:** NYC Council Hearings  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animals care

[REDACTED]

First, i am so disappointed in this City Council. This City has become a horrible place to live. It is no longer the greatest City in the world. Everything here in NYC can be found elsewhere under a much cleaner safer lovely environment. I will not be retiring here, nor will I be investing here. So for the little that you have done at least...at least protect the animals. As far as i am concerned they're a much better species than we will ever be!!!

Daria Aumand

[REDACTED]  
Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Dava <davacity@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:34 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Cat Rescuer on LES

[REDACTED]

Please Stop The Insanity.  
We need funding so everyone can spay and neuter their pets.  
So much senseless death can be averted by common sense measures.

I am a former cat rescuer for over a decade in the LES Chinatown area. I took the course in Trap Neuter Release at the ASPCA out of necessity. The sadness I've witnessed, the unnecessary animal abuse by disturbed and unenlightened individuals could fill a book. I have rescued dozens of cats and kittens off the street. I've fostered, and adopted out many cats pulled off of death row at ACC when their time was up. I even fostered and eventually adopted a dog pulled out of ACC only to be returned there again according to the rescue group I got home from. Needless to say, this is all done out of pocket.

This is the hapless lot of people like myself who genuinely care about the neglected and pets and unwanted pets strewn across NYC. I've attended ACC board meetings years ago in the past and stopped going because the rhetoric was useless and I didn't see anyone up there taking the helm with what is a CRISIS in this supposedly great city. I have since moved out of NYC, I no longer have the means to keep rescuing animals that others see fit to toss away.

The legislation and leaders in New York City MUST DO BETTER.

HELP PEOPLE TO SPAY & NEUTER!!!!

Dava Nasr

[REDACTED]  
10002

Sent from device. Please excuse typos.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Dave Handy <davehandyny@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 3:00 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] A Statement from David Handy on the State of Animal Rescue in New York City

[REDACTED]

Dear Members of the New York City Council, and to Whomever it May Concern,

I am writing today in support of allocation of substantial funding for high volume, low cost spayed and neutering programs, and affordable veterinary care, for all New Yorkers, especially those in need.

Recently my girlfriend and I adopted two rescue kittens from an amazing rescuer named Heidi, who runs an NPO called Heidi Wrangles Cats. I cannot tell you how much we love and adore our new babies. Same goes for our 2-year-old cat. And when I tell you she loves them and she loves being big sister to them, believe that is an incredible gift everyday getting to watch them learn and grow and discover life. The joy they provide us more than covers their end of the rent.

Animals make all of our lives better. It doesn't matter whether it's a couple kittens like we have, a few birds, a loving dog, an entertaining turtle. Animals have the ability to add so much joy to our lives, as we take care of them and ensure that they have happy ones as well. Extending this opportunity, to care for an animal, to all New Yorkers will improve our quality of life. Not only will it improve the lives of those New Yorkers, but it will improve the lives of those animals who deserve good care. Many desperately need a loving home. Many people desperately want to give these animals a living home but fear obstacles to their care.

We have an opportunity to help eliminate some of those barriers. We should do so. I urge you and the other members of the city council to approve and fund these programs. Caring for the lives of others, especially animals, should be considered Paramount. Let's refocus on these efforts together.

Thank you,

Dave Handy  
Council District 40  
Brooklyn, NY

[REDACTED]

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**From:** David Cooper <david.allen.cooper@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:55 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Written Testimony Regarding the State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I'm a lifelong New Yorker who has lived in Bushwick for the past seven years. My partner and I have cared for several community and stray cats over the years, and have done our best to help with trap-neuter-release (TNR) efforts when we see a new cat on our block. However, we see new cats appearing all the time. We've even seen some cats who are clearly friendly (i.e., not feral and who belong in a loving home).

We have no doubt that these friendly cats are former house cats who have been abandoned by their caretakers. While we can't know the reasons why any given cat is abandoned, we know that a key reason why some cats are abandoned is because of the high cost of caring for pets.

There's an easy solution to this problem: The City Council must devote substantial funds for TNR programs to handle the number of stray cats out on the streets. The City Council must also devote enough funds to supporting the valuable work that cat rescue groups perform, and providing financial assistance to pet parents in need of affordable veterinary care.

This is the most dynamic and prosperous city in the country. We have the means to support these efforts. Please show that we have the will to do so too.

Sincerely,

David C.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Deborah Soffel <deborahsoffel@verizon.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:37 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

**Please accept this testimony for consideration on The State of Animal Rescue in NYC**

As an owner of an attached brick one family home in Rego Park, Queens for the last 20 years, we have seen many stray, abandoned, feral, and wild animals come through our small block-long shared conjoined backyard.

All of our neighbors make a point to care for and feed the cat population, placing food outside each day. Some of the neighbors have been successful in trapping, neutering, and re-releasing cats at their own personal expense.

However, over the years and particularly since the pandemic, the feral cat population has greatly increased. In our backyard alone, this spring, two cat litters producing at least 10 live birth kittens. My family has made a concerted effort to get the kittens trapped and adopted; we have managed to place three kittens in adopted homes, with at least five or six more kittens still lingering in the backyard, un-neutered and now too old to easily adopt. These kittens are in addition to the adult cat population of at least another half dozen. We have consulted many organizations on what to do but it seems that we would have to trap them and neuter them at our own expense, starting at \$100 per cat, with appointments needed to be set up in advance of trapping. We could of course all agree to stop feeding them, but naturally this goes against all reasonable feelings and to get the entire block of homeowners to cooperate is a huge task unto itself.

The current situation is beyond our abilities to deal with. New York City has a responsibility to animals and to home owners to help. Free neutering at the very least!!!

This is just one example from over the years, but the escalation in numbers is becoming alarming, and unhealthy to the neighborhood ecosystem.

Thank you,  
Deborah Soffel

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Rego Park, NY 11374

**DEBORAH THOMAS TESTIMONY TO NY CITY COUNCIL**  
**RE: Animal Rescue and NYC ANIMAL CARE CENTERS – SEPT. 13, 2024**

Good morning. My name is Deborah Thomas and I have volunteered at the NYC Animal Care Centers (ACC) Manhattan Shelter as a cat adoption facilitator for nearly 20 years. I am also a member of several animal welfare organizations and I advocate for all NYC animals.

Since I only have 2 minutes to speak here, I will get straight to the point. Over the past 20 years, I have seen vast improvements at the ACC, better shelter conditions for the animals, and in recent years, a placement rate in the 90% range has prevailed. However, we are currently seeing troubling overcrowding in the animal shelters due to people surrendering their pets to the ACC in numbers not seen since before the Covid-19 pandemic, due to several reasons, including people being evicted from housing due to rising rents, people having to leave NYC to find suitable work or affordable housing, and/or after losing housing, moving into new housing or homeless shelters that do not allow pets, and last but not least, extremely high veterinary costs.

I respectfully urge the City Council to do two things to help turn around this animal surrender surge. (1) Please allocate additional funding to the ACC so that they can hire more animal care and placement staff, as well as additional veterinarians and medical support staff to help with intake and in-shelter care once the animals are at the ACC. Having additional staff would help get the animals ready for adoption faster, as well as help to promote more adoptions. (2) Please write and pass a "Pets in Housing Bill" that would OUTLAW landlords prohibiting pet owners from having household pets in ANY and ALL NYC housing, no matter the type of housing or the size or breed of the dog, cat or rabbit. I would be happy to work and lobby with any City Council member willing to write and support such a "Pets in Housing" Bill, which I feel would greatly alleviate the current overcrowding crisis at the ACC and at all NYC shelters.

And lastly, since this hearing is about Animal Rescue, I respectfully urge Chairwoman Schulman to please bring to the floor and pass Intro 967 (Ryder's Law), which would ban and discontinue the suffering of Carriage Horses in NYC.

Thank you very much.

Deborah Thomas

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Debra Cameron <dlcameron@optonline.net>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 6:10 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Voters for animal rights

[REDACTED]

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Hi, My name is Debra Kalish. I am a dog volunteer at ACC Manhattan. I live in District 6 and my City Council representative is Gale Brewer.

I have been volunteering at ACC for over 3 years. The overpopulation situation is the worst I have ever seen. It is a tragic, unending parade of surrendered and abandoned dogs. Many of them come in **ungroomed**, **unvetted**, **underfed** and now **unaltered**: largely, a function of the insane cost of New York City vet care.

Having so many unaltered dogs in an overcrowded shelter contributes to behavioral problems. On a **good** day, shelter dogs can deteriorate from stress, noise, fear, too little space, not enough exercise. **UNaltered** dogs can **exacerbate** bad behavior, leading to cage fighting, emergency placement pleas, and, sadly, more euthanasia. It's heartbreaking.

Unaltered dogs have medical issues, too. I recently teamed with an ACC rescue partner to pull a 7-year old **unaltered** male who now needs a perineal hernia operation to fix his extreme GI problems. It will cost thousands of dollars – so unnecessary for us and so avoidable for this poor dog.

We need the city's help to expand affordable spay-neuter services. Here's are some things the city can do:

- Fund existing non-profits to expand **their** services – they are **already** doing the work
- Work with Boards of Veterinary Schools to introduce spay-neuter rotations into their curricula
  - Give vet students course credit or tuition breaks for semester-long, spay-neuter work in the city
  - Jointly fund a program to train all vet techs to perform spay-neuter throughout the city, and pay them to do so.
- Use tax breaks or other incentives to incent private vets & corporate chains to perform X-number of low-cost spay/neuters each year.

There are just too many unwanted animals in New York City, and we can't rescue our way out of this mess. We need more affordable, accessible spay/neuter services to tame our overpopulation crisis.

Please help us help the animals of New York City. Thank you.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Debra Rapoport <waitandsee2@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:24 PM  
**Cc:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal care and rescue

[REDACTED]

Please support and add more funding to ANIMAL RESCUE and affordable veterinary care

## FUNDING FOR ANIMALS AND THEIR PEOPLE/RESCUERS

I offer the following needs:

1. **Low to No-Cost, High-Volume Spay and Neuter Services**: These services must be made widely available—not just at brick-and-mortar clinics but also through mobile clinics that travel to all neighborhoods across the city. If these services aren't easily accessible and free, many people simply won't take advantage of them, a fact any rescuer can confirm.
2. **Access to Low-Cost Veterinary Care**: In addition to spay and neuter services, rescuers need affordable veterinary care. Veterinary expenses are one of the largest financial burdens faced by rescuers and rescue groups. Most have tremendous financial debt and many are currently “closed to intake” due to this. Affordable options would allow us to provide better care for animals and open our doors to take on more cases without being limited by cost. The requests for help from the community are nonstop and it's heartbreaking that they are denied assistance due to impossibly high financial constraints.
3. **Targeted Education Campaigns**: Services alone aren't enough. We need to educate communities about the benefits of spay/neuter and responsible animal care. Cultural differences often impact how companion animals are treated. We see countless friendly, unfixed companion animals left on the street, facing injury or contributing to the overpopulation crisis. Education—through both targeted advertising and school programs—can foster compassion and inspire the next generation to make a difference.
4. **Easier Access to Funding**: Access to resources like veterinary care, food, and supplies is crucial, yet the process for obtaining funding is unnecessarily complex. Every step seems to demand more documents and forms, discouraging many rescuers from even applying. The city needs to understand that we are not large corporations with legal teams. We are small, grassroots operations. If the process isn't simplified, the funds are rendered unattainable.
5. **Stronger Partnerships for Adoption Initiatives**: The city should foster more partnerships with rescues for initiatives like adoption events and brick-and-mortar adoption spaces. These collaborations would amplify the voices of rescuers and expand our reach. Having city-backed spaces and events would not only increase visibility but also encourage more community involvement in animal adoption and rescue. This would create an invaluable platform for both rescuers and animals in need.
6. **Housing Regulations**: We are now the city of Yes, except when it comes to our pets. It's very difficult to find housing that allows dogs/cats with their size restrictions and illegal “breed” restrictions and these poor animals that had homes, end up on the street or in kill shelters unless one of the self-funded rescue groups have space. Pet owners end up giving up their animals when they can't find housing which is traumatic for the families and their pets. These pets often end up in kill shelters due to the lack of room in shelters and rescue groups. It's awful.
7. **END THE SPEND**: Many, many, many stores are selling puppy mill puppies. They also do this for cats. Even supposedly reputable breeders need to stop. Until there are none, adopt one (or 2) should be the new motto for our city of Yes!

Debra Wantuch

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Denise Korycki <wildwindwest@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 11:19 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Hi,  
I'm writing to share testimony of my experiences with local NYC rescue groups. I have worked somewhat closely with 3 different organizations. These folks are tireless and dedicated but are also overwhelmed and financially challenged. I have volunteered, fed, fostered many sets of kittens and contributed but no amount of donations will take the place of regulations and direct financial support from the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. The cost of spay/neuter care is outrageous and only leads to more kittens being born in an overpopulated and dangerous environment which will continue to overburden these rescue groups and all their volunteers. This is an epidemic and needs to be addressed.

Thank you for taking the time to listen.

Denise Korycki  
Brooklyn, NY 11222

## **Testimony**

**9-14-24**

### **Submitted to NYC Council**

### **Subject: Inhumane conditions indicate the need for a Council Committee on Animal Welfare**

On January 3rd 2023 I met` with Jonathan Boucher, Lynn Schulman's Chief of Staff. We discussed the need for a Committee on Animal Welfare to be put in place on the NYC Council. On March 3rd 2023 I sent an email on this topic to Speaker Adams with a cc: to numerous Council members. On January 25th 2024 I sent a follow-up email asking important questions. I did not receive answers to my questions. I followed-up again on February 19th 2024.

This past week I called Speaker Adams' office TWICE to ask logistical questions regarding the Hearing. Although a timely response was needed, no one returned my call. Why?

A Committee on Animal Welfare is overdue to be established on the NYC City Council. Animal issues are brushed aside in the affairs of the city and animals don't have fair representation in New York City government. A committee is needed that will handle animal concerns and issues relevant to the welfare of animals. The committee can discuss policy, and draft legislation regarding NYC's animal welfare issues.

A committee could be led by and staffed with council members who care about animals and who are concerned about animal welfare issues, including at the NYC ACC. The DOHMH falls down on the job in too many ways, and the ACC gets away with the mistreatment of animals. The committee could provide some much needed oversight over the ACC. Oversight which is apparently not forthcoming from Lynn Schulman and the Committee on Health.

Council member Holden is familiar with the ACC. His Intro 1502 - Transparency in Euthanasia Reporting and Shelter Reform Task Force (2019) - was a step in the right direction regarding oversight of the ACC.

To the detriment of the animals, the ACC continues their practice of overdosing dogs (and possibly cats) with drugs such as Trazodone. This rampant drug abuse may also inflame the ACC's pneumonia outbreaks. My general understanding is that there is a lack of antibiotics - and possibly expired doses are being administered. Some of the animals need to be treated by outside vets, but are kill-listed and often killed instead. Ventilation needs must be addressed and Assistant DOHMH Commissioner Mario Merlino was known to NOT be on top of updating or providing funding for the HVAC system. Not sure where this stands now.

The Department of Health is notorious for short-sighted decision making in its holding back much needed funding for the NYC ACC.

Please have the Planning Toolkit and Housing Agenda include pet friendly policies in future affordable housing and negotiate with landlords to end pet discrimination. New York residents should not have to choose between a place to live and to get rid of their pets. New York City must do its part.

Animals are the true voiceless. I have hope that there will be oversight of the ACC, and the overdue Committee on Animal Welfare will be established on the NYC Council.

A "Canine Crisis".

On August 22nd 2024, the NY Post published an article about deplorable conditions at the recently opened NYC ACC shelter in Ridgewood, Queens. Here is the link –

<https://nypost.com/2024/08/22/us-news/dogs-at-new-nyc-animal-care-center-shelter-neglected-inside-cramped-filthy-cages-council-member-and-whistleblowers-say/>

This inhumane treatment of animals is unacceptable.

New York City must strive to be a humane city and do better in their care of the City's animals. Temporary expanded housing must be provided for the animals to alleviate inhumane conditions.

The City must act proactively. Ban backyard breeders. Support spay/neuter services. Encourage the public to #AdoptDontShop. And how about local officials sponsor frequent adoption events, and post ACC's animals on their social media. These are just a few important steps that would help alleviate the animal welfare crisis in NYC.

It is shameful that what was supposed to be a "state-of-the-art" facility ... has so quickly devolved into an inhumane prison for animals. There are no excuses for this. Instead this only highlights the egregious lack of planning on the part of the City and the NYC ACC, and points to the dire need for the Committee on Animal Welfare to be established on the NYC Council.

Thank you.

Deva Cohen

#AdoptDontShop

Links:

- Intro 1502 - Transparency in Euthanasia Reporting and Shelter Reform Task Force (2019)

<https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3913890&GUID=37662634-8F28-4AB5-BC1B-1E35239B6648&Options=Advanced&Search=>

- Article in NY Post 10-30-20

Neglect, filthy cages and no water: Inside the embattled Animal Care Centers of NYC | [https://nypost.com/2020/10/30/dogs-kept-in-neglectful-conditions-at-animal-care-centers-of-nyc/amp/?\\_\\_twitter\\_impression=true](https://nypost.com/2020/10/30/dogs-kept-in-neglectful-conditions-at-animal-care-centers-of-nyc/amp/?__twitter_impression=true)

- Shelter Reform Action Committee (SRAC)

<https://www.shelterreform.org/>

- Enjoy SRAC's skit about the ACC and

DOHMH: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=rkl6XGOIZro&embeds\\_eri=http%3A%2F%2Fshelternotes.com%2F&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=rkl6XGOIZro&embeds_eri=http%3A%2F%2Fshelternotes.com%2F&feature=emb_logo)

- Hear SRAC's President Esther Koslow briefly but eloquently speak at a City Council hearing about the need for a Department of Animal Welfare.

[https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=af4e4c09vJ4&embeds\\_eri=http%3A%2F%2Fshelternotes.com%2F&feature=emb\\_logo](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=af4e4c09vJ4&embeds_eri=http%3A%2F%2Fshelternotes.com%2F&feature=emb_logo)

- Justin Brannan is interviewed by NY1. The office that is currently in place is a far cry from the original Department before it was watered down to an office. And even what Brannan discusses was not put in place.

[https://twitter.com/NY1/status/1197145853884076032?s=20&t=FEJ\\_w9cjGmQko\\_62Y7a5w](https://twitter.com/NY1/status/1197145853884076032?s=20&t=FEJ_w9cjGmQko_62Y7a5w)

- Watch the press conference in which a heartbroken ex-ACC volunteer speaks about the ACC's killing of a dog named Billy. At least one volunteer and a rescue partner quit as a result of this killing. The issues related to backyard breeding are brought up in this video. New York City must do its part as well.

[https://m.facebook.com/plugins/video.php?height=240&width=426&referrer=www.twitter.com&share\\_id=NS-UNK-UNK-UNK-IO5\\_GK0T-](https://m.facebook.com/plugins/video.php?height=240&width=426&referrer=www.twitter.com&share_id=NS-UNK-UNK-UNK-IO5_GK0T-)

[GK1C&href=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fcurtisliwa%2Fvideos%2Fthe-new-york-city-shelter-system-is-in-dire-need-of-help-volunteers-need-more-of%2F443175597407](https://www.facebook.com/curtisliwa/videos/the-new-york-city-shelter-system-is-in-dire-need-of-help-volunteers-need-more-of/443175597407)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Lucky Meows <luckymeowsnyc@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:55 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Lucky Meows Inc. Cat Rescue Statement for NYC Cat Crisis

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council Members,

My name is Diana Alvarez, and I am the President and Founder of Lucky Meows Inc. Rescue, based in New York State. I established my organization in 2021 to better access resources after years of independent rescue work or relying in other organizations. Like many others, I faced numerous challenges starting in the pandemic.

Balancing a full-time job as a banker while handling the daily demands of rescuing NYC cats has been increasingly difficult. The emotional and financial toll on me, and many others in the rescue community, is significant. We often face the stress of being available 24/7, risking personal safety, and making financial sacrifices without compensation. This dedication is driven by our passion, but it is unsustainable without systemic support.

Currently, I have over 40 cats in my care. My vet bills and food to care for my rescues this year have surpassed \$10,000, and my outstanding debt is over \$10,000. This financial strain severely limits our ability to take on new cases and continues to impede our efforts.

To address this crisis effectively, we urgently need support in the following areas:

1. **Low to No-Cost, High-Volume Spay and Neuter Services:** We need to expand these services through mobile clinics that reach every neighborhood. Accessibility is crucial for widespread adoption.
2. **Targeted Education Campaigns:** Community education about the importance of spay/neuter and responsible pet care is essential. We must address cultural differences and promote humane treatment of animals through advertising and school programs.
3. **Easier Access to Funding:** The current process for obtaining resources like veterinary care and supplies is overly complex. Simplifying the application process for funding would make it more accessible for grassroots organizations like ours.
4. **Stronger Partnerships for Adoption Initiatives:** Increased city support for adoption events and physical spaces would enhance collaboration with rescues, boosting visibility and community involvement in animal adoption.

The mantra “One by one until there are none” is within reach if we receive the necessary resources and support. Many dedicated individuals are ready to contribute, but we need your help to make a substantial impact.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Diana Alvarez  
President and Founder, Lucky Meows Inc.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** DIANA PILARTE <pilartediana@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 10:02 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]

[REDACTED]

Dear Council, I am writing to you from a dog mother who has lost her 4-legged daughter. Because of not having enough money, I couldn't afford to pay a vet for my beloved dog. Everything is very expensive and I couldn't afford it. I asked you to please put up dog insurance at a low cost for those who can't afford to pay. A mother who has lost her dog says goodbye.  
Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Diana Vogel <dianavogel92@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:50 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of animal rescue

[REDACTED]

Hello NYC council,

As a New York City resident, dog owner, and former animal rescue essential worker, I would like to urge the city to allocate sufficient funds for low-cost spay and neuter programs and affordable veterinary care for New Yorkers and their pets.

We need to end the cat and dog overpopulation crisis in this city permanently and take the burden off of private citizens to ensure that our cat colonies and dog populations are not overrunning the streets, filling shelters, and being euthanized in droves.

Thank you,

Diana Vogel

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Diane Kimbrell <smilee14@verizon.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:22 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] STATE OF ANIMAL RESCUE

[REDACTED]

As a senior citizen and pet parent, I am urging city government to allocate major funding to cover high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter, in addition to affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you so much for considering this heartfelt request.

Respectfully,

Diane Kimbrell

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Dilpreet Kainth <dkainth01@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:28 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony for State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm writing to submit written testimony on the State of Animal Rescue in NYC. As a pet parent, rescue volunteer, foster home and animal advocate, I want to urge the NYC Council to allocate substantial funding for high-volume lost-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for every animal in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

As someone who has lived in NYC for over ten years and have spent a majority of that time volunteering with animal rescues, fostering rescued cats and kittens, and advocating for adoption and spay/neuter, I deeply understand the importance of this need.

A large majority of homeless pets are former pets who have been abandoned due to lack of affordable veterinary care, leading to these animals suffering and dying on their own. In addition, affordable spay neuter appointments are extremely rare or inaccessible for rescuers, volunteers and pet parents who need to care for these animals. This is a huge problem because many of these animals are left unspayed or unneutered leading to even more pregnancies and homeless kittens and puppies.

New Yorkers deserve to have pets but pets also deserve the care and accessibly to receive the treatment and support they need. Pet parents should've have to sacrifice or abandon their pets due to the lack of affordability or accessibility

We also need to provide more TNR and care services for the homeless animals all throughout NYC. There are millions throughout the city who are suffering and need our help. And the rescuers who are trying to help them need help too. The number of dying or sick animals is heartbreaking and we need to stop this cycle.

Please provide more funding and support for homeless animals and animal rescues throughout NYC. This problem has been neverending and it's such a cruel system that needs solutions asap.

Thank you for your time  
Dilpreet

Dear Members of the Health Committee:

I want to thank Committee Chair Schulman for holding this important hearing. The pet overpopulation crisis, and especially for dogs, is an issue I care deeply about, and which affects me in a very personal way. For the last seven years, I have been a dog volunteer at the Brooklyn ACC shelter until moving to the new Queens shelter in July when the Brooklyn location closed for renovations. I have been spending 20-30 hours a week at the shelter – walking dogs, providing enrichment, cleaning kennels, and advocating to ACC management for better animal care conditions when they have allowed standards to decline.

Solving this crisis is going to take a multi-pronged approach and involve the City Council, city agencies, nonprofit organizations, and all of our city's pet owners – but it can be done. No, it MUST be done! We simply cannot allow this scale of animal suffering to continue. Nor can we turn our city's animal shelters into animal warehouses, which is the road we're headed down if this unrelenting influx of animals – especially dogs – continues unabated. We also simply cannot expect already overburdened rescue groups to continue pulling animals from ACC shelters, especially when their own adoptions have also declined. In addition, we simply cannot continue ignoring the fact that there are an estimated 500,000 – 1,000,000 stray cats living on our streets, which is just appalling and unacceptable in a city as wealthy, animal-friendly, and progressive as ours. Adding to this tragedy is the utter lack of support the city has provided for the small group of individuals who, out of sheer compassion, have taken on the enormous emotional and financial toll of caring for this massive cat population.

I think the following proposals will significantly reduce the number of homeless animals in the long term, while also improving the welfare of animals who end up in ACC shelters and live on our streets.

Remove the Dept. of Health (DOH) from control over ACC and anything related to animal welfare.

Corine Schiff's testimony crystallized what animal advocates have always known: DOH has zero interest in animal welfare and has a complete disregard for NYC's homeless animals. As has been suggested, a new City Department of Animal Welfare (or a publicly funded organization along those lines) should be created, with the main purpose of contracting with and overseeing ACC shelters. Ideally, it would be run by individuals with a background in animal welfare; would receive adequate and regular funding just like any other city agency; and would be granted strong oversight and enforcement powers. This Department would hold ACC to high standards of animal care, which unfortunately, DOH has miserably failed to do. It would also take over the animal welfare programs currently under DOH's purview but which they have no interest in promoting or administering, including the Animal Population Control Program." Creating a new City Department may be a significant legislative undertaking, but it is well worth the time and effort. Simply put, as long as DOH remains in control of ACC or has any involvement in animal welfare issues, things will remain as dismal as they have been for our city's homeless animals.

Outreach and expansion of DOH's "Animal Population Control Program" (APCP).

Almost no one is aware of this \$6 million program – and is yet another example of DOH's complete disregard for animals. DOH should be required to raise awareness of this program by:

- Collaborating with other city agencies that manage and administer programs for low-income New Yorkers, such as NYCHA, Dept. of Social Services, and HRA. These agencies can raise awareness of the APCP through their website, in letters and emails to clients, and public outreach (advertisements, social and traditional media). DOH can do the same for its low-income programs, such as Medicaid.
- Ensuring 311 has information on this program so residents seeking free or low-cost spay/neuter services for their pets can apply to the program.
- Reaching out to non-profit organizations that serve low-income New Yorkers (legal aid, food pantries, services for domestic violence survivors) – APCP should be included in the services these providers discuss with clients.

DOH must also be required to report to the City Council on their outreach efforts and their effectiveness (i.e., number of applications submitted, number of grants approved, number of animals spayed/neutered, including a breakdown by species). DOH must also be required to conduct an annual or bi-annual analysis of funding needs for continuation and expansion of the APCP.

#### Robust spay/neuter and TNR (Trap, Neuter, and Release) programs.

Hundreds of thousands of intact stray cats live on our city's streets. Nearly 60% of the over 15,000 companion animals entering ACC shelters each year are unspayed/unneutered. Costs for spay/neuters in NYC average \$600 but can be much higher. If anything cries out for a publicly funded, low-cost spay/neuter program, this certainly does. Having a large-scale, well-funded spay/neuter program is key to reducing the homeless pet and feral cat population, and this is something NYC can and must do. The city also needs to partner with TNR groups to manage, control (through spay/neuter), and help care for the feral cat population.

#### NYCHA must enforce its own pet rules.

NYCHA's own rules state that each resident is allowed one dog and one cat per household, each animal must be spayed/neutered, and residents must provide proof that the pet is altered. However, these rules are routinely flouted by residents and ignored by NYCHA. Even worse, some residents breed their dogs and sell the puppies for profit – many of which will eventually end up at ACC shelters. This is a widespread problem and one which NYCHA refuses to address, even when reports and complaints are made to management.

NYCHA also prohibits certain breeds, including pit bulls. I am strongly against breed bans because it has been well-documented that the propensity of a dog bite or attack is not related to any particular breed, and such incidents are virtually always caused by people – how the dog is trained; abuse of the dog; inappropriately approaching the dog; etc. However, if NYCHA is going to have this rule, then they must enforce it. From the number of pit bulls that I and other advocates see in NYCHA housing, they are clearly not enforcing this rule. This makes NYCHA complicit in the dog overpopulation crisis and overburdened ACC shelters and rescue groups.

The majority of dogs at ACC shelters are pit bulls or pit mixes. I have interacted with literally thousands of these dogs over my seven years, and I can tell you, they are some of the sweetest, friendliest, and most loving dogs. But the sad fact is, there are far more pit bulls than there are people willing to adopt them; and so, from an animal welfare perspective, it would be far better if fewer of these dogs were being born. If NYCHA enforced its own pet rules, I strongly believe we would see a gradual and ongoing reduction in the number of pit bulls, thereby easing the crisis at ACC shelters and reducing the overall homeless dog population. Granted, this alone will not solve the problem, but it is certainly one piece of the pie – and an especially important one.

#### Ban backyard breeding.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals defines "Backyard Breeding" as:

"The irresponsible breeding of animals in inadequate conditions with insufficient care, often by people with little experience or knowledge. Backyard Breeders, as distinct from responsible breeders, do not meet acceptable standards of care and breed animals irrespective of whether there is a known demand for the offspring. Backyard Breeders often do not adequately provide for all the special needs of the mother and her offspring. Inadequate nutrition, infectious diseases (kennel cough, parvovirus), parasite infestations (fleas and worms), behavioral problems, health issues, and genetic abnormalities are common in these situations, placing the welfare of animals at risk."

Sadly, it is not uncommon to see female pit bulls come into ACC shelters shortly after giving birth. They rarely come in with their babies and it's likely that their babies were taken from them before 8 weeks of age. The first two months of life are crucial for a puppy's growth and development. They receive vital nutrition and immunity from their mother's milk, and until about 8 weeks, are unable to rely solely on solid food for adequate nutrition. Puppies also learn vital social and behavioral skills from their mother and littermates during this period, including appropriate play, bite inhibition, and communication. Removing babies at such a young age also causes

significant mental and psychological distress in the mothers, and when it happens over and over again, I cannot imagine the emotional pain it places on these poor dogs.

I've also seen dogs that seemed to have been used as breeding machines. They're usually 3 or 4 years old, have permanently and severely outstretched bellies, sometimes hanging so low that they almost touch the floor. They usually have some kind of uterine, mammary, or other medical issue resulting from excessive breeding. As one employee sadly, yet aptly, put it upon seeing one of these poor creatures: "They bred the sh-t out of her!" I strongly suspect that these dogs are dumped at ACC shelters once they are no longer able to produce as many puppies as their earlier. (Remarkably, these dogs are still incredibly sweet, gentle, and trusting despite the abysmal way they've been treated).

These dogs are not coming from puppy mills, pet stores, or out of state breeders – they are coming from right here in our city's own private houses, apartments, and NYCHA buildings. And while the pet store ban has had a significant effect on reducing the homeless rabbit and guinea pig populations, and while I believe it will similarly lead to a reduction in the number of Huskies, German Shepherds, Bulldogs, and Pugs (all popular breeds sold at pet stores) that come into ACC shelters, if we're going to make a dent in this crisis, we must also address the much larger issue of backyard breeders.

A few cities have already passed legislation to ban backyard breeding and others have bills working their way through their respective City Councils. I think a good model for NYC would be the bill passed by the City of Edmonds in Washington State because it takes both a carrot and stick approach. This is a summary of the bill:

- Makes it illegal to deliberately breed any dog, cat, or rabbit for the purposes of profit.
- Violators are subject to a civil penalty of up to \$1,000 per litter.
- The fine is eliminated if the violator provides proof that the animals involved – and their offspring – have been spayed or neutered "and that all breeding activity on the property has ceased."
- There is an exception for "accidental litters" if proof is provided that the animals bred have been spayed or neutered.
- Bans the advertisement and sale of dogs, cats, or rabbits, with a fine of \$250 per animal per day. The fine does not apply to required "rehoming fees" as part of an animal adoption.

Being on the frontlines of this crisis has been emotionally and mentally draining. I often feel a sense of heartbreak, profound sadness, and, worst of all, hopelessness – because those who have the power to change things, mainly City government, just do not care. But this hearing has truly renewed my spirits and for the first time, given me a very real sense of hope. Many great ideas have been proposed as to how we can significantly alleviate this crisis; and we have great momentum!

Again, thank you all for holding and participating in this hearing and I truly look forward to a time when it will be the norm to see empty dog kennels in ACC shelters; and when I'm no longer seeing constant pleas on social media for help with feeding yet another huge cat colony.

Sincerely,

Dolores Ferraro



Forest Hills, NY 11375

[doloresferraro@yahoo.com](mailto:doloresferraro@yahoo.com)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Donna Cancel <donna.cancel@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 10:41 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] NYC Council on the State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

Pets are members of our families and sd we learned during Covid a source of love and companionship for many in our community. Whether they are support animals or not, they help people through mental health crises and allocating funding to protect them in NY is vital to allow more individuals the opportunity to adopt. I strongly urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. Rescuers continue to try and support communities and need all the help they can get. In these times donations are not always available.

Thank you for any support allocated to rescuers and general NY pet parents.

Regards,  
Donna Cancel

To all the members of council:

I am a resident of Brooklyn and an avid animal advocate. For many years I fed and tried my best to give shelter to the neighborhood feral cats. I've done this for more than 8 years. I tried my best to have them TNR'd and I was able to do this for a few out of the 20 that showed up in my yard.

Unfortunately, my income doesn't cover enough to do this and to maintain my expenses. It's disheartening that we as human beings can't help the voiceless and defenseless.

These cats do not ask to be born and because of heartless individuals who take cats as pets and then decide to toss them out, we have a problem with stray cats in all the boroughs. It's so sad and heartbreaking to see a defenseless animal looking and searching for food in the streets, not to mention the risk at the hands of other prey and cruel humans.

I feel if Spay/neutering was made more available and affordable, we will be able to combat the problem of overpopulated stray cats as well as overpopulated shelters with unwanted dogs waiting on the kill list to be euthanized because of irresponsible humans. Please consider our request as it truly comes from a place of caring.

Thank you,  
Donna Cordero

████████████████████

Brooklyn, NY 11208

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Donna E <donna@brooklynanimalaction.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:51 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] TNR Funding and support for our community cats and rescuers

[REDACTED]

I have been involved in TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return) and rescue in Brooklyn since 2000. I can attest to the urgent need for substantial funding to support our community cat population and continue vital TNR efforts—spaying/neutering, vaccinating, and providing medical care for the sick and injured. Private citizens are spending their own time and money to do what should be the city's responsibility. Many of us are financially and emotionally exhausted. The cost of veterinary appointments has become astronomical, making it nearly impossible to access care. Without city funding, there is no sustainable solution in sight, and countless animals will suffer and die.

I implore you to dig deep and allocate substantial resources to fund this critical effort.

Donna Erhardt

[REDACTED]  
Co-founding member of Brooklyn Animal Action.



**Brooklyn Animal Action**  
*a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit All-Volunteer Animal Rescue Organization*

[BrooklynAnimalAction.org](http://BrooklynAnimalAction.org)

[View Our Adoptable Pets](#)

[Support BAA](#)

**State of Animal Rescue  
Public Hearing Testimony  
Submitted by Donny Moss on 9/16/2024**

**Live markets**

- On 9/9/2024, The NYT published extensive story about the public health risks associated with the 70+ live animal markets (aka wet markets) in NYC.
- Multiple animal species are intensively confined in cages that are stacked on top of each other.
- The markets are breeding ground for infectious disease.
- Avian flu outbreaks have already temporarily shut down several markets.
- if avian flu mutates into a strain that can infect humans, it could spread like wildfire before public health authorities are even aware of it.
- Wet markets should be shut down.

**Horse-drawn carriages**

- Certain conditions in NYC cannot be corrected in a way that would make the operation of horse-drawn carriages humane or safe.
- No amount of regulation or enforcement can change that.
- Example one: NYC has no pasture where the horses can graze, run, roll and interact physically, as herd animals do. In NYC, they are stripped of everything that would make a horse's life worth living.
- Example two: Horses are prey animals, not predators. When they spook and bolt down the street in midtown or in Central Park, they become weapons. Over the years, spooked horses have died, and pedestrians and motorists have been seriously injured.
- Please pass Ryder's Law (Intro 573) to take horse-drawn carriages off the streets of NYC.



This is my written testimony concerning the many volunteer organizations in New York City which rescue and care for abandoned dogs and cats. These groups are staffed by caring individuals who use their personal funds to feed, shelter and provide medical care to the countless animals who are abandoned in our city. They rely heavily on charity from family, friends and other interested citizens. It is a very difficult financial situation for everyone involved.

Is it possible for New York City to provide funding to these groups in order to continue the incredibly huge job that they are doing? Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Eileen K Mullen

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Elaine La Penna <elaine.lapenna235@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:52 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee hearing

[REDACTED]

Good evening,

I am a pet owner - of 4 rescue cats - residing in Two Bridges NYC. I also foster bottle babies for Little Wanderers NYC. The need for low cost vet care in NYC is critical for all of us. An animal welfare agency is also desperately needed to be the voice for all the cats being abandoned and left on the streets to die; for all the cats that are not spayed/neutered and continue the vicious litter cycles; for the sick ferals out in poor neighborhoods. Our rescuers are drowning!!! Please hear our pleas and HELP ALL OF US.

Sincerely,  
Elaine La Penna

[REDACTED]  
NY NY 10002  
[REDACTED]

Dear Committee members,

I am a pet owner in Brooklyn who has rescued cats from my back yard. Spaying a female cat is a big expense. Even veterinary offices that offer discounts are painfully expensive. I have spent hours trying to find places, following false leads, and just coming up short. I have also had to put thousands of dollars of debt on my credit card to cover veterinary expenses – and I am talking dental work that makes it possible for a middle aged cat to eat without excruciating pain, not extreme steps extending life for an elderly cat. Please make low cost spay neuter and veterinary care available to New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

Elena Cunningham

## **\*\*Paws for Change: Transforming Cat Welfare\*\***

Hello, my name is Eliana Gibbs, MAP Engagement Coordinator for Queensbridge houses, and today I appeal for support for our community cats.

On August 16th, during a community assessment, I discovered three malnourished kittens and a young mother cat emerging from a rat-infested hole under a NYCHA building. This heartbreaking sight highlights the horrors these innocent creatures face. NYCHA has a troubling history of sealing live cats inside buildings, and I fear for these little ones.

I reached out to over 15 cat rescues, but only one responded, NY. Rescuers are underfunded by the city and overwhelmed. We must confront this crisis and take action!

We cannot effectively manage the rat population without educating the community on caring for stray cats. Immediate action is essential to protect these vulnerable lives and ensure they receive the care they need. Thank you.

Thank you for listening, and I urge you to take this matter seriously. Together, we can make a difference for these innocent lives.

1. **Increased Funding for Rescues:** Provide more financial resources to cat rescue organizations for spay/neuter programs, medical care, and adoption efforts.
2. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch initiatives to educate the community on responsible pet ownership and the importance of spaying/neutering.

3. Support for Foster Programs: Recognize the importance of foster care in saving lives and provide city support for training and financial assistance.
4. Improved Shelter Resources: Enhance shelter facilities and resources to better care for cats.
5. Legislation and Policy Changes\*\*: Implement stricter penalties for animal cruelty, support pet-friendly housing, and promote adoption over purchasing pets.
6. Community Engagement: Encourage community involvement with local rescues through volunteering, donations, and partnerships with schools and businesses.
7. Accessible Veterinary Care: Ensure low-income residents can access veterinary care for necessary medical attention for their cats.
8. More Affordable Spay/Neuter Clinics: Establish free or low-cost spay/neuter clinics in low-income neighborhoods.
9. Government-Level Support for Community Cats: Advocate for a structured approach to manage community cats at the government level, not just locally.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Elie Levine <elielevine01@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 12:17 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] allocate funding for vet clinics!

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I am a concerned resident writing to insist that you allocate funding for low-cost, high-volume veterinary care and spay/neuter operations in NYC. These things should be accessible to any New Yorker in need.

Thanks for your consideration.

Elie

Elie L. Levine / community manager, games @ the new york times / [REDACTED] / 📍 NYC

Thank you, Council Members. My name is Elizabeth Falcone, and I've lived in Council Member Crystal Hudson's district for over 12 years. Like many of us, I've noticed stray cats in our streets, but it wasn't until three years ago that I decided to take action. Since then, I've dedicated countless hours and personal funds to rescue over 130 cats in our district, getting them spayed and neutered.

I want to tell you the story of some of the first cats I rescued, so that you can understand how deeply the cat overpopulation crisis and the lack of affordable spay/neuter impacts regular citizens in your district. I have lived in my apartment building for over a decade and a group of cats has always lived in its backyard alleyways. They would often wake us up at night because of the yowling and fighting as they mated. And then one day I noticed that one of the cats looked very sick. He had lost almost all his fur and was emaciated.

When I searched for help, I was bounced between agencies like 311, ASPCA, and ACC, all of which informed me that there was no direct help for outdoor, unowned cats but that they should get spayed and neutered. I learned from the NYC Health website that there are programs where regular residents like myself can trap and neuter these cats, but the cost and logistics were left up to us.

So that's what I did. I got certified and began to spay and neuter the cats behind my building, but I quickly found myself spending over \$2,000 out of pocket. This work was emotionally draining and financially unsustainable, especially given the limited availability of affordable spay/neuter services.

New Yorkers like myself are stepping up to solve this preventable problem, but we need help. No one wants to see sick, suffering animals outside our apartment windows, and it shouldn't be a financial burden to do what's right. Increasing access to affordable spay/neuter services is incredibly important for residents in every council district. Pets and animals bring joy to so many of us, and it should not be the privilege of the rich to be able to properly care for them.

Again, I have rescued over 130 cats from Council Member Hudson's district alone and have paid for their spay/neuter services out of my own pocket. This is incredibly important volunteer work I want to keep doing, but I humbly ask the Council - and particularly Council Member Hudson - to lend their support to addressing this issue. I urge the Council to support increased access to affordable spay/neuter services so residents like myself can continue this vital work for our community. Thank you.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Levanah99@gmail.com  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 8:54 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Cc:** levanah99@gmail.com  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony to Help Protect and Save our Shelter Animals

[REDACTED]

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to ask that all the animals in the shelters be protected and saved, and that the killing or euthanasia be strictly prohibited to any animal that has a chance for reasonable health trainable behavior. Nor should any animal be killed for space.

More clean well kept shelters should be built, more foster programs, and all housing must be required to permit pets, domestic animals.

Perhaps a special committee meeting should be virtually / hybrid set up to discuss actions and plans to help our precious animals.

Thank you.

Rev. Elizabeth Levy  
NYC, NY. 10011  
levanah99@gmail.com  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** E Mag <elizm8@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:28 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee hearing

[REDACTED]

Topic: NYC private citizens doing the work of NY City, the State & NFP's

I reside in District 9 (since 2002) and previously lived on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. I've been a renter, a homeowner, a co-op Board president, a public school parent and a private school parent in addition to being a full time employee in various companies across our city in my over 35 years as an NYC resident.

I vote in every election.

I am also a lover of animals and will not pass by any animal that needs assistance.

I attended the Council's hearing on Friday September 13 to show my support for the hundreds (maybe thousands) of New Yorkers like myself who rescue/care for homeless animals of NY. I won't bore you with the details of the many, many, many cats I have trapped or rescued off the streets of our city. I have copious records from the ASPCA TNR program, along with the vet bills to verify my efforts. Just for a reference so you understand the scope of things, in the early spring I spent approximately \$3,800 on ONE colony cat (friendly and neutered) who lives in my garden and needed 12 teeth extracted. The option to not provide surgery/removal would have meant his death in a matter of weeks (he's a young cat and otherwise healthy and I still hope to find him a permanent home).

**I ask you to do SOMETHING to improve the resources available to all NY residents. Do SOMETHING to take responsibility for the welfare of ALL animals in the city, including strays. Do SOMETHING that will not require private citizens like myself to shoulder the burden that our city has miserably failed at. Shame on NYC. It's 2024 and this city continues to FAIL at caring for stray animals in a decent and humane manner.**

**Some ideas also for consideration:**

**Mandate that all veterinarians who are licensed in NY city and state MUST donate a certain number of hours every month to spay/neuter and medical care for unhoused cats & dogs.** This could be managed much as the ASPCA manages their TNR program (no loopholes/no excuses/no substitutions). Given that private equity has found their greedy way into the ownership of more Vet practices there is obviously money being made and services at a discount will become even less available to those in the rescuer community.

**Do something/initiate REAL fines against people who use stray cats as their form of rodent control.** I know one building superintendent on my block who locks a few unneutered cats into the basement of his 35 apartment building in Harlem and barely feeds them so they will kill rodents for food. The cats multiply endlessly and then he tosses those he considers 'extras' out on the street to struggle and eventually die because they have had little to no interaction with people, they are not particularly healthy given their lives and will die from eating poisoned rats/mice. This same super has openly acknowledged he manages 10 buildings in the

Bronx where he has also deposited stray cats. This is fairly common behavior among supers in certain neighborhoods.

**Educate NYC citizens that cats are not super creatures that will survive on the streets on their own.** Too many people think that they can toss out a cat and 'it will be fine'. That cat WON'T be fine and will likely die within the year. If the cat is unneutered it will add to the problems that we already have (1 female cat can produce approximately 400 kittens in her lifetime!!!!). In neighborhoods that are predominantly of color there are ingrained beliefs about cats and how they can manage and should not be altered. It is a cycle of DOOM for these cats. **In my 20 years of rescuing and the hundreds of cats I've dealt with I can attest that less than 20% of them are feral cats. They are almost all formerly housed, pets that people simply discard (central Harlem location).**

It's time for the City Council, the Mayor and all of NY to step up and get in line with other large US cities on managing stray animal populations and being a truly humane city.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Maguire

  
New York, NY 10026

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Beth Moore <bethmoore99@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 10:43 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The state of animal rescue in NYC is dire

[REDACTED]

Dear Council,

I have volunteered for two rescues in NYC (Animal Haven and PuppyKitty NYC) and from first hand experience I can speak on the neverending volume of discarded pets on the streets of NYC that in turn breed and exasperate the issue when they are not spayed/neutered. The volume is exorbitant and so many of these animals suffer as a result living on the streets. It's senseless and with proper funding the city government can mitigate this issue. We simply cannot rescue ourselves out of this matter. We need government funding and enforceable spay/neuter laws.

I urge the city government to allocate funding for low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Moore

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Beth Petrenko <bethpetrenko@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 2:17 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony on The State of Animal Rescue in NYC

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

I am an Astoria, Queens resident who is urging the City Council to allocate funding for affordable spay, neuter, and veterinary care for New Yorkers in need of it, as well as setting aside funding towards high-volume and low-cost spay and neuter options for the thousands of feral cats in our city.

Walking through my neighborhood, which has several private citizens running nonprofit cat rescues/TNR services, I still see so many cats who do not have ear tips and look like they are struggling on the streets. I strongly urge the council to take action on a problem that affects all 5 boroughs. People cannot afford to care for their animals and then dump them, while other animals are being surrendered to the overburdened shelter system. My own cat is a rescue and, while I am fortunate enough to be able to provide veterinary care for her, I am also in awe over how expensive each appointment and treatment costs.

Thank you for your time and I hope you will consider putting adequate funding towards this cause.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Petrenko

[REDACTED]

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**From:** ERodriguez <mzrodeli@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 6:55 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony for Government Funding Allocation: High-Volume, Low-Cost Spay/Neuter and Affordable Veterinary Care for New Yorkers

[REDACTED]

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am here today to urge the allocation of substantial funding to support high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care for all New Yorkers, including pet parents and rescuers. Access to these services is a vital step in promoting public health, reducing the number of stray animals, and ensuring the well-being of pets across our communities.

New York City is home to a diverse population of pet owners, many of whom struggle financially to provide necessary veterinary care. For rescuers and low-income families, the cost of basic services such as vaccinations, spaying/neutering, and emergency care can be prohibitive, often leading to animals suffering from preventable diseases or living on the streets. By providing funding for these services, we can address several pressing issues:

1. **Overpopulation and Public Health:** The lack of affordable spay/neuter services contributes to animal overpopulation, leading to more strays on the streets, higher rates of euthanasia, and increased strain on animal shelters. Unsterilized animals can spread disease, potentially threatening public health. Investing in high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter services would significantly reduce these issues, leading to healthier communities.
2. **Economic Equity:** Pet ownership and rescue work should not be a privilege of the wealthy. Many New Yorkers, including those in lower-income brackets, deeply care about their pets but are unable to afford essential care. By funding affordable veterinary services, the government would ensure that all residents, regardless of economic status, have access to the care their pets need. This not only improves the lives of animals but also strengthens the emotional and mental health of the pet owners who depend on their companionship.
3. **Supporting Rescuers and Reducing Shelter Burden:** New York is fortunate to have a large network of rescuers and volunteers dedicated to saving the lives of stray and abandoned animals. However, many of these individuals struggle to cover the costs associated with rescuing, spaying, neutering, and providing veterinary care for the animals they take in. By supporting rescuers through affordable services, we can reduce the burden on our city's animal shelters and prevent unnecessary euthanasia.
4. **Long-term Savings** Investing in preventive care, such as spay/neuter programs, ultimately saves public funds. Reducing overpopulation leads to fewer animals entering shelters and lowers the costs associated with animal control, shelter maintenance, and healthcare for stray animals. Long-term, the cost-benefit of such programs is undeniable.

In conclusion, by allocating substantial funding to high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care, the government will make a critical investment in the health and well-being of New Yorkers, their pets, and our communities. This is an opportunity to show that we value compassion, equity, and responsible pet ownership across all socioeconomic backgrounds.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth Rodriguez

September 15, 2024

Ellen Stewart  
c/o El- Liza's Dog House Inc.

██████████  
Cherry Valley, NY  
██████████

RE: Overcrowding conditions at NYCACC, and a plan to assist with the overcrowding

Greetings,

My name is Ellen Stewart, and I am the owner of El-Liza's Dog House. We are a full service kennel with approximately 60 full size kennels (expandable to 80), a 4 bedroom 2,800 square foot house, a pole barn which has a gated area which we used as an ISO unit, a 10 cage full sized grooming room, a retail area (which can be converted to veterinarian space to do spay/neuters and emergency care), all located on approximately 16 acres upstate NY.

Last year, I had Elizabeth Keller of rescue Dogs Rescue Soldiers, a NYCACC NHR offer this space to Risa Weinstock, but Risa declined to answer the email offer, and when asked at a board meeting by Nolan why she hadn't, she said she would check her records.

I find it appalling that NYC taxpayer's funds were spent in the multi millions to build a 50,000 square foot facility in Queens, which has only 72 kennels for dogs. I find it further unbelievable that Risa (and perhaps her associates) went out of NY to the state of Delaware to register the LLC that owns the land that she purchased in Queens (which was contaminated and wasted several millions to decontaminate and cost years of time delays and is a 22 minutes walk from the nearest subway station, keeping potential employees and volunteers as well as adopters away).

Rep. Holden has clearly stated his sentiments about the Queens ACC facility, most of which in short, match my comments above.

So, I am here to make an offer to this committee which I hope will not fall on deaf ears.

I would like to sell the kennel and house. I am looking to retire and I live 5 hours away from there and haven't the time to invest there.

I am looking to sell all for the sum of \$1,300,000. There are close to 13 acres that you could expand on to turn the property into an amazing situation, both for the NYC dogs, and as a full service kennel/veterinary center for the locals.

I would consider a 2 year lease, so that ACC could finish building Brooklyn and the Bronx.

This would be a wonderful solution in aiding the lack of space. You can train dogs there, adopt them out, and bring in newer arrivals as the dogs get adopted out.

I hope to hear from someone on your committee in answer to my offer.

Sincerely,

Ellen Stewart

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Emilly Gavilanes <egavilanes@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:45 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] See Below

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council,

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high- volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care services for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet pat parents!

Thank you!

Regards,  
Emilly Gavilanes

## Emily Hartford – Testimony on Affordable Vet Care –Committee on Health Hearing 9/13/249

My name is Emily Hartford; I live in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, and I'm pleased to share testimony regarding affordable veterinary care in New York City. Rescued animals from the City's shelter system and rescue organizations have been a vital part of my and my family's life for nearly all of my 20 years as a New York City resident, so this topic is close to my heart.

My husband and I have two cats: Bird and Bean (prior to their time with us, our cat, Miette was with us for over a decade until she passed in 2021). These animals are in our lives thanks to the tireless work of rescuers. I adopted Miette during my early years as a New Yorker, from the ACC; Bird and Bean were both brought in from the streets by small Brooklyn cat rescuers: Good Home Pet Adoptions and Monroe Street Cats.

(Miette was a smart, slightly spooky brown and grey tabby with big feelings. Bird is an acrobatic and sweet, tiny orange tabby. Bean is a gigantic tuxedo who wants nothing more than to cuddle his best friend, Bird.)

I can't imagine our lives without these animals. My husband and I both feel that Miette was a critical salve to our mental health throughout the pandemic. Now, Bird and Bean bring us a huge amount of joy—and remind us to slow down our busy lives, to give care to these creatures and each other. They are our family.

Our cats would not be alive without affordable vet care, and the rescue organizations that depend on it. The rescuers that saved our cats' lives are running *tiny* operations, without municipal support for the critical service they provide this city. They give their energy and their resources to try and save every cat they can, and find it a loving, safe home. I know from speaking with them, that their work would be absolutely impossible without affordable veterinary care.

These rescuers ensure that animals are spayed/neutered before being adopted—making the adoption process much more affordable and feasible for families like mine. My husband and I are both working artists, and knowing that there are options to rescue an animal, and be supported in those initial vet expenses, was a huge part of our ability to do it.

These rescuers also ensure that as many feral cats as possible are spayed/neutered before being returned to their neighborhoods—taking on the expenses themselves and through donations. Despite Herculean efforts, the demand for this work far exceeds the capacity in my home community of Brooklyn. The feral cat population greatly exceeds small rescuers' ability to save them, and I know that's also true across the city.

Greater access to veterinary care will help these dedicated community members continue to provide this vital service—connecting New Yorkers with the pets that will become family, and ensuring that as few animals as possible are forced to live short, painful lives on the streets. I deeply hope that the Council will see what an important part affordable vet care plays in our families and communities.

Dear Committee:

I write to offer my testimony on the state of animal welfare, particularly companion animal welfare, in New York City. I'd like to raise three points:

- 1) **The cost of vet care is out of control across the country and in New York City.**  
People who need to access vet care for their pets (or for their rescue work) are overly burdened. My rescue cat, who came inside in January of this year, has cost me over \$15,000 in vet bills since being diagnosed with Lymphoma – unapparent at the time he came in off the street. His every-three-week chemo treatment costs \$750 for the vet to administer a pill to him. I have no other choice except to pay for it or euthanize him. I have racked up extraordinary debt. I am fortunate to be able to carry this debt, despite it costing a fortune in interest on my CareCredit card. So many others are unable to do this and either let their pet go, hoping for the best, euthanize them, or drop them in an overburdened shelter. The city could do several things to ease this crisis:
  - a. **Demand vet practices provide payment plans for expensive services and provide services at a discount for low-income households.** This would help families hold on to beloved pets, ease the homeless pet crisis, and ease the overburdened shelters.
  - b. **Create a fund to be accessed by low-income households** to support their veterinary costs.
  - c. **Support the ASPCA or enter into a city run program** offering free spay/neuter and basic wellness (vaccinations etc.) for low-income individuals.
- 2) **The homeless animal crisis is out of control.** As someone active in Trap-Neuter-Return programs in Brooklyn, I see the impact of unspayed/unneutered pets and homeless animals – particularly cats – breeding out of control, overburdening rescuers with kittens and pregnant animals. Male cats, unfixed, fight causing sickness and become a nuisance with their spraying. The city can take numerous steps to ease this crisis:
  - a. **Provide an incentive to pet owners to spay and neuter their pets** and provide a place for people to access free spay/neuter and basic wellness (see c above).
  - b. **Provide support to rescuers** in the form of:
    - i. **City wide education programs as to what TNR is**, how to help rescuers in their neighborhood, and providing access to city properties to effectuate TNR programs.
    - ii. **City wide education programs as to how to care for community cats.**
    - iii. **Provide small grants** that are easy to access to rescuers to support their work.
    - iv. **Ensure vets provide low-cost or no cost services** to those that are TNR certified and provide care.
    - v. **Provide additional City run (or support the ASPCA)** in doing massive spay-neuter clinics to be accessed solely by rescuers.
- 3) **Ban pet stores and support existing shelters and build more shelter space.** No one should be purchasing a pet in a store in the city when the shelters are bursting at the seams with pets of all types. No pet stores, period. The city can:
  - a. **Provide incentives to individuals for adopting pets from shelters** in the form of a welcome home pack with information on how to care for the pet, coupons and freebies for food and other basic needs.
  - b. **Provide additional funding to shelters** that are in existence.

c. **Build additional shelter space(s)** for the overflow crisis.

If the city engaged with even one or two of the suggestions above it would go an extremely long way towards easing the homeless pet and companion animal abandonment crisis.

Emily Harting

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11221

[REDACTED]

[Emilyharting@gmail.com](mailto:Emilyharting@gmail.com)

New York City Council Committee,

I am a Brooklyn resident writing to voice my support for low-cost spay and neuter services in the city as well as for increased access to affordable veterinary care. I have spent thousands of dollars on veterinary services for my own pets within the last year. Additionally, in the last month, I have worked to rescue 5 cats within Brooklyn and have paid for their veterinary care, food, and transportation. While I am happy to do my part to help animals, it should not fall on ordinary people to solve the animal crisis in New York City. Additionally, it is unrealistic to expect that private individuals are able to solve the animal crisis here in the city when individuals have far less resources than the city.

I hope the City Council will take steps to make affordable pet care available and accessible in order to promote the health and wellbeing of animals.

Sincerely,

Emily McVey

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Emily Poppish <epoppish@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 6:34 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]

[REDACTED]

I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Emma Montgomery <emma@emma-montgomery.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 4:31 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To Whom It May Concern,

We urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

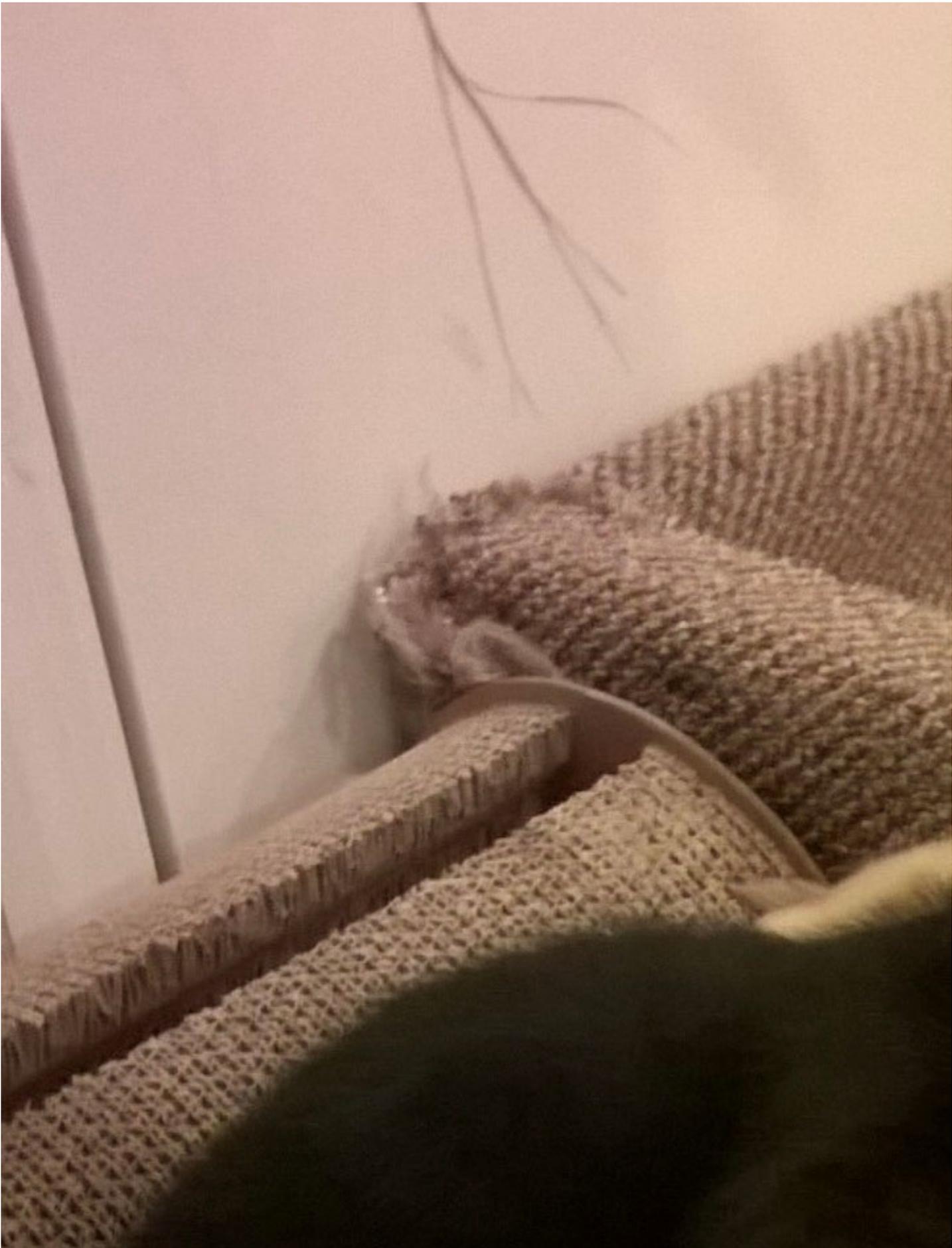
I adopted my two cats Charlie and Pepper from Anjellicle Cats Rescue. Their foster mom Wendy found my boys on the streets of Flushing, Queens with their mother Nala when they were just a few weeks old. The kittens had a severe respiratory illness when Wendy took them in. She nursed Nala and her kittens back to good health.

Without Wendy's care and financial support, our boys Charlie and Pepper may not be here today. We were able to adopt healthy, neutered, vaccinated kittens in thanks to Wendy's significant financial contribution.

The financial burden of shouldn't on the wonderful TNR community or foster parents. They are overwhelmed with the amount of cats on the street—the city should be thanking them for their work and subsidizing their significant efforts to make NYC a better place for all.

Thank you for reading my story and supporting the cat families of NYC.

Best,  
Emma, Zack, Charlie and Pepper









**Emma Montgomery**

Founder & Principal | Brooklyn, NY

[Emma-Montgomery.com](http://Emma-Montgomery.com) | [@emmamontgomerydesign](https://www.instagram.com/emmamontgomerydesign)

(347) 852-5680

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Emmeline Cardozo <emmeline.cardozo@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 1:58 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Committee on Health Hearing on Stray Animals

[REDACTED]

Good morning,

I am a Brooklyn resident and urge the City Council to direct funding to address the crisis of stray animal overpopulation in NYC. Please fund proven solutions including TNR, affordable spay and neuter services and funding for veterinary care and food for at-risk New Yorkers and their pets-- these measures reduce suffering and allow city residents to keep their pets at home and out of animal shelters or the street.

Without coordinated city-wide action and increased funding it will not be possible to reverse the current cat overpopulation crisis. We cannot be dependent on a patchwork of 501c3 organizations and activists to be the driving force on this issue -- this is the responsibility of city government. I support adoption of the recommendations of the many dedicated advocates who provided testimony in the Committee on Health Hearing on 9/13/2024.

Emmeline Cardozo  
Brooklyn, NY

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Erica Clayton <erica.j.clayton@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 3:04 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The state of animal rescue

[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Erica Clayton, I'm a resident of Brooklyn, lifelong cat lover, and member of the NYCACC foster network. While I am not a full time volunteer, I do open my home to cats as a foster parent. Fostering means getting a cat out of a stressful shelter environment and into a warm, loving temporary home until their forever families are ready to adopt.

As you know, the New York City animal shelter and rescue system is under a tremendous amount of strain. Every organization is over capacity in animals and bills while dangerously under resourced - including the largest city-supported system the NYCACC.

The cost of medical care for basic and necessary procedures like spay/neuter procedures or vaccines deter potential adopters due to their unpredictable and high costs. We are in need of large scale, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

In addition to fulfilling this funding need, we need the city and state to help spread awareness of pet insurance, its availability, and the importance of insuring pets as early as possibly to help save on out of pocket care for emergencies (and even routine wellness visits). I have personally undertaken nearly \$10k in vet bills this year, a significant portion of which are for preexisting conditions that insurance won't cover. Without insurance I could have been in an even tougher place than I already was.

I am remarkably lucky to be able to receive these bills and pay them in full. And while some visits warrant the high costs (emergencies), others are much more routine but still out of reach for many working class families.

All pets deserve a chance at a happy life in a society that can support them. Shelters are being forced into debt or choosing euthanasia because they cannot keep up with the demand. It's an unfortunate but necessary fact. These programs need immediate funding in order to curb population growth and provide relief to shelters and rescues across the city.

Thank you  
Erica

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Eugenia Furneaux <eugenia.fa@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:31 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Hello, my name is Eugenia Furneaux. I am a resident of Williamsburg, Brooklyn and I am involved in the rescue and safety of feral cats in our neighborhood. I volunteer with greenpoint cats and am a caretaker for two cat colonies in Williamsburg and Greenpoint. It is an understatement to say our animal rescue groups are stretched too thin. Without proper care and support the crisis will only escalate at both the risk to our animals and those who work tirelessly to care for them. I see first hand the financial and emotional toll the lack of funding, support, and physical resources available in our city. I am gainfully employed and I struggle to be able to afford for the care of our animals in need. Without the support of rescue groups I do not know what I would do. I strongly urge the NYC council to allocate substantial on-going funding low cost, high volume spay and neuter resources with an on-going commitment to affordable veterinary care for all rescuers and low-income pet parents in our city.

Sincerely,  
Eugenia Furneaux

Eugenia Furneaux  
[REDACTED]

TESTIMONY FOR NYC COUNCIL HEARING 9.13.24

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Submitted by Eva Prokop, founder of Whiskers-aGoGo 501c3  
92 Dupont Street apt 2R Brooklyn, NY 11222  
City Council District 33

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I have been running a small cat and kitten rescue for almost 15 years. We were incorporated and granted 501c3 status in 2018. Our cats and kittens come from the backyards, streets, and parks of Brooklyn, from private surrenders, and animals we “pull” from the Animal Care Centers in response to pleas for help from the ACC New Hope department.

Rescue has never been easy – we deal with injured, ill, and abandoned animals. We understand this is a part of the job description. In recent years, however, the number of abandoned friendly animals seems out of control. At the same time, the cost of veterinary care has skyrocketed. With private vetting options out of our reach – we’ve had to slow down at the time when we should be doing MORE of spay and neuter!

The most important part of rescue is prevention: spay and neuter to tame overpopulation, control of backyard breeders (they exist for both dogs and cats), and policing animal abuse. Sadly, NYC government has failed on all these fronts, failed animals and people who care for them (which is a majority of your constituents).

We have an underfunded, poorly run municipal shelter system which doesn’t offer a facility in every borough (despite the court ruling years ago), and a toothless Mayor’s Office of Animal Welfare, which doesn’t even provide a (tiny) list of low cost spay neuter options for our pets. Don’t even try to report animal abuse – NYPD doesn’t seem to be aware that it is part of their job description.

I am tired and discouraged. I have to compete for very limited spay/neuter appointments with other rescuers AND – ironically with ACC! We have to ask for private donations to pay for vet bills, pet food, supplies, gas, transportation. This is not OK.

You have an army of animal-loving people who will work for free to help animals and their communities and who will do it FOR FREE. Do your part.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** eugenia bortsova <avia210@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 8:21 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Affordable Spay/Neuter for NYC pets

[REDACTED]

I urge the city government to allocate substantial and sufficient funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.  
We have too many unwanted pets in the city, and our shelters and rescues are overwhelmed.  
I am a member of many low-income neighborhoods pet groups and many times a months see questions about affordable spay/neuter services. It is definitely needed for our city.  
If you have any questions, contact me here, please.  
EVGUENIA Bortsova  
Kings county resident

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Ezra Ooghe <ezraooghe@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 6:28 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Call for action

[REDACTED]

We urge city council to allocate substantial funding for low cost, high volume spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker and need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thanks

Ezra Ooghe

Bedstuy, 11233

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Fadia Mohama <fadiamohama@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 9:23 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Affordable Vet care for NYers

[REDACTED]

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high volumen, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents"

Fadia Mohama

[REDACTED]

Love life and life will love you back. Love people and they will love you back. Arthur Rubinstein

# feargal halligan

██████████, Brooklyn 11216 NY - ██████████ - [www.feargalhalligan.com](http://www.feargalhalligan.com) - [feargalhalligan@gmail.com](mailto:feargalhalligan@gmail.com)

To Whom it concerns:

I am a volunteer at an animal charity known as ForAnimals inc. For the past five years I have been involved in most aspects of the charity but particularly as a shelter volunteer. There are too many cats! From colonies all over Queens we trap cats for spaying, and this eats up a huge proportion of the Charity's budget. Allowing low cost spay and care would allow the charity to free up resources towards homing stray animals and generally managing large colonies of whatever animals collect in the city.

I implore the city to take notice and free up funds now!

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Feargal Halligan". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

September 16, 2024

I'm not part of any rescue group. I live in Queens and I am one of very few people that I'm aware of in my area that does TNR (trap, neuter, release). I do it passively, aka, the cats that pass through my yard repeatedly will be TNR'd, I am not seeking them out like true rescuers do and I've probably done at least 20 cats. I live around people who don't care until it's affecting them directly but are unwilling to step up and do one thing to fix the problem. Everyone doing this has a lot going on in their lives but unlike most people, the animal lovers can't look away.

I've had a few rescue people help me over the years, but mainly it's been me on my own dime. As everyone knows, it's nearly impossible to get an appointment for Spay/Neuter at ASPCA so I've learned to be creative, make connections with rescuers and find less expensive ways to handle this. However, it's so much more than just a trap, neuter, and release. It's the need for holding and recovery space. What if they're friendly? Then it's feeling awful about putting them back out and then becoming an adoption advocate. If you can't find homes, you end up with more pets that you didn't plan for. It's such an involved and emotional process for every single person who cares about animals, regardless of animal species. Nearly everyone doing this feels like they're drowning and we/they need a life vest.

Why couldn't the city find a way to make this a paying job? I'm sure more people would become more involved if that were the case. We need a recovery/holding space that can accommodate the most basic animal needs as well as handling all medical issues that can arise in every borough. In terms of the feline population, if this were a focused effort we could curtail the birth rate and slow down and hopefully eventually, halt all the misery of being an unwanted animal on the streets of NYC. Animal rescuers operate in the shadows and front most if not all the costs or have to beg for money via Go Fund Me's, etc. No matter if it's for a person's personal pet or a stray or injured animal they want to help, a simple vet visit now costs over \$100. If you're looking at testing, meds, or lifesaving measures, you could go broke trying to help one sick animal. I understand vet's costs have also risen but something's got to give. The city needs to step in in a real way.

The Town of Hempstead has shelter visits built into their tax structure. Any person residing within that township is entitled to bring any pet in for Spay/Neuter and medical issues free of charge. They'll even hold a sick animal there for free until it's well enough to be released, and or, if not, they will humanely end its misery. Why can't NYC find a way to put a focused effort into this massive issue? It's way overdue. Thank you.

Flora Carnevale

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Fran Antigone <gumdrop48@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 3:30 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Bill to reduce veterinary fees

[REDACTED]

My name is Fran Antigone  
I live in Brooklyn in Midwood  
and have been involved in rescuing, spaying/neutering and adopting out cats and kittens most of my 78 years.

The harm of the high fees vets charge make it difficult or impossible for children in low income families to have pets. It is not a luxury for a child to have a pet especially if the child's life is on the rough side. Pets are not only for rich and middle class kids. As a retired psychotherapist I am aware and have witnessed how pets aid in sustaining children where there is family instability and/or childhood depression.

I too came from a poor and difficult family on the lower east side and can tell you that it was the cat who was always there for me since both parents had to work.

Telling a child that the animal they brought home can't be kept because the vet is too expensive or that the pet that was kept had to be surrendered is not only heartbreaking to a child but damaging as they lose their source of reliability. So please consider those kids when you consider this bill.

Reducing spay/neuter fees and other vet costs will allow rescuers to get the initial care the animals need, spay/neuter, and to assist the new caretakers in the ability to afford vet fees that arise such as continuing vaccines and dental care for aging cats and dogs Sent from my iPhone

Frances Greene



Richmond Hill, NY 11418-2147

I am a longtime Queens resident. I want to bring this matter to your attention. The problem of feral cats that need help to be fixed and vaccinated to avoid an overabundance of cats getting hit by cars and dying of disease.

I wish to ask for your help to get funds to help animal organizations and to help these animals and keep our city of New York as humane, as to help these animals as we would help any human being.

Myself and my family and my neighbors have taken in many animals over the years and feed them and take them to the vet and get them spayed and neutered, and as we age and have less funds to live on it becomes more difficult to save these animals.

I appreciate your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Frances Greene

[REDACTED]

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**From:** francesca castellanos <castellanosfrancesca86@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:00 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] More resources for nyc animals

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern:

My name is francesca castellanos and I have been volunteering as an animal rescuer for over 25 years. And I can attest for the need of low cost spay and neuter services for pet parents and rescue groups to help ease the heartache of so many homeless pets in the city. As rescuers this is something emotionally, financially and physically affects us seeing so many homeless animals especially because this can be avoided bringing more resources. Resources such as low and free spay/ neutering and veterinary care to low income people so that they don't have to abandon or surrender their pets due to lack of money. I sincerely hope that you will continue to address this issue and find a solution that all stakeholders agree with.

Sincerely

Francesca Castellanos

Sent from my iPhone

Frانيا Shelley-Grielen, Animal Behavior (MA), Urban Planning, (MS)  
Applied Animal Behaviorist, Licensed Pet Care Technician Instructor, Author  
<https://AnimalBehaviorist.us>

### NYC Council 9/13/24 Testimony

Hello everyone, my name is Frانيا Shelley-Grielen. I am a licensed pet care technician instructor, author and applied animal behaviorist working with companion animals in New York City. As an animal behaviorist, I am called upon to work with pet guardians mainly for behavior issues they are experiencing with their pets.

Research and experience tell us that behavior concerns are among the top, if not the top reasons for surrender to animal shelters and for consulting animal professionals. Typical behavior issues listed are aggression and unacceptable elimination for both species, cats and dogs. But more often than not, it is the surrender to shelters that happens more frequently than addressing a behavior issue or two, and when surrender is not possible, as in shelter capacity not allowing, we see what we are seeing now, more animals, namely cats, being “dumped” or turned out of homes into public spaces.

Former house cats are not socialized or nearly equipped to the very hard life of living on the streets. Nor are the streets cats equipped for the life they are born into. Most of them will not make it:

“ It was previously reported that 75% to 90% of kittens die before six months of age in high density FRC populations (Izawa and Ono, 1986, Mirmovitch, 1995, Nutter et al., 2004, Gunther et al., 2011).” (1)

and that journey towards death is fraught with illness, starvation and predation, and savagery.

TNR organizations and Rescues do tremendous heavy lifting in this city to ameliorate the onslaught of street cats and dogs but it is simply not and never enough. There are not enough people to be on the other end of rescue and forever homes may not be forever or no one would be getting surrendered or dumped in the first place. Neutering companion animals and managing behavior are vital to insuring permanence in homes. Neither can happen without support, cultural acceptance and access to resources.

We already have a laws in place that speaks directly to this. New York State Education Law §809, which states:

*“courses of instruction shall cause instruction to be given in every elementary school under state control or supported wholly or partly by public money of the state, in the humane treatment and protection of animals and the importance of the part they play in the economy of nature as well as the necessity of controlling the proliferation of animals which are subsequently abandoned and caused to suffer extreme cruelty.”*

Strong language but we need to ask whether or not such a law is just on the books or is implemented in today's classrooms or yesterday's or tomorrow's. Research on students and classrooms where humane education was offered shows:

“..statistically significant gains in knowledge, attitudes, and intended behavior at both the third and seventh-grade levels...children who were more knowledgeable about and favorably disposed toward animals also were more likely to respond with greater empathy to people and have better relationships with peers... During focus groups third-graders related evidence of behavior change, some stating that they had begun to spend more time with their pets, had stopped hitting or teasing them, or had shared their new knowledge with friends and family members... During focus groups several seventh graders, like their third-grade counterparts, suggested that their behavior had changed or would change as a result of the Potter League program. Some, for example, indicated that they had become kinder toward their pets and would be more willing to speak up about mistreatment of companion animals” (2)

This is one study and like most studies, raises more questions perhaps than it answers – one of which might be how strong a hold such attitudes might take as children mature, but with such promise and with an immediate effect to benefit humans and companion animals, why need to find out the answers. We are morally, ethically and legally obligated.

#### Footnotes

(1) I. Gunther, T. Raz, O. Berke, E. Klement, (2015) Nuisances and welfare of free-roaming cats in urban settings and their association with cat reproduction, *Preventive Veterinary Medicine*, Volume 119, Issues 3–4, Pages 203-210, ISSN 0167-5877, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.prevetmed.2015.02.012>.

(2) Unti, B., & DeRosa, B. (2003). Humane education past, present, and future.

Many people in NYC are willing to spay/neuter community cats in their backyards, but they are held back by the high costs at private vet clinics and limited access to low-cost options. The ASPCA, for example, only released about 1,000 appointments for rescuers in September. If affordable and accessible services were available, more community members—not just rescuers—would get cats fixed.

Franze de la calle

[REDACTED]

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**From:** gabe Carr <gabecarr@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 11:34 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony

[REDACTED]

I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable vet care for any New Yorker in need, including both rescuers and pet owners.

G. Carrillo

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Gaby Niggemeier <gniggemeier@mac.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 12:07 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue in NYC

[REDACTED]

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you.

Gaby Niggemeier  
Resident

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Geoff Chadsey <geoffchadsey@earthlink.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:56 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] re: TNR services for NYC cat colonies

[REDACTED]

I'm writing to share my support for community cat care and Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) and vaccination efforts throughout New York City, and in Bushwick in particular. These efforts are humane for outdoor cats and effective for communities who are impacted by and care for the cats. My partner and I have just bought an apartment in Southeast Bushwick. With our building came a cat colony of about 20 cats, scattered across 3-4 yards. We worked with the group Bushwick Street Cats, after contacting a number of groups and the ASPCA. They helped us trap and neuter 5 cats over two days. Spaying fees were covered by money allocated by the ASPCA. There are many more cats to go. There will be even more by next summer if we do not continue trapping breeding cats. In the meantime, we look after them as best we can. City funds, not just private or non-profit funds, need to be allocated to help curtail the breeding and to help care for these cats. Thank you.

Geoff Chadsey  
[REDACTED]  
Brooklyn, NY 11207  
[REDACTED]

My name is Giang Nguyen, and I have been volunteering with several cat rescues, as well as fostering with the ACC, since 2021. At the end of 2023, I moved from Manhattan to Bushwick and began rescuing cats independently. Through this work, I've had the chance to meet many neighbors just a block or two from my home who love and care deeply for their cats but cannot afford to have them spayed or neutered. While they understand the importance of these procedures, financial hardship makes it impossible for them to cover the costs.

I've connected some of these individuals to my rescue network, and while we've been able to help a few, the lack of affordable spay/neuter appointments means that many more remain in need.

Another concerning case is a bodega half a block from my home that had two unspayed cats. The owners refused to spay them and even threatened to abandon one. My rescue stepped in, and we took in the cat, who was later diagnosed with pyometra, a life-threatening infection of the uterus.. Without our intervention, she would have suffered and died from this condition which is so preventable with a spay surgery.. The other cat remains unspayed because I haven't been able to secure an affordable appointment.

Another situation involves a smoke shop across the street, where the owner is intentionally keeping cats unspayed so he can breed and sell their kittens. Despite offering to pay for the procedures myself, the owner declined any assistance.

These stories all come from within a one-block radius of my home in Bushwick, but I know they are only a small glimpse of the widespread suffering animals face across Brooklyn and New York City.

This is a 100% solvable problem. The solutions are clear:

1. **City-funded, high-volume spay/neuter programs** accessible to both rescuers and pet owners.
2. **Education and advocacy** to promote spay/neuter practices.
3. **Enforcement of laws** against illegal animal sales and backyard breeders, like the smoke shop.

By implementing these measures, we can prevent unnecessary suffering and improve the lives of countless animals across our city.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Gina Houghton-Larsen <gina60@ameritech.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:56 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Cc:** Gina Houghton-Larsen  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funding plea for ACC

[REDACTED]

>  
> Hello NYC Council on the State of Animal Rescue  
>  
> It is with great urgency that I write you today-on behalf of our beloved family pets.  
>  
> As a longtime animal advocate, shelter volunteer, and adopter of two dogs, I can speak firsthand to the urgent need for additional shelter funding. Spay and neuter education and services are of the most critical first line of animal overpopulation. I have assisted in several 'spay/neuter' days where volunteers assist dog owners in education and coordination/scheduling their pet spay and neuter.  
>  
> Once pets are adopted, many pet parents face high veterinary costs making it a difficult choice to adopt a pet in the first place.  
>  
> In short, New York City NEEDS more funding to assist in spay/neuter clinics as well as veterinary care specifically for those adopting pets.  
>  
> Please please please listen to the New York City residents in their urgent need to help with adoptions, care, and spay and neuter assistance!  
>  
> thank you,  
>  
> Gina Houghton-Larsen  
>  
>

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Gina Trivellini <gina.trivellini@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:42 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Good afternoon,

My name is Gina Trivellini and I am writing to strongly urge city government to allocate substantial funding for animal rescue and care. As a foster (and then adopter) with Little Wanderers NYC, and a resident of the Upper East Side of Manhattan, I can attest to the need for this funding. There are sick and injured, scared but oftentimes loving animals living in our streets.

New York City rescues are doing incredible, meaningful work with little to no resources. They rely on support from the community, and sometimes that isn't enough. There is a significant need for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. Please make this funding a priority so that we can properly care for all of the animals in New York City that cannot advocate for themselves.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,  
Gina Trivellini

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Grace Houghton-Larsen <grace.houghton.larsen@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:53 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] STATE OF ANIMAL RESCUE

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I am urging the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorkers in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

As a 3-time adopter, 3-time foster parent, and an advocate for all animals and pet parents to live a healthy and happy life, I am outraged at the lack of funding and am urging, as a resident of NYC for nearly 10 years, for substantial, meaningful funding to be allocated to this cause.

Thank you for your consideration,

Grace

My name is Gracita Samuel, and I live in Jamaica, Queens, in city council district 28, represented by Adrienne Adams. Jamaica is one of the toughest areas for animal rescue work, and it feels like the burden is placed squarely on the few of us who try to help. Once people in the community know you care about animals, you become the go-to person when they find sick kittens or injured strays.

This summer, the situation spiraled into a crisis. People are finding animals suffering in the streets, but with no access to affordable veterinary care, they bring them to me. I've become an unpaid, unofficial animal welfare officer for New York City. My home is now a shelter full of abandoned pets, all desperately needing new homes. But I'm just one person—I'm also a wife and a mother, and my family wants me with them. My kids ask why I'm always rescuing animals instead of spending time with them, and my husband feels like I'm being forced to choose between our family and these animals. No one should have to make that kind of choice. This situation is heartbreaking because there's a simple solution: spay/neuter programs. A city-funded, high-volume spay/neuter initiative would change everything. It would prevent so many of these animals from being born into suffering in the first place. If we can reduce the number of unwanted animals, shelters won't be so overcrowded, and the animals that do come into the system will have a better chance at finding loving homes. Right now, people are scared to take animals to the shelter because they know it's overwhelmed. They leave them in the streets instead, and that's how the problem lands on my doorstep. We need the city to step up with a real, accessible solution. A comprehensive spay/neuter program would ease the burden on rescuers, improve shelter conditions, and, most importantly, end the needless suffering of thousands of animals. The city has the power to fix this, and it shouldn't be on the shoulders of a few people in the community. We need action now. --- This version seeks to capture the emotional weight of the situation, emphasizing the personal toll it takes on you and why a systemic solution like spay/neuter is not just needed, but urgent.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Greg Padgett <gdpadgett@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:42 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Low cost spaying and neutering funding

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I've been involved in the NYC rescue community for several years. It has been heartbreaking to see the number of kittens/cats on the street skyrocket post-COVID. I beg that you please allocate city funds to assist with low-cost spaying and neutering of strays and pets for both animal rescuers and pet parents. There is no way for rescuers to stay on top of controlling the pet population on the streets without government assistance. With vets charging \$600+ dollars for a simple spay/neuter surgery (office visit, blood work, surgery on another day), it makes it impossible for already struggling rescues as well as low-income pet parents to make the responsible decision of spaying/neutering animals. As more animals are being born on the streets, I'm also seeing an increase in tragic stories of animals getting injured by cars and/or sick with more people crying out for resources from already tapped-out rescues to pay for urgent vet care bills. Our streets aren't safe for furry creatures. It's exhausting work and disheartening when you see kittens being born left and right on the streets with no open homes for them to go to. I pray you help these furry New Yorkers by providing much-needed resources just like you are to new people relocating to this area from other parts of the world.

Thank you,  
Greg Padgett  
[REDACTED]  
Upper West Side

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Haley Wilt <haleywilt3@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 7:39 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Haley Wilt, and I am a resident of Astoria, Queens.

I am writing to urge the city of New York's government to allocate funding for veterinary care, including high-volume, low-cost spay and neuter programs, for any animal and New Yorker in need. This funding would help reduce the number of stray animals in our community, and provide much-needed aid to rescuers and pet parents alike.

Please, do the right thing and dedicate necessary resources to this cause. New Yorkers and pets will thank you.

Thank you for your time,

Haley Wilt

[REDACTED]  
Astoria, NY 11105

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Harlem Animal Rescue <harlemanimalrescue@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:34 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] TESTIMONY on State of Animal Welfare

[REDACTED]

My name is Aimee Jolson, co-founder of Harlem Animal Rescue transitioning to President of the newly formed 501c3, Be The Change Animal Rescue. We are a tiny, mostly two to four person group of rescuers operating in Central Harlem, District 9. In a five block radius, there are at least 100 homeless cats, that we know of. In the 10-12 blocks we cover and the five colonies we feed, we estimate at least 200 cats are unfixed and unvaccinated. We would love to invite a council member for a tour.

Every single day we are fielding pleas for help. Every single day we say no, because we cannot keep up with what is happening. **A MINIMUM of 60% of the cats we rescue are friendly dumped house pets, or their direct descendants.**

I am allergic to cats, so much so that I hated them because growing up, when friends got a cat, I couldn't visit them anymore. I have been a vegetarian/vegan and animal advocate for over forty years. I have lived in NYC since 1991 and I never saw a homeless animal until 2017 when I moved to Central Harlem. It was in a lot behind the library on 135<sup>th</sup> street where I encountered my first colony of kittens living in a trash pile with friendly adults around. I reached out for help on FB and found other rescuers nearby...and so it began.

I am so overwhelmed and so exhausted by the state of rescue in Harlem at this time that to even imagine how to testify feels impossible. I would like to emphasize the toll that doing this work takes on the humans who show up for these animals every day. The humans who find animals that have been hit by cars or have fallen out of windows and are lying on the ground writhing in pain.....we deal with all of it. Burn out is real, mental health crisis is real, and compassion fatigue..... that burnt out two years ago. It is so bad.

**WE NEED HELP NOW!!! WE NEED EMERGENCY FUNDING!!**

**At the recent hearing, the lack of preparation and concern from the DOH, made my had explode. SHAME SHAME SHAME SHAME!!! There is an entirely volunteer army doing work that is a city crisis and a CITY RESPONSIBILITY..We need a person who actually CARES to be doing that job. It was truly unconscionable.**

We manage a mega colony at a Mitchell Llama complex near 147<sup>th</sup> and ACP. The management is on board with us working there but the situation is OUT OF CONTROL. There are a minimum of **40 UNFIXED, UNVACCINATED cats on just ONE block between ACP and Lenox**. At least 20 of those are kittens under the age of 16 weeks. And the moms- are already pregnant again. In August we took 12 kittens, and were able to fix two moms. There are at least five more unfixed females who have certainly given birth or are about to any moment. We have no more funds to help. This colony will be 80 by the end of the year, and so much suffering and death. Not to mention parasites, worms and the kittens tested positive for zoonotic organisms.

**The management company would like the DOH to issue citations to shareholders on the property who insist these are their cats and fight with us when we work to rescue and TNR. DOH NEEDS TO DO THEIR JOB. No more funds needed?!!!!!!**

**HARLEM NEEDS FREE/AFFORDABLE SPAY/NEUTER and vet care options. WE ARE DROWNING.**

And as for the ACI Unit...it is a joke. Impossible to report anything, impossible to get any actions taken without a gigantic social media campaign. Most officers tell us to call the ASPCA. THEY DON'T EVEN KOW IT IS THEIR JOB TO RESPOND TO ANIMAL CRUELTY.

On a Sunday in February, Super Bowl Sunday, we received a **horrifying video of a small maybe two pound ginger kitten lying on a sidewalk on 136<sup>th</sup> street. His THROAT HAD BEEN SLIT!!!** This is a street where we have done extensive work in fixing the community cats and is a colony we have been caring for. Clearly we were behind in our information or he could have been saved. Police were called. They came and saw the kitten. It is unclear if he was thrown away or taken to ACC. There are cameras – at least si- that point to the exact spot where this murder occurred. Anyone knows that a person who is slitting the throats of kittens, is also a danger to humans. **NOTHING WAS DONE.**

As a rescuer, I took it upon myself to get access to management security, but I could only get so far because IT ISN'T MY JOB. Animal Cruelty Unit kept passing the buck and saying it was not our business.

We know the exact time that this incidence occurred as there is video of the baby taking last breaths. Even the police officer who came to pick up the animal said injury was consistent with throat being slit. To this day, we have no further information.

I say again **SHAME ON THE DOH. WE NEED HELP!! WE NEED FUNDS!!!  
WE NEED AFFORDABLE SPAY/NEUTER. WE NEED IT YESTERDAY!!!!**

**We work on a metro transit property- a CITY PROPERTY because the workers there BEGGED us to help the out of control population of cats that were getting in their workrooms, peeing, giving birth, dead cats, cats overflowing from the ones being dumped by people in Esplanade Gardens. They had been trying for two years to get help from the city, from ACC or ASPCA. No one helped.**

Since that time we have taken dozens of cats and kittens from the property and fixed the community cats. At this location. Unfixed. Probably from the Mitchell -Lama Housing at Esplanade Gardens.

People there constantly dump pets, and then refuse help when it is offered.  
DOH needs to be fining them. NYC needs to fund affordable care.

Lastly: have a hearing for RYDER'S LAW. How many more animals need to die in our streets. This situation has a SOLUTION. The only thing standing in the way is corruption. WHEN IS ENOUGH????!!!!

Thank you for holding this hearing.

Aimee Jolson,  
Co-Founder  
Harlem Animal Rescue  




[REDACTED]

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**From:** Harry Morales <harry.morales@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:17 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Please help with stray cats

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

My name is Harry Morales. I live in Brooklyn, NY On Dekalb ave in Bushwick. I, with the help pf my girlfriend, have been spraying/neutering stray cats using our own money.

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high volumen, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Sincerely yours,  
Harry Morales

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Harry Ortof <harry.ortof@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:55 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

I strongly urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorkers in need, including pet parents and rescuers.

There is an overwhelming amount of evidence that shows pet ownership has significantly increased in cost over time. Below are links to just a few of those studies and articles:

[Why You're Paying Your Veterinarian So Much \(New York Times\)](#)

[My first 6 months of owning a dog in NYC cost me \\$5,500 \(CNBC\)](#)

[How much does it cost to own a dog in New York?](#)

[NYC ranks as worst place to own pets — rent is even higher for animal owners \(NY Post\)](#)

[NYC among top 10 most expensive cities for dog owners \(Pix 11\)](#)

Thank you for your time and attention.

**Harry Ortof**

Greetings,

My name is Heather Day and I am sharing my recommendations and personal experiences as a passionate cat owner and long-time cat fosterer in Brooklyn, New York. Specifically, I've had the pleasure of consecutively fostering four cats - Juice, Milkshake, Mocha, and Clover - through Brooklyn Animal Action, an incredibly dedicated and resourceful volunteer-led group. Mocha was my pandemic foster fail and is a treasured forever family member now.

Our city must demonstrate a greater commitment to the well-being of NYC animals and provide the necessary systems and supports for the humans who take care of them - including formal institutions like the ACC, volunteer-led groups like Brooklyn Animal Action, and everyday individuals and families. In doing so we can greatly reduce unnecessary suffering, prevent concerning public health issues, and maximize the efficacy and ROI of funds through more efficient and sustainable systems.

In echoing the recommendations of many advocates, here are some of the ways in which I hope our City will address the pressing issue of animal welfare.

### **Increase Funding and Resources to Provide Adequate Services**

- Increase the budget for Animal Care Centers (ACC) to improve shelter conditions and expand capacity
- Seek out and establish public-private partnerships to further support shelters and connected groups
- Collaborate with and veterinary schools for student internships and volunteer opportunities to alleviate the shortage of professionals
- Collaborate with local and national animal welfare organizations to share resources, best practices, and support for shelter operations, rescue work, and foster and adoption processes

### **Reduce Shelter Overcrowding by Strengthening Adoption and Foster Initiatives**

- Implement more widespread "Adopt-Don't-Shop" campaigns and distribution of public education materials promoting pet adoption
- Lower the barriers to adoption by hosting promotional adoption opportunities with no-fee options
- In partnership with the ACC and non-profit and volunteer groups, promote foster care programs to place animals in temporary homes, effectively reducing shelter crowding and increasing their likelihood of successful adoption

### **Optimize Shelter Operations**

- Improve shelter intake procedures to manage and prioritize cases effectively
- Implement innovative technology solutions for better tracking and management of animals in shelters, and effective public engagement, including adoption platforms and social media/web presence.

### **Address the Root Causes Leading to Abandoned and Stray Animals**

- Launch educational programs to inform the public about responsible pet ownership and the importance of spaying/neutering
- Invest in more veterinary clinics and affordable spay/neuter services to increase access to care
- Allocate funding to assist low-income pet owners with costs associated with pet ownership, including spaying/neutering and to provide transitional care for the pets of housing-insecure New Yorkers and domestic violence survivors entering shelters

### **Support New Legislation and Regulation Reforms**

- Support and enforce the proposed bill to ban the sale of dogs and cats in retail stores, which could reduce impulse purchases and drive more prospective pet owners to the ACC for adoption
- Implement stricter regulations on pet breeding to control the supply of pets and reduce the number of animals experiencing abusive conditions and entering shelters
- Introduce policies that reduce building restrictions for tenants with pets

These strategies collectively address the underlying issues leading to shelter overcrowding, streamline resources and enhance collaboration between all dedicated parties, improve animal welfare, and create more comprehensive and sustainable systems for managing pets in New York City and supporting the people who love them. Like many New Yorkers, I am one of these people. Caring for Brooklyn cats over the past 6 years has not only benefited them, but has deeply enriched my own life. There are proven connections between engaging with animals and increased well-being for humans and I can personally attest to this. I am proud of my city already and will be even prouder when we demonstrate a strategic, well-resourced, and sustained commitment to animal welfare.

Sincerely Heather Day - and truly, from us all:



My name is Heather Glassberg I am the Executive Director of Ridgewood Rescue in District 34, Ridgewood, Queens. I joined with some of my fellow rescuers three years ago and formed Ridgewood Rescue, so we could work collectively to try to be more effective in helping the cats in our neighborhood.

My council member is Jennifer Guiterrez

The great Mahatma Gadhi said "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." I believe the same can be applied to a city. New York City is supposed to be one of the greatest cities that sets an example for the rest of the world, yet we haven't one of the most underfunded animal welfare programs of any major city in this country.

I can't leave my house without seeing stray cats - starving, injured, maimed, unhealthy cats. I hear them yowling and fighting in my backyard. The problem is getting worse even though there are concerned neighbors who are trying to do something about it. We want to get them spayed and neutered but we can't access adequate affordable services. This is a municipal problem and we need the city to step in and address it. Offloading the problem onto privately funded organizations and private residents like us isn't working. We don't have nearly as many low-cost spay/neuter options needed to solve this problem. Let's make it possible for pet owners to keep their pets instead of abandoning them. Without spay/neuter a cat is not a practical indoor pet - the males spray and the females go into heat. These nuisance behaviors put them at high risk for abandonment. All the abandoned pets we find are unfixed. They don't have street survival skills and we're finding them in bad condition, sometimes frozen in fear.

As rescuers, our focus has always been on reducing the outdoor cat population. Most outdoor cats don't have caretakers and their lives can be brutal and short. Stopping that cycle of misery is our mission. Now that vet costs have skyrocketed and pet friendly, affordable housing is difficult to find, people are abandoning their pets in massive numbers. These animals are unfixed and often found in bad shape - sick or injured. Many other cats we find are an abandoned pet that needs medical treatment on top of spay/neuter and low-cost spay/neuter resources are at an all time low. We can't afford to help every cat in need that we see. We have to tell heart-warming stories on instagram and beg people to give us money, or donate to our gofundme. We're getting into credit card debt, can't save for the future and can't improve our circumstances. The burden of rescue work is physically exhausting and emotionally draining. If the city could fund high-volume, low-cost spay-neuter, then that would help relieve the crushing financial burden we're under.

Aside from a chronically underfunded shelter system, NYC offers no animal welfare services, relying instead on an army of volunteers to solve the public problem of outdoor cats with our own private funds and free time. Hundreds of tiny one-person animal rescue organizations and independent trappers are stepping into this vacuum in city services, to reduce the number of outdoor cats and end the cycle of misery of life on the streets. We do this while our neighbors

breed cats to sell kittens, while cat hoarders get evicted and the cats either get trapped inside and starve or released to the street where they can add to the problem, while sadistic people find abandoned pets and abuse them for entertainment. There's so much that needs to be done to create a city that is better for both animals and humans. We have no legal frameworks to address hoarding cases. No collaboration between city agencies if a box of kittens is found next to a trash can on garbage collection day. No city leadership period.

It's never too late to move from a city that's backwards to become an innovative leader. We can start addressing the root causes of the outdoor cat overpopulation by funding and launching a city-funded spay/neuter program that will provide free or discounted spay/neuter appointments to all New Yorkers, so that residents don't have to abandon their pets, and rescuers won't have to be responsible for spaying and neutering every animal in New York City.

I started doing rescue work in 1999, because I constantly saw stray injured cats in my neighborhood of Ridgewood, Queens.. There were no city services to help outdoor cats so I looked online and found a s. I was surprised that a city the size of New York doesn't have any animal services - no spay/neuter program, no access to affordable veterinary healthcare for abandoned cats. I had to hunt around for a program or organization to help the cats.

The city needs to create a robust, low cost spay/neuter program to prevent pet abandonment, enough appointments to help us get ahead of this crisis so we can move into maintenance mode. We need to have a place to refer the many people that contact us on a weekly basis asking us for help with their unfixed pets. Veterinary costs have skyrocketed, and it is simply unaffordable for most people, other than the wealthy New Yorkers to simply get their cats spayed or neutered, so they don't keep reproducing.

We beg you, the City Council, to please implement a more reasonable plan to help all of us rescuers. We are essentially unpaid city employees tackling an insurmountable challenge. We need your help. Make this city great for the animals and the people who love them and set an example for the rest of the country and world.

Thank you so much for your time!

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Heather Mancino <heathermancino@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 12:15 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Low Cost Spay & Neuter

[REDACTED]

Good afternoon,

I hope this message finds you well.

My name is Heather Mancino and I reside in the town of Prince's Bay in Staten Island, NY. On the weekends, I dedicate my time volunteering at AMA Animal Rescue in Brooklyn NY.

As a shelter volunteer of 3 years, I have much experience and have seen a lot in the "pet world." With that, I am urging you to consider allocating money towards low cost spay/neuter and veterinary care.

The lack of accessible veterinary care significantly impacts our community, especially local animal rescues like AMA who are trying their best to save as many animals as possible. Far too many pets are losing their lives because the cost to help them is far too high. City funded vet clinics could seriously help end the crisis most shelters are currently facing.

Additionally, city funding could increase adoptions, allow more people to keep their pets, and bring down the number of strays on the street.

I urge the city to consider dedicating funds to establish these vital services. The lives of many animals depend on it.

Thank you for considering this important issue. I am happy to provide further information or discuss this matter at your convenience.

Best regards,

Heather Mancino

[REDACTED]  
Staten Island, NY 10309

Regarding the Urgent Need for Affordable, Spay/Neuter, and Vet Services:

My husband and I live on 76th Street in Bay Ridge and we're writing to urge the City of NY to allocate funds for free and low cost spay/neuter and vet services for those in need.

We moved into our neighborhood 11 years ago and immediately discovered a major feral and neighborhood cat problem behind our house and on our block. Fortunately, we soon met volunteers with Brooklyn Animal Action, and because of their support, the support of other rescuers (like Latonya "Sassie" Walker), and our own efforts (getting TNR certified) we've had nearly 60 cats spayed and neutered, have offered medical assistance for injured cats, and found homes for countless friendly abandoned cats and kittens.

Without selfless volunteers - none of whom are paid and all with full time jobs - our neighborhood would be overrun with homeless cats and kittens, many of them sick and suffering. On top of doing the rescue work, volunteers also must raise funds to cover all their costs, or pay for it themselves, and it's unfair to expect volunteers to handle an issue of this scale without support from local government. What they do benefits our entire community.

My husband and I have also spent a lot of money to prevent a feline population explosion on our block. Because we're independent contractors and Senior Citizens, the expenses have been a financial burden to us, but we're not alone: most volunteers have limited means but feel obliged to act to reduce animal suffering.

1. The city desperately needs affordable vet care **in every district** in New York City. Not only for low-income residents, but also for the countless volunteers who work to solve the homeless cat problem, mostly without compensation.

It's not fair for all of the financial and logistical burdens for this valuable community service to fall solely on the shoulders of volunteers.

2. We also need spaces where cats can be held to recuperate after spay/neuter. It's not fair to expect residents and volunteers to use their homes for this (there are many empty storefronts that could be used).

3. Ideally there should one paid person per neighborhood to do rescue work, training, and logistics. (Neighborhoods with the most need would be prioritized first.) Training could be done in conjunction with Neighborhood Cats.

Thank you so much for listening.

Helen Garrett



Brooklyn, NY 11209

**Helene Hartman-Kutnowsky**

**████████████████████**  
**Bronx, NY 10458**

Testimony from Helene Hartman-Kutnowsky 9/13/24 re: The State of Animal Rescue Hearing

Good Evening, My name is Helene Hartman-Kutnowsky and I am a member of Bronx Community Board Seven, I am on the Environment Committee, but this is my personal testimony. I live in the Norwood section of the Bronx. I do not do all, that many of the speakers here do. I have three Rescues in my apartment, all from my building that my neighbors have put out in the courtyard. I also feed two feral cats in my courtyard. They have shelters and are fed twice daily.

Several months ago, I rescued two cats in my courtyard, in one month. You should know that my building houses about 110 apartments, it is not a huge NYCHA complex.

First rescue: a neighbor spotted another neighbor leaving her apartment with a tiny orange kitten in her hands. When she asked, where was she going with the kitten, she said the Bodega, because her son was allergic to cats. She got the cat from a co-worker who didn't want the kitten back so she told us that if the bodega wouldn't take the cat, she would put it out on Mosholu Parkway! The kitten was certainly not more than three months old, if that much. Fortunately, I know our angels in the neighborhood who help whenever they can. I called my friend Iris Lugo, who works miracles with kittens and she was able to arrange for the kitten to come to her that afternoon!

Second rescue: The same neighbor called me again when she noticed a very sick animal hiding in the corner of our courtyard. I think most people would have missed seeing her because she looked like a dried mop in the corner, she was that ill. Again, I called another Angel in our area, Betty Arce and convinced her to call Bronx Tails for help. When I found the adult kitty, the ACC in the Bronx was not open.

What I feel is needed is Education and Information : I don't believe that many of my neighbors know where to take animals when they can no longer keep or can afford to get care for. I know the adult female cat I rescued was not spayed. The ACC Receiving Center has very limited hours in the Bronx. It is only open a few days per week. Bodegas are not Receiving Centers and should not be considered places to take cats or kittens! This seems to be a common attitude in my community. Information needs to be available to all residents, in posters on the subway (in many languages), on Instagram and I believe on Lease Riders as well. The rider should explain that animals cannot be put out on the street; that it is up to the tenant to find a place for the animal that is safe and healthy for them. It should list out options in each borough or at the very least, a reminder to call 311 for help. Also, the public should be educated about animal abuse and what to do when they see that. I understand that cost is an issue but that I am sure will be covered in most of the other testimony. I will only say that there are many families that work and are not Medicaid eligible who also need low cost vet help.

Feral Cats:

The Porter in my building currently feeds about 8 cats in the basement with very little help with paying for cat food. The cats are not all fixed yet but we are in the process. At some point, in the near future the porter will retire, these are feral cats. Help will be needed to relocate them to sanctuaries or areas that need "Working Cats." These cats are not "streetwise" at all. They have

not been taught how to survive in a colony by their Mother. We also need low cost vet help for these animals as well, because they also get ill.

In closing, I want to thank all the rescuers for all their remarkable and selfless work. A big Thank You to the Chair Lynn Schulman and the Health Committee, for tackling this important and Herculean task. Please feel free to reach out to me if any clarification is needed.

In closing, I would like to quote Gandhi, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress, can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Helene Hartman-Kutnowsky



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Helene <linyqueensgirl@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:59 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Please vote to offer low cost spraying

[REDACTED]

I am a New Yorker and pet owner and lover please pass this bill to help these defenseless animals. I will and they will appreciate it from their hearts. Thank you. So very much. It is imperative that this issue is resolved these poor souls suffer Please help them. Bless you

[Sent from the all new AOL app for iOS](#)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** holly <hollyinnewyork@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:36 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue, Hearing September 13th 10am

[REDACTED]

Dear NY City Council,

My name is Holly Kinski. I moved to Williamsburg Brooklyn in 2006 and have been in the same apartment ever since. There used to be a free roaming colony of about 20+ cats roaming the backyards of my block. All summer long they would fight and mate and wake the whole neighborhood up in the middle of the night with yowling. The backyards smelled like male cat urine as they were all trying to mark their territory. Every summer we would see kittens suffering, some surviving but most dying as they fell victim to disease and other ailments their frail bodies couldn't handle. The ones that survived went on to get pregnant, have more kittens and the cycle continued.

In March 2016 I became TNR certified because I couldn't handle another summer like the many others I lived through. I trapped and spayed/neutered every single cat on the block. Almost 8 years later there are just 2 cats remaining, living peacefully and quietly.

I got involved in rescue because as I found out through personal experience, the feral cat population gets out of control quickly and it shouldn't be on the shoulders of the citizens or overwhelmed animal rescues to solve this problem, all done on our spare time and on our own dime. This is a \*city\* problem and the city needs to finally step up and address this.

Since the pandemic when the ASPCA was closed for the entire year and then reopened on a very small scale compared to previous years, the problem worsened. With people also abandoning their pets outside, often still intact because they couldn't afford to spay/neuter their pets, the problem has grown exponentially. The rescuers in this city are basically unpaid city workers, overwhelmed and burnt out and going broke trying to fix this city's problem.

Please we, the citizens of New York urge the city government to step up and provide the funding for high-volume, low-cost (or better yet \*free\* especially for rescuers!) spay/neuter services. Pet parents shouldn't be forced to abandon their pets for lack of affordable services. As I witnessed on my own block, spay/neuter \*does\* work! It is the only way to dig ourselves out of this mess.

Thank you for your time,

Holly Kinski  
Williamsburg, Brooklyn

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Holly Koffler <hollylynnkoffler@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:03 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Low Cost spay and neuter

[REDACTED]

We need low cost spay and neuter in NYC. We have an exploding cat population. the cost of spay and neuter is exorbitant.. People cannot afford to spay and neuter their animals. It should not be left up to citizens to build affordable cat and dog spay clinics such as flatbush cats.

If the city would have cheap/affordable vet care spay/neuter and wellness it would save the city money in the long run and have happy citizens and pets.

Holly Koffler-Wooley

dogs and cats (which may undermine the pet store sale ban). We support the intent of Int. 1018 and look forward to working with the Council on this legislation.

Again, the Humane Society of New York thanks the New York City Council Committee on Health for addressing animal welfare and we urge the City Council to support significant funding to ensure that the animals in our city get the care and protection they need. As the testimony of so many people indicated, time is of the essence.

Sandra DeFeo  
Executive Director  
Humane Society of New York  
306 East 59 Street  
New York, NY 10022  
phone 212.752.4842 Ext. 233  
mobile 917.721.6905  
email [sandra.hsny@verizon.net](mailto:sandra.hsny@verizon.net)  
website [www.humanesocietyny.org](http://www.humanesocietyny.org)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Husnain Chouhdry <husnainchouhdry13@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 8:58 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal rescue

[REDACTED]

Good morning members of the Council, My name is Husnain Chouhdry and I am a resident of Astoria, NY. I am here as an advocate for animal rescue, representing the collective voices of countless rescuers, shelters, and compassionate New Yorkers who dedicate their time, resources, and hearts to saving and caring for animals in need. The state of animal rescue in New York City is both inspiring and deeply challenging. Every day, rescuers across the city work tirelessly to save animals from abandonment, abuse, neglect, and overpopulation. These animals cannot speak for themselves, which is why it is our duty, as a society, to be their voice and stand up for their well-being. They rely on us for protection, care, and advocacy, and it is our responsibility to ensure they are not forgotten or left to suffer. Rescuing animals is not just an act of compassion; it is a moral imperative. These vulnerable creatures deserve a second chance at life, and through rescue efforts, they are given the opportunity to experience love, care, and safety. However, the reality is that many rescuers are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of animals in need, often without the necessary resources to provide adequate care. One of the most pressing issues we face is the lack of accessible and affordable veterinary care, including spay and neuter services. The cost of veterinary care has risen dramatically, placing an enormous financial burden on pet parents and rescuers alike. This has had a ripple effect on animal overpopulation and the well-being of both rescued animals and those already in homes. We urge the City government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. These programs are essential not only to reducing the strain on animal shelters and preventing the cycle of overpopulation but also to fulfilling our duty to care for those who cannot care for themselves. By rescuing these animals, we are not only saving individual lives but also addressing a larger societal issue. The humane treatment of animals reflects the values of our city, and we must lead by example in providing the resources necessary to protect and care for them. Expanding affordable veterinary care and spay/neuter services is a critical step toward ensuring that no animal is left behind, and that every person who wants to help can do so without facing insurmountable financial barriers. In closing, we believe that every animal deserves a loving home, and every rescuer and pet parent deserves the support necessary to provide that care. We are calling on you, our elected officials, to stand with us and ensure that NYC becomes a leader in humane, compassionate, and accessible animal care. The animals cannot speak for themselves, but together, we can be their voice and ensure they are heard. Thank you for your time and

Hello,

I am writing to you as both a concerned resident of Flushing, Queens, and a passionate advocate for the well-being of animals who have no voice in the world we dominate. The issue of stray cats has become deeply personal for me and my neighbors, as we've witnessed firsthand the rise of an unmanaged and growing population of strays in our community. I feel compelled to reach out, not just for the cats themselves, but for the entire neighborhood.

Between my daughter and myself, we have welcomed seven stray cats into our home. While our compassion drives us to care for them, the financial strain of spaying, neutering, and providing necessary medical care is becoming unsustainable. I am not alone in this. Many of my neighbors are working tirelessly to manage small colonies of spayed and neutered cats within our two-block radius, covering the costs entirely out of pocket.

While we are a community that recognizes the importance of humanely managing the stray cat population, our resources are stretched thin. We need help. The cost of feeding and maintaining these colonies, while trying to prevent further population growth through spaying and neutering, has become overwhelming. Yet, the benefits of having these colonies in our city are undeniable.

New York City has long struggled with rodent issues. In our complex, before the stray cats established a colony, we were frequently overrun with mice. For the past ten years, these cats have kept our property pest-free. Some of my fellow residents see the cats as unsanitary and are pushing for their removal, but the alternative—potentially hazardous and costly pest control methods—seems to ignore the critical role these cats play in maintaining a balanced ecosystem. In short, their presence has provided a natural and effective solution to our mouse problem, and I firmly believe the benefits far outweigh any concerns.

However, without affordable spay/neuter and medical services, it will become increasingly difficult to sustain this humane effort. I respectfully and urgently ask for your support in implementing low-cost services for the animals we care for. We are ready and willing to continue the work of feeding, sheltering, and maintaining these colonies, but we need the city's help to alleviate the financial burden.

These cats, like so many other animals, have been forced to adapt to a world where their natural environment is disappearing. It is our responsibility to protect them. I ask you to consider the value of our collective efforts and the importance of their continued support in our neighborhood. The cats have become more than a colony; they are an essential part of our community's ecosystem.

Please help us ensure their safety and well-being, and in doing so, help us all.

Thank you for your attention.

Thank you, speaker Adams and Chairperson Schulman. My name is Ilene Richman. In 2011, I moved to District 36, now represented by Chi Ossé, from Manhattan, and I was immediately struck by the differences. Bed Stuy, of course, had been a redlined community that was neglected and uninvested in for decades. I saw that it was under-banked with almost no green space. I learned that it had 57 bodegas for every 1 supermarket, with life expectancy 5 years lower than the city overall. And, it had unhoused cats. Everywhere I looked, I saw cats. And while it wasn't in the datasheets, I came to understand that the enormous population of street cats was yet another manifestation of inequity. You do not see unhoused cats running around affluent neighborhoods.

People in under-resourced communities are experts at self-help. They organize to meet their own needs. As I got involved in local animal rescue, I was hugely impressed by how much was being done, but I also saw untapped capacity. So in the self-help tradition, I created a collective called NARN-CB, the Neighborhood Animal Rescue Network of Central Brooklyn. Some of our 75 members are testifying today.

I wish I had time to tell you about the incredible work our members undertake, about the hundreds of cats we rescue every year, about the many community members that we help, and about the tremendous toll that this work takes on us, emotionally and financially. I hope that you will hear those stories today. But what I want to close with is this: it's not enough. Self-help can only go so far. The city is not investing nearly enough in animal welfare, and New Yorkers all over the city, but especially in neighborhoods like Bed Stuy, need access to free spay neuter and affordable veterinary care, along with other approaches to make pet ownership sustainable and accessible for all.

<https://www.nyc.gov/assets/cidi/downloads/pdfs/BK03-CPP-Profile-ACS-CIDI.pdf>

[https://www.ny4p.org/client-uploads/pdf/District-Profiles-2021/NY4P-Profiles\\_BK3.pdf](https://www.ny4p.org/client-uploads/pdf/District-Profiles-2021/NY4P-Profiles_BK3.pdf)

<https://www.nycfoodpolicy.org/foodscape-bedford-stuyvesant/>

[REDACTED]

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**From:** iraida rojas <iraida522@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 7:12 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] PLease Fund Pet Animal Program  
**Attachments:** Screenshot 2024-09-16 at 7.07.59 PM.png

[REDACTED]

“We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.”

[REDACTED]

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**From:** irene vasquez <ilvasquez97@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:42 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Pet care

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,  
As a fellow New Yorker and pet parent,  
I strongly call on the New York City government to dedicate substantial funding toward high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care, ensuring all New Yorkers, including rescuers and pet owners, have access to essential veterinary services.  
Irene Vasquez

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Isabel King <isabel.e.king@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 8:30 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Sept 13th health hearing

[REDACTED]

Hi there!

I am emailing to urge the NYC government to allocate funds to low-cost, high-volume spay/neuter and affordable vet care for any NYCer in need; pet owners and especially animal rescuers.

Shelters are overcrowded and it will not stop until you address access to affordable spay/neuter. They will keep repopulating exponentially and this will not go away.

Thank you,

Isabel King  
Williamsburg, Brooklyn NY

## City Hall Testimony - Isabel Klee

Hello, my name is Isabel Klee and I've been lucky enough to work with New York City animal rescues and shelters like the ACC for almost a decade.

I share my fostering and volunteer experiences on social media, where I have grown a relatively large audience. Sharing these stories has been wonderful and powerful, but of course with everything there is a dark side as well.

I get comments referring to the ACC as a kill shelter, and as a person who has worked with countless rescue organizations around the world, I can confidently say that this choice in words is extremely harmful and misguided.

The Animal Care Centers of New York City is an open intake shelter, meaning they cannot turn animals away. It is the shelter that serves this city that we all love so much, the city that never sleeps. It shouldn't surprise any of us that the animal crisis never sleeps either.

The ACC takes in every animal that comes to their doorstep. They take in strays, medical cases, owner surrenders, behavioral cases, and hospice dogs. In August alone they took in 1,163 animals - a staggering number. Unlike many shelters that claim to be no-kill, they don't get to choose which animals come into their care. Open intake city shelters like the ACC are, arguably, the shelters that need the most support.

I've had the opportunity to spend countless hours at the ACC over many, many years. What I see are staff members who work incredibly hard. They are overworked and underpaid. They are doing the best they can with the resources that they have. Every single hallway is filled with pop up kennels, every single office has a dog. They are saving as many animals as they possibly can.

I agree that something needs to be done about the animal crisis in New York City. We need more funding, we need free spay and neuter clinics, we need education about pet ownership, and we need to provide resources to the organizations that are doing the work.

I am so proud to support New York City's rescue organizations in a way that uplifts them to do better, instead of shaming them for not being the best.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Isabel Montalvan <montalvan.isabel76@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:49 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Substantial funding for low spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care testimony.

[REDACTED]

My name is Isabel Montalvan and I reside in East Elmhurst, QUEENS, NY. My zipcode is 11370. In the past 5 years, I've witnessed an increase on the pet abandonment and dumping on the streets (incrementally grown post pandemic) and, on the ACCs in the city. In my neighborhood alone, we have dozens of feral and stray cats on the streets who are suffering tremendously of cold, heat, hunger, and humans abuse. My husband and I have adopted four cats from a rescue organization. But it is not enough. We also face the reality of the cost of vet care which is ridiculously high and continues to go up.

The work these many rescue organizations do is of the utmost importance. But as we, pet parents, they do often seen their job cut off by the outrageous veterinary costs to spay, neuter and care for these animals. Many residents as us, are suffering the inflation on our cost of living and, many, aside of the irresponsible (those who just abandoned their pets on the streets), are forced to surrender their pets to whom ever can take them.

I believe all of these will hugely decrease if the city government is able to allocate SUBSTANTIAL funding for high volume, low cost spay/neuter and veterinary care for ANY New Yorker in need, including rescues and us, pet parents.

We need the city government to do what's right.  
New York residents, and most importantly, cats, dogs, birds and all animals well being demand it.

Sincerely  
Isabel Montalvan.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jackie Borodan <jackie@neighborhoodcats.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:48 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee hearing

[REDACTED]

Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Jackie Borodan. I am an independent trapper based out of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. I am also the NYC Community Program Director for Neighborhood Cats. My intention is not to tire you with another repeated testimony. I want this email to be included as a cry for help. May there be changes to help us all.

Best,

Jackie Borodan  
NYC Community Cat Program Director  
Neighborhood Cats  
212-662-5761  
[www.neighborhoodcats.org](http://www.neighborhoodcats.org)

*Help keep those supper dishes filled!*  
Please visit [Neighborhood Cats Kibble](#) to donate food through our Amazon Wish List.

**From:** Jackie Rauchberger <jackie.rauchberger@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 17, 2024 11:13 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: Testimony: Urging the city for substantial funding!

Dear city council,

THIS is what no animal protection laws do to poor animals - torture on the beach for sacrifice???? A dog tortured to death? A rooster running around with its head chopped off??

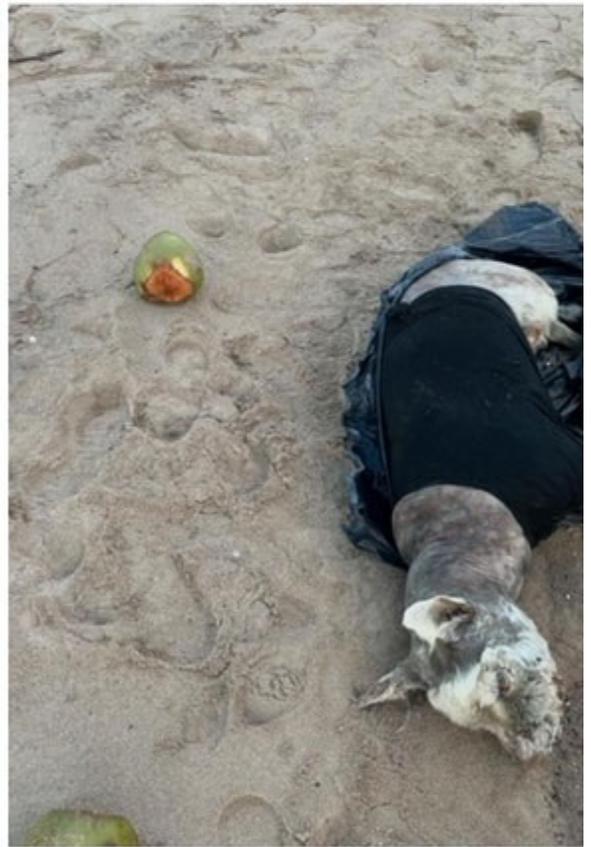




## Zion's Mission Animal Rescue

4h · 🌐

#Howardbeach #howardbeachnewyork  
#howardbeachqueens  
#howardbeachneeds help #ineedhelp  
#ritualslaughter #saved #savedfromslaughter  
#savedfromritualslaughter #pigrescue #pigletrescu  
#yorkshirehog #animalsarentient  
#animalsarentientbeings #farmanimalrescue  
#bruciesangels



We need strict animal protection laws, maximum penalties and jail for these evil criminals!! Plus major funding to prevent backyard and illegal breeding. Major funding for affordable vet care and high volume low cost spay and neuter.

Please help these poor souls and have a heart finally!! We are in 2024 in a civilized country and city.

Thank you,  
Jackie Rauchberger

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 16, 2024, at 6:02 PM, Jackie R <jackie.rauchberger@gmail.com> wrote:

For the past five years, I've dedicated myself to volunteering for small-sized rescues with fostering and rescuing abandoned cats on the Upper East Side (UES) and the Bronx of New York City. I've seen the heartbreak and horrors that come when our city fails to care for its animals. Veterinary costs are skyrocketing, and many people simply cannot afford basic animal care, such as spaying or neutering their pets. As a result, cats and other animals are being abandoned in droves, left to suffer on the streets, vulnerable to starvation, disease, the dangers of traffic, dog attacks, and even cruel acts of violence.

The problem is particularly acute in underserved neighborhoods like the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn. Even Manhattan has seen a sharp rise in the number of unfixed, abandoned cats. I've rescued cats from every corner of this city, and the stories are heartbreaking. Cats like Harry, who we found on the Upper West Side with four BB gun bullets lodged in his small body, causing a sick heart and collapsed lung. He ultimately didn't survive, but he didn't deserve to suffer like that. Or Emelie, a sick cat rescued on 5th Avenue and 78th Street, who cost the rescue organization thousands in vet bills. Little Anastasia, malnourished and abandoned on 73rd and Madison, took four months to nurse back to health. And the list can go on ....

We, the volunteers, are the ones left to shoulder the burden. We sometimes risk our lives going into dangerous areas to trap and rescue these cats, beg for donations to cover astronomical vet bills, and do all of this while working full-time jobs and taking care of our families. The city provides no meaningful support. The ACC is underfunded and overwhelmed, forced to euthanize animals because they are always at capacity. This cannot be the answer – to euthanize healthy and semi-healthy cats and dogs.

Rescue organizations like Belladonna & Friends, Saint Spiro, etc., which I work with, spend thousands of dollars to save cats who could have been spared their suffering with simple, affordable, early intervention.

This city needs to wake up; you, the lawmakers of this city, need to wake up and do something, and have compassion for these poor souls. We need more funding for low-cost, high-volume spay and neuter programs. We need advocates in government to push for affordable veterinary

care for all New Yorkers, especially rescuers and pet owners in need. There must be stricter laws around animal cruelty and abandonment. It is despicable what happens on the streets of New York, and it is entirely preventable.

Even in wealthy areas like the UES, abandoned cats are a growing problem. Bodegas and supers must be held accountable for spaying and neutering their pets, and it's time to put an end to the practice of keeping cats in dark basements as mousers, where they're neglected and starved.

I urge you, as a long time tax-paying, caring citizen of this city, to step up and help these cats, the rescues, and the people. Make this city better. Fund high volume, low-cost spay and neuter and low-cost veterinary clinics.

As Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." Right now, New York City is failing. We need help—especially the cats. It's time for this city to prioritize animal welfare and fund the services and laws that will make a difference.

Thank you,

Jackie Rauchberger  
Upper East Side

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jacqueline Best <Jbest7131@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 3:08 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony on the State of NY Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Dear NYC Council,

I am NYC resident of Rosedale, NY 11422. I currently take care of 2 cat colonies for over 10+ years. One cat colony I actually inherited from the previous home owners. In this time I've struggled with getting them neutered and spayed. Even though the city has the TNR initiative it still appears that not much has been done to foster or promote this initiative. There are plenty of social media groups and neighborhood app groups that are always pleading for a TNR specialist or Rep but requests go unanswered. We have discovered the low cost vet mobile services and they offer as much assistance to the neighborhood that they can.

As a New Yorker that is always rescuing animals and re-homing pets to stop from going into the shelter, we would like to encourage the city council to allocate funding for low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for New Yorkers in need.

Jacqueline Best  
Rosedale, Queens, Ny  
[REDACTED]

**Testimony of Jacqui Painter, Assembly District 51, Red Hook**  
In Support of Spay/Neuter Programs and Affordable Veterinary Care

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is Jacqui Painter, and I am the District Leader for Assembly District 51 in Red Hook, Brooklyn. I am writing today in strong support of Voters for Animal Rights (VFAR) and their advocacy for increased funding and resources for spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care for pet owners, rescuers, and animal welfare organizations across New York City.

Our city is currently facing a crisis—an overwhelming population of stray and owned cats, a surge in pet surrenders, especially of large dogs, overburdened shelters, and adoption rates that are not keeping pace with need. As a community leader, I see firsthand the struggles of individuals and organizations working tirelessly with limited resources to address these urgent issues.

The City Council must prioritize a significant investment in high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care. This will ease the financial burden on the many dedicated rescuers and pet parents who are at the forefront of this issue. Addressing the root causes of overpopulation through proper funding will help alleviate the strain on our city's shelters and animal welfare organizations, ensuring healthier, more sustainable outcomes for both animals and the community.

I also support Council Member Justin Brannan's new legislation aimed at cracking down on backyard breeders, which is a crucial step in mitigating the pet overpopulation crisis. It's essential that we hold breeders accountable for irresponsible practices that only compound the challenges we face in animal welfare.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Health Committee Chair Lynn Schulman and Speaker Adrienne Adams for their leadership in addressing these important issues. By investing in spay/neuter services and affordable veterinary care, the City Council has the opportunity to make a meaningful, lasting impact on the well-being of our city's animals and the people who care for them.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. I urge the City Council to make this necessary investment for the betterment of our community and our animals.

Sincerely,  
Jacqui Painter  
District Leader, Assembly District 51  
Red Hook, Brooklyn

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jamie Grace <jamie.grace.m@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:43 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony for State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I am writing you as a resident of New York City, animal lover- ans well and an animal rescuer, animal foster parent and concerned citizen.

I write to urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low cost, spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need- inclusive of rescuers and pet parents alike.

I have taken it upon myself in the last few years to allocate my own time and funds in helping to save the animals abandoned on the streets of New York. We need better infrastructure and funding most importantly to help reduce overpopulation and save sick and injured animals. If we can spay and neuter these animals we can help reduce overpopulation and alleviate the pressure on the rescues of our amazing city.

Please consider this allocation. It is desperately needed.

Many thanks.

Best,  
Jamie Adams  
Forest Hills, NY

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jamie H <hallj86@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:52 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Urging you to please show up for animals

[REDACTED]

I am a proud and yet incredibly concerned New York resident in Clinton Hill, and dog owner. I have volunteered at shelters for years and never have I seen the situation we're currently in, and it's getting worse every single day.

I am urging the City Council to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Please help us with this overwhelming crisis. We are exhausted but our hearts won't let us stop. Please help.

Thank you,  
Jamie Hall  
Clinton Hill, New York

Jamie Hall  
206.941.5006  
[hallj86@gmail.com](mailto:hallj86@gmail.com)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jana Rosenthal <jana@advocatrescue.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 11:54 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee hearing

[REDACTED]

Dear Council Members,

Thank you for giving NYC rescuers an opportunity to hopefully implement changes for the better regarding the animal crisis in NYC.

I am the founder of AdvoCat Rescue, a foster-based rescue that is headquartered in Forest Hills, Queens, though we have foster homes to hold cats in many areas of Queens, Brooklyn, and Manhattan. We rescue 400 to 450 cats every year.

In addition to my volunteer animal rescue work, I work a full time job, often including overtime, to support myself.

In October, it will be 6 years that I've been running AdvoCat, and often it's a struggle, and it's always stressful.

Over the years running AdvoCat, we've faced many obstacles and hurdles related to available affordable veterinary services, holding spaces for TNR, logistical, and quite honestly, overall mental and compassion fatigue.

The sad truth is that we feel we are doing the job, for free, much of what should be provided as basic services of a first world city, and we know, other rescues and rescuers feel exactly the same way.

AdvoCat Rescue focuses primarily on taking in strays (healthy, sick, or injured), pulling from ACC (also healthy, sick, or injured), and accepting owner surrenders. We are limited in how much TNR (trap, neuter, return) we are able to effect, due to a lack of holding space and time constraints, as nearly all of our volunteers, myself included, also have full time jobs.

Imagine being expected to go to work each day, not only to not be compensated, but to also be expected to pay out of your own pocket, for the privilege of working. Imagine at this job you just can't keep up with the demand of your field, and the requests to do more come at you 10x a day. Imagine feeling the guilt of having to either say "no" to saving a life, or just not responding. Then imagine those cases that you are unable to take on, you get bad reviews and nasty words as they don't understand that the requests for help far exceed what the combined effort of all rescuers in the area can accommodate.

For our intakes, we rely on having partner vets to work with that give us rescue friendly pricing, but over the years, our vet relationships have gone from 4 to 1 due to private vets being bought out by corporations who are just not willing to extend discounted pricing to us. Most remaining private vets that work with rescues just

won't take on additional rescue clients, as you must understand, every single rescue appointment they grant is discounted, which is a donation made by said veterinarian.

Often, my biggest source of stress when an emergency pops up, is where can I send the cat that we can afford? I contact our primary vet, sometimes they tell me yes, they can see a cat the same day, often they tell me no they can't. Keep in mind as well, when we have an emergency case, our vet will charge us an emergency fee of \$150, on top of the fees for exams, diagnostics, hospitalization, surgery, medications, supportive care, etc. That \$150 can be recouped by soliciting for donations, often in increments of \$5 to \$20 per donor, and often we don't recoup even enough for the emergency fee, aside from the rest of the bill. It often depends on how captivating the story is, how cute the cat is, or how emotional people feel about the case, but even when we know a case might not grab people's attention, it can't be the factor to decide if we should help this cat.

Since COVID, there have been many areas in rescue that have really hurt us and other rescues.

The ASPCA shutdown for spay and neuter services from March 2020 to about July 2020. Stray and feral cats that typically would have been spayed and neutered during this time weren't. When ASPCA resumed opening the clinic, the appointments were very limited. In fact, ASPCA used to perform roughly 85 surgeries a day prior to the shutdown, to this day, the numbers are far lower, and they seem to do approximately 35 to 50 total a day now across all locations, a far lower amount than pre-covid.

The outcome of this is that the stray and feral population had a great opportunity to procreate, and rescuers have never been able to spay/neuter our way out of this. The population has essentially snowballed exponentially over the past 4 years and the number of requests we get to take in found cats, help injured and sick cats, and cats that people no longer want has snowballed as well.

Post-covid there has been a vet shortage and a vet takeover by corporations. Nearly all the corporate vets are unwilling to extend a discount to rescues, and some offer such a minimal discount to their already very high rates, it's still not close to affordable for us.

In addition to the cats under our care, we also often help those in the general public who reach out to us for help. We will offer them our own spay/neuter appointments that are ear-marked for our own cats, as an effort to curtail them surrendering a cat. We also sometimes help people with their cat's medical bills on a case-by-case basis.

Right now, we are working with an elderly person in Rego Park who has an indoor/outdoor hoard of about 60 cats +/- . All the cats appear to be underweight. Some are fixed, some are not. Some are sick and/or injured. Some are friendly, some are feral. The neighbors are upset as there are cats all over the street, and the area smells terrible. The man is in frail condition and recently had heart surgery. If I had to make a guess, he won't be around a couple of years from now. We have so far removed 15 cats from the area and haven't made a dent. Many of these cats will be feral and won't be adoptable. We don't have a place to hold more than two at a time as my foster volunteers are not experienced with feral cats, so holding the ferals falls exclusively on my back, in my apartment, while I plan next steps to get them to a sanctuary hours away. Ideally, we'd love to move many at a time to a sanctuary as it's a 5 hour drive each way, but we're so limited in that we don't have a holding space for these cats so what else can we do? The fees to get each cat into a sanctuary vary from around \$400 to \$1000 depending on which sanctuary has availability, in addition to paying for the basics like testing for diseases, applying flea meds, and treating any illnesses or injuries prior to them going. I've asked the homeowner who allowed this situation to fester and grow for financial assistance and received no response, as is

the case with the vast majority of those asking for help, they expect everything to be handled for free. No other “industry” is expected to work for free and even provide financial resources to never be paid back

NYC, the greatest city in the country, surely can do better for rescuers, who are carrying the weight of this burden solely on our backs. I’m honestly not even aware of any services, aside from ACC, that the city offers, and we help the city in this regard, as we are a New Hope Partner, and try to regularly pull cats from the shelter when we are able.

These are the ways I believe NYC can help this small but struggling segment of the community that do so much yet receive nothing in return:

**We need a greatly expanded city run spay and neuter program.** Either very low-cost or free. It should include mobile clinics that visit under-served low-income communities as these communities are least likely to seek out spay and neuter due to financial and logistical constraints. Not only will this help to reduce the amount of unintentional breeding, but it will also greatly reduce the amount of abandoned and surrendered pets, as the bad behaviors often attributed to unfixed cats will often be corrected.

**We need access to free and/or low-cost veterinary care in every borough in multiple locations.** NYC is a place where many don’t have cars and public transportation is not ideal to travel long distances with animals. This will give us options when we often have none. This should also be available to low-income individuals as they often come to us to help, which is a drain on our limited funds but also a drain on our time and resources for things we shouldn’t be handling.

**We need holding spaces for TNR in multiple locations in every borough.** The Town of Hempstead does this for their rescuers and typically Nassau residents live in houses with extra rooms, a garage, a basement, and they don’t need to bring feral cats into their homes to expose their own pets to fleas and possible diseases. NYC residents mostly live in small apartments with no “extra” rooms. I currently have dog crates in my living room to accommodate. Would you like to live that way? So many are restricted from helping to tackle this problem as they have no place to hold these cats once trapped prior to surgery, and the post-surgery recovery period which is typically 2 to 3 days depending on the gender of the cat.

**We need food banks for cats and dogs for rescues and for low-income individuals.** Again, people coming to us to provide food for their pets is something we do, but it’s not something we should be asked to do.

**We need educational community outreach programs about spay and neuter, about the potential costs of owning a pet, and about pet insurance** which will help people better manage the expectations and expenses involved in owning a pet.

I get this is a lot to ask but with a coordinated effort between rescuers and the city, each of these goals are attainable even if it’s just one at a time. Programs like this will make the city a better place with the reduction of animals suffering on the streets, alleviating rescuers suffering from emotional and physical exhaustion, and reducing the sad reality of people needing to surrender their beloved family members due to financial constraints.

If you would like to discuss further, I can be reached at [REDACTED].

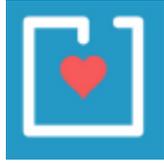
Best regards,

Jana Rosenthal  
**AdvoCat Rescue**

Forest Hills, NY 11375



[Visit Us Online!](#)



(Please Add [jana@advocatrescue.org](mailto:jana@advocatrescue.org) to your contact list so I don't wind up in your spam folder)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jasmin Curth <jasmin.curth@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:27 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue 9/13/24 testimony

[REDACTED]

Hello,

There is a homeless pet crisis in NYC and the citizens of NYC are desperately trying to help them, but there is no way we can without government funding. I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for safe, high volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker, including rescuers and pet parents. The cost of veterinary care is too high and sadly many people simply can not afford to take their pets to the vet and many landlords do not allow pets. These issues are causing people to dump their family pets on the street to fend for themselves and surrender them to already overcrowded shelters and independent rescues. Shelter/rescue intake is at an all time high and adoptions are at an all time low.

Please allocate substantial funding for safe, high volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care. Please also see that there is funding to educate people on how to care for a pet starting in K-12 and community outreach programs, and provide funding to build more animal shelters throughout NYC for the animals. We desperately need your attention and funding for this urgent crisis.

Thank You,  
Jasmin Curth  
Brooklyn, NY

[REDACTED]

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**From:** JC1985 <jcatania1985@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 12:57 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] voters for animal rights

[REDACTED]

We urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume, low-cost spay/neuter & affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers & pet parents

Thank you,  
Staten Island resident -Jason Catania

Dear City Council Members,

I'm writing as a lifelong New Yorker and current non-profit leader in NYC. I run an early childhood program in Morningside Heights where our focus is on providing a child-centered, equitable, and supportive program for young children and their families. My experience of 16 years and my Masters Degree is in Child Education and Development. So much of what we teach these children is about empathy and kindness as we hope they will grow to become New Yorkers who protect and care about their community. Right now at 2, 3, 4 and 5 years old, they have so much love to give.

It is my hope in writing this letter that you may see that what is going on with the overpopulation of animals and the problem of dog breeding, fighting, and animal abuse in the NYCHA housing projects (specifically in the Bronx) is not only impacting the lives of innocent animals, but creating a culture of violence and lack of safety for our most vulnerable New Yorkers: young children and their families who are living in poverty. **I also hope that you will see the long lasting impacts of New Yorkers not being able to afford spay and neuter costs and how it leads to increased violence among animals and among humans. Right now, veterinary costs are simply unaffordable to most New Yorkers, even those above the poverty line. This has left a huge burden on rescues, and has created an opportunity for dog breeders and fighters to take advantage of all of the vulnerable animals out there, continuing a violent cycle.**

What moved me to write this letter are the images and videos of cats being literally torn to pieces by fighting dogs in the Bronx. So many people around the country and world have seen this taking place and it is horrible to think that this is how NYC is reflected. It is devastating to know that this level of violence is taking place not too far from our little school and that humans have also been hurt and affected. Personally, I believe that no living creature deserves to be tortured or face a painful death. But, this issue goes further than just the animals. It affects the culture of NYC as a whole, it plays a part in holding back New Yorkers who are already struggling, and affects the mindsets of vulnerable children who will be the future of this city. **It teaches the children who live in housing projects that it is ok to abuse animals and to take life for granted. Caring for and understanding animals is, for many children, the first step in developing empathy. Children who learn that violence toward animals is ok have a much higher chance of being violent towards humans in the future. This is a systemic problem that if not stopped, will continue to sociologically impact how violent human beings are towards other humans.**

I know that as government officials, you have so much on your plates. I have no doubt it is exhausting, overwhelming, disheartening, and honestly depressing a lot of the time to create change. I also know that there has been some action taken in making dog fighting illegal. However, there needs to be action taken to reduce the amount of animals on the street and to stop the cycle of not only violent animal deaths, but the amount of euthanasia that is taking place at shelters due to the overwhelming number of cats and dogs. It is truly and deeply

heartbreaking and overwhelming for the individuals who are trying to rescue cats from being killed by dogs and trying to rescue the dogs that are bred over and over again to fight. Rescues are struggling with resources and are stretched so thin. The animals don't deserve to be born just to be killed or live miserable lives, and the humans of NY don't deserve to lose their animals because of lack of affordability, or experience increased violence in their communities. Being able to keep and care pets leads to increased empathy, happiness, and productivity in people, which will have positive effects on communities.

This is where government funding of spay and neuter services come in. There is a cat and dog crisis in NYC. The overpopulation of cats and dogs is staggering and too much for rescues and even shelters to keep up with. If the government were to fund costs of, or decrease the cost of spay and neuter services, this would decrease the overpopulation, lead to fewer animal deaths, and also contribute to ending the culture of dog breeding and animal violence, which ultimately impacts community violence. Rescues could do more to help as well.

I don't know the ins and outs of how the city is run, but I do know the police are already overwhelmed and that rescues and shelters are deeply overwhelmed. My plea that something more is done by the city to reduce spay and neuter costs is based not just on my views on animal rights but the major damage animal overpopulation and animal violence is causing to the human beings involved. **I ask that this be seen as a human rights issue that will affect the level of violence between humans as well.** As government officials, I am begging for you to protect the most vulnerable people of this city.

If there is anything I can do to assist you with this situation, I would be happy to communicate further.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

Jaya

Written Testimony for the City Council Hearing on the State of Animal Rescue in New York City

Jean Bublely ■ [REDACTED] ■ Brooklyn, NY 11217 ■ jbublely@gmail.com

September 13, 2024

I am Jean Bublely, a resident of District 39. I want to thank my City Council Member, Shahana Hanif, for all the work she does on behalf of animals. I also want to thank Committee Chair Lynn Schulman and Speaker Adrienne Adams, for holding this hearing.

For the last ten years, I have volunteered with several cat rescue organizations as a foster and as an adoption coordinator. I see the heartbreaking plight of sick and injured homeless cats, many of whom are abandoned pets. Sadly, their population is increasing, and the City is in a crisis. All of us are affected. For one thing, the large number of homeless animals has overwhelmed our city shelter system, which we all pay for with our tax dollars. The news media report that the brand-new ACC facility in Queens is already over capacity. Private shelters are overflowing too.

How do we end this crisis? The answer is clear. We need city funded free or very low-cost, high volume spay/neuter services that are available and accessible to all City residents! This is a municipal problem, and the City must step up to solve it.

My experience is with cats, so I will address that situation, but I hope you will hear from the dog rescue community too. Intact cats, whether they are feral, abandoned pets, or pets that are allowed outside, reproduce rapidly. Cat rescuers spend countless hours and go into debt to spay/neuter and vaccinate as many homeless cats as they can. These rescuers are ordinary citizens, volunteers with full-time jobs, and they are the only people on the frontline taking direct action to mitigate the crisis. These unpaid workers play a critical role in controlling the cat population, and they protect the public health by vaccinating the cats against rabies. Their important work, and their sacrifice of time and personal funds, has gone unrecognized far too long. It is time for the City to support them by providing free or very low-cost, high volume, spay/neuter services.

Although some low-cost spay/neuter services are offered by various organizations, the demand far exceeds the capacity, and slots are hard to come by. Moreover, even the low-cost spay/neuter services are too expensive for rescuers who spay/neuter and vaccinate dozens, or even hundreds, of cats. Fees range from \$130 to \$225, which adds up fast for rescuers!

Rescuers could do so much more if they had access to free or very low-cost, high volume spay/neuter services. Individual pet owners would benefit too. Many low-income cat owners cannot afford to spay/neuter their animals, and intact cats do not make good pets. Intact female cats howl when they go into heat, which is often when they do not get pregnant. Intact male cats have very strong, unpleasant smelling urine, and they tend to spray urine to mark their territory. These undesirable behaviors drive people to surrender or abandon their cats.

With a city funded program to provide free or very low-cost, high volume spay/neuter services, we can solve the crisis of homeless animals! This program would take the pressure off our municipal and private animal shelters, support low-income pet owners, support rescuers (many of whom are low-income themselves), and alleviate animal suffering. Together we can do it!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

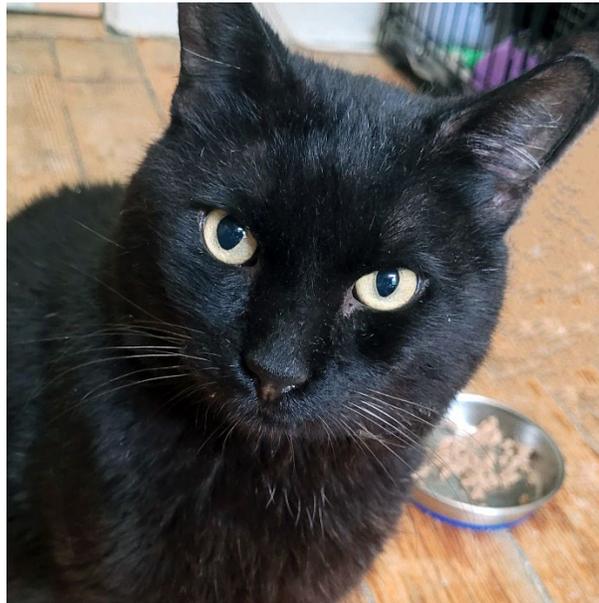
Written Testimony for the City Council Hearing on the State of Animal Rescue in New York City

Jean Bublely ■ [REDACTED] ■ Brooklyn, NY 11217 ■ jbublely@gmail.com

September 13, 2024

I am Jean Bublely, a resident of District 39. I want to thank my City Council Member, Shahana Hanif, for all the work she does on behalf of animals. I also want to thank Committee Chair Lynn Schulman and Speaker Adrienne Adams, for holding this hearing.

I submitted testimony on Friday. However, my rescue colleagues are telling me that I should have included a personal story, so I would like to tell you about a cat named Marcel. My original testimony is included after the story for reference.



Marcel, shortly after his dental procedure

Two cat rescuers spotted Marcel as they were driving on Conduit Avenue, and they scooped him up. He had the big ruff that unneutered males develop around the age of two years. He was friendly, most likely a dumped pet. He was in bad shape with a URI (upper respiratory tract infection). He appeared to have been fighting, which is common among intact males. When he recovered from the URI, he was neutered, vaccinated, and tested for two common cat retro viruses, FIV and FeLV, which both degrade the cat's immune system. He was positive for both. Since FeLV can be transmitted to other cats through casual contact, he had to be kept separate from other cats.

After several weeks of waiting in a cage, sweet Marcel finally got a foster home with no other cats. Unfortunately, his new foster home didn't last very long. His foster mom said his fur was dirty, smelly, and matted. He nipped her when she tried to brush him. So, I arranged to take him. First, I had to find a new foster home for Mustachio, a sweet older cat with digestive problems, whom I had been stabilizing. That's one of my fostering specialties. I take cats with various issues that most fosters don't want to deal with. I work with them and get them ready for adoption.

As soon as Mustachio went to his new foster home, I took Marcel. He seemed itchy, and he was pulling his fur out in clumps. His previous foster mom was right when she said he was smelly and matted. I booked a vet visit as quickly as possible for a check-up and grooming. The vet told me that Marcel was in poor condition, and he might not have long. Nevertheless, I hoped to give him a good year or two.

I thought Marcel might like feline companions, and FeLV positive cats are always in need of fosters, so I took in Cindy and Loretta, who were both FeLV positive. Cindy never warmed up to Marcel, but Loretta was sweet on him, and he was happy for the companionship.

One of Marcel's problems was stomatitis, an autoimmune disease that attacks the teeth and dental roots. His gums were infected, which was why he hadn't been able to groom properly. The treatment for stomatitis is complete removal of all teeth and dental roots, which is an extensive procedure. Marcel's case was complicated by the fact that he had a heart murmur, which makes anesthesia more complicated, and riskier. He needed a specialist. The first appointment I could get was with Dr. Carmichael in West Islip. I live in Park Slope, Brooklyn, so I spent \$600 on car service on top of more than \$5000 for the echocardiogram, consultation, full-mouth extraction, and pain medication.

Marcel recovered quickly from the dental procedure. His coat became sleek and beautiful. But just a few months later, his appetite declined. A trip to the vet revealed that his red blood cell count was very low, and my vet had me take Marcel to the emergency hospital for a blood transfusion. I spent over \$3000 for the transfusion and two nights in the hospital. Although he was much better for a few days, his red blood cell count went down again. The veterinarian tried a few drugs that she thought might help his body start producing red blood cells again, but to no avail. He had what's called non-regenerative anemia, meaning that he had lost the ability to make new red blood cells.

Although his condition looked bad in the lab reports, clinically, he did well for a few weeks. He ate, played, and cuddled. But his red cell count became so low that he was in danger of having seizures and being unable to control his body temperature. I decided to euthanize him before he got to that point. He happily kneaded his blanket on the trip to the clinic, and I held him as the vet administered the lethal drugs. I still cry when I think about him. He should not have suffered that fate. He should have been neutered as a kitten, and he never should have been dumped. This is the heartbreak that rescuers face over and over again.

Help end the suffering. Please provide funds for free or very low-cost spay/neuter for all City residents!

\* \* \*

For the last ten years, I have volunteered with several cat rescue organizations as a foster and as an adoption coordinator. I see the heartbreaking plight of sick and injured homeless cats, many of whom are abandoned pets. Sadly, their population is increasing, and the City is in a crisis. All of us are affected. For one thing, the large number of homeless animals has overwhelmed our city shelter system, which we all pay for with our tax dollars. The news media report that the brand-new ACC facility in Queens is already over capacity. Private shelters are overflowing too.

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My experience is with cats, so I will address that situation, but I hope you will hear from the dog rescue community too. Intact cats, whether they are feral, abandoned pets, or pets that are allowed outside, reproduce rapidly. Cat rescuers spend countless hours and go into debt to spay/neuter and vaccinate as many homeless cats as they can. These rescuers are ordinary citizens, volunteers with full-time jobs, and they are the only people on the frontline taking direct action to mitigate the crisis. These unpaid workers play a critical role in controlling the cat population, and they protect the public health by vaccinating the cats against rabies. Their important work, and their sacrifice of time and personal funds, has gone unrecognized far too long. It is time for the City to support them by providing free or very low-cost, high volume, spay/neuter services.

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Thank you for your time and consideration.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** J Stone <jstonenyc@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:08 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony to NYC Council on The State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

I am writing to respectfully request the NYC Council to please take action to address the current overwhelming need for high-volume and low-cost spay/neuter services as well as affordable emergency and ongoing veterinary care for any and all New Yorkers in need. Rescuers, pet parents and foster parents especially need the help to prevent pet abandonment and failure to access vet care due to unaffordable prices and access issues. Pet euthenasia due to shelter overcrowding needs to be eliminated. As a volunteer for City Critters Animal Rescue, I help feed feral cat colonies; trap, neuter and release healthy ferals; transport cats to medical care, spay/neuter and medical services; and foster and adopt rescued cats. My husband and I have adopted and currently care for 4 cats whom I rescued.

Thank you for considering this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Jean Stone

Jean Stone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** sharon schay <sharon.schay@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:40 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Written testimony on the state of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Dear city council,

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high- volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care services for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet pat parents!

Thank you!  
-Sharon Schay

As a senior with two senior cats,I find it impossible to afford vet care for my pets. At ages 14and 16,They need senior care as much as I do. One vet visit for blood work,for hyperthyroidism cost\$400 and that does not include the office visit or meds. A 10%discount offered by vets for seniors does not help my fixed income. I have had to resort to homeopathic meds on Amazon to keep my pet somewhat comfortable. I adore my fur babies,they are my companions. I can't even afford to haveeuthanasia if needed.. We need low cost care for seniors and their pets. AND WE NEED IT NOW!!

Jeannette Remak

Sunnyside. NY11104

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jeannine Harris <jharris612@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 7:11 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Written Testimony

[REDACTED]

To Whom This May Concern:

I implore the city government to allocate funding for low cost spay and neuter services, as well as affordable veterinarian care for every New Yorker. The costs are rising to care for an animal and if vet costs are lower, there is a greater chance more animals will be rescued from the shelter opposed to being dropped off and euthanized. Owning a pet is a personal choice however, these animals did not choose to be born. I am a pet parent of 4 and choose to struggle financially for their care. I am an exception as are many, but there are even more who choose not to because of the financial burden. Please, if you any compassion, please help the voiceless. Have a heart.

Respectfully yours,  
Jeannine Harris

**THE MYSTERIOUS COMMUNITY CAT PROGRAM (CCP)**  
...OR HOW ACC DUMPS DOMESTIC CATS OUT ONTO THE STREETS TO SUFFER  
(AND PROBABLY DIE)

My name is Jeff House. I am a Level II cat volunteer at the ACC Manhattan facility on East 110th Street. I have been a volunteer there since 2017. I help to care for all of the cats in the building on average two nights per week. I also helped manage cat colonies for over 20 years in the city and promoted TNR (trap, neuter & return). In addition, I am an environmental attorney and animal rights lawyer. I have provided counsel with regard to and helped to promote animal related laws, regulations, and policies in the city and state, as well as, nationally for numerous organizations and elected officials.

During Friday's hearing, you heard testimony regarding the ACC's Community Cat Program (CCP). The program certainly provides a great benefit. As you know, there are hundreds of managed cat colonies in the five boroughs. Through the CCP, colony managers are able to bring in their feral felines for vaccinations and spay/neuter procedures. In addition, ACC accepts for spay/neuter cats that are under the care of individuals who feed and care for a cat or a few cats in more of a "backyard" setting. On a slightly smaller scale than some of the more organized colonies, these individuals also provide food, water, and shelter to the cats under their watch. There is another kind of person who brings in cats located outside. This is the person who simply finds or claims to find a cat on the street or in a neighborhood (many just want to relinquish a cat with less red tape). (This person, as well as, all of the above people who surrender a cat are referred to by ACC as "good samaritans" and in the case of the colony or backyard caretaker, sometimes referred to as a "good samaritan - owner" on the cats' identity cards).

While it would be ideal to have all cats adopted out to loving homes, we know that is not possible - certainly given the size of this city and the limited funding of ACC. Thus, those who bring in cats for spay/neuter and are willing to pick them up after the procedure for placement back into "managed" living situations are essential. The primary problem arises with those "good samaritans" who are not willing to take control of the cat after spay/neuter - the people who simply "found" the cat (some lucky few of those cats may be designated as "strays" and if they survive any ancillary medical issues, may be moved into adoptions). Many of these are simply dumped by ACC back onto the street or other location where they were allegedly found (which may have been made up by the so-called "good-samaritan"). I have seen in the shelter many of these **CCP cats destined for dumping back out by ACC**. Many are incredibly sweet and friendly - no doubt because they had at one time been inside cats. They either escaped or, as is often the case, were dumped by their owner. As you can imagine, ACC, by dumping a sweet, loving cat onto the mean streets of New York, dooms that cat to a short life filled with terror and suffering. I have heard by word-of-mouth, that ACC claims the cats may have a home and will find their way back to it. While this may have limited validity in a small town somewhere with

individual houses, this sea of concrete and apartment buildings offers no such hope. Not to mention, they may have been abandoned in the first place on purpose.

I wish I could tell you more about how this system works, or what rules ACC may claim to abide by with regard to such “returns” of cats, but I can’t. The reason I can’t is because it is all cloaked in secrecy. In fact, volunteers are told not to ask any questions about the CCP program or any of the cats in its control (I and other volunteers have learned about dumping thanks to concerned staff members who anonymously provided us with such information because they were so upset by what was happening). We have been warned that if we ask any questions about the CCP or its cats we may be terminated. I and other volunteers view this secrecy as a means of ensuring that ACC can move as many cats out as possible and to tout that they are properly handling the cat situation in the shelter. Of course, what’s behind such box-checking is nothing more than pure cruelty.

So, what can be done? Here are some suggestions:

1. Eliminate the secrecy around the program. Provide to the staff, volunteers and city officials all information about the program, any purported rules, and each individual cat in the CCP.
2. Carry out a full investigation and accounting of the CCP.
3. Create a new set of regulations for the CCP, including definitions as to what constitutes a colony, a caretaker, and care, and a complete set of procedures to ensure that cats can only be returned to caretakers with the means necessary to care for any cats under their control.

Thank you,

Jeff House

[chouseski@gmail.com](mailto:chouseski@gmail.com)



Testimonial from Jen Heinsman

**I have been an LVT for 28 years and I have also been rescuing cats on the street since I was 19 years old.**

**I am certified in TNR.....I take care of 28 cat colonies- I take care of 96 plus cats on the streets of Queens EVERY DAY. I am up at four am to make sure they are all fed before I even go to work. Every day. Cold, rainy, wintery, when I am sick, have had surgery, NO matter what.**

I am also in the veterinary field as a practice manager-----and even I have struggles FEEDING spaying n neutering. I have no support for finances for these animals.

What needs to be done is city wide low cost spay n neuter- not only for rescuers, but for everyone ....so people can have pets again!

I am doing everything out of pocket all by myself. With your support, I can afford pet food, I can get these cats population under control locally. We need this to be an organized effort -and work on this problem together.

Currently in Queens, there are NO resources for low cost spay n neuter. People cannot afford a 300 dollar spay for feral cats. We can do better.

I get threatened all the time as I feed animals. People do not even understand I am trying to HELP the neighborhood.

I try to stay on the curb and be super courteous to those around me, but I need your support for the safety of the animals and myself.

This needs to be a neighborhood initiative!

And it should start in NYC! Let's be the ones to set the example.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jenna Wharton <jennamwharton@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 6:04 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To Whom It May Concern,

I am begging the city to please allocate substantial funding to affordable vet care for both rescue and pet parents. As someone who is still paying off medical debt from my pet's health expenses in 2022, please hear me when I say we cannot carry on like this. Our animals and citizens deserve better.

Kindly,  
Jenna M. Wharton  
10128 resident

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jennifer Rhein <jennr163@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 7:47 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] 9/13/24 Hearing on Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Jennifer Rhein

[REDACTED]  
Whitestone, NY 11357

My name is Jennifer Rhein. I am a volunteer with For Animals, Inc. I live in District 19 and my council member is Vickie Paladino. I know she is an animal lover herself and has not only helped ACC with funding, but has also hosted ACC adoption events in our neighborhood, and I would like to thank her for that. I would also like to thank her for taking the time to meet with Jonlyn and myself in July along with some of her staff members, to speak about this issue of animal rescue and the high cost of vet care, and the need for no to low cost spay/neuter and other vet services.

I have volunteered with For Animals, Inc for over 8 years. For Animals, Inc. is a fully donation based and volunteer run organization. We receive no city funding. I, as well as every other volunteer, work a full time job, and do my best to serve the animals and the community in my “free” time. I constantly feel like it’s not enough. I spend my mornings, lunch breaks, and evenings handling emails, posting on social media, trying to raise funds for our animals’ surgeries, and driving cats to and from trapping locations to other volunteers for recovery, to vet appointments, to fosters, and to adopters.

I work full time in special education, working with children with special needs. For the last few months I have been helping an 85 year old woman who feeds cats near my school in Richmond Hill, Queens. She herself has taken many of them to the vet over the last decade, and has spent thousands of dollars having them spayed/neutered. She has paid for dental surgeries and other surgeries as well. She calls me the “cat angel,” but I constantly feel like I am failing her and these animals, as we still have not been able to help them all. She is on limited income. Just last month she paid \$600 for one of the cats she feeds to have his injured tail surgically amputated, and be neutered. That was the price with a rescue discount. She continues to offer to pay to have the remaining male cats that come to her yard neutered, but I ask her to wait until we can hopefully get free appointments. One of the friendly cats she was feeding for the last 3 years is now in my apartment as a foster. His name is Buddy and she believes he once had a family that moved and left him behind. He had a cracked tooth, a cavity, gum disease, and needed almost all of his teeth removed. The cost of his surgery was

\$910 with a rescue discount, and we are currently fundraising for it, which really means begging people on social media for donations.

The morning of this hearing I was in a group text with our founder and another volunteer who could not make it in person because Norman, a 4 year old affectionate, sweet cat found dumped in Brooklyn earlier this year, was crashing. He had been diagnosed with a heart murmur, and his tiny heart was giving out this very morning. After numerous tests and medications, Norman passed away that morning. His vet bill is \$666 with a rescue discount.

The stories the day of the hearing made me cry numerous times. It's not just the animals that are suffering. The people of this city, particularly all of us who care about these animals are suffering. We are drowning and need help. We all got into this because we saw a need, and we love animals. There is no city agency for animal welfare. There is no department to ensure hoarding cases are addressed. I know because I personally have made numerous 311 calls, 911 calls, calls to the ASPCA, DOHMH, and nothing is done. We are unpaid, unappreciated, everyday citizens trying to do the right thing. People think we get paid, or that we have facilities and resources somewhere in an imaginary place, but we don't. We encounter some wonderful people, but we also encounter some really mean people, and we have no protection. We deal with abuse, people spitting at us, kicking our traps, yelling, cursing, and more, when we go out to help the animals.

The people I volunteer with, and the people who testified from other organizations, or as independent rescuers or pet parents, are some of the nicest, kindest people out there. Most of them are in financial crisis with maxed out credit cards. They see their health deteriorate. They miss out on family gatherings and vacations because they can't leave the animals and don't have anyone else to help care for them.

Everyday I see multiple posts and receive multiple emails on social media about an animal in need. Most of the people in this city want to help these animals, but they worry that in doing so they themselves will go into debt. As I type this letter I am responding to emails telling someone to bring the 4 kittens she just found to ACC, as we have no space and no open fosters. I'm also speaking with my mother's neighbor who suddenly is seeing a cat in her garage and doesn't know what to do.

As was said numerous times at the hearing, New York City needs high volume free and low cost spay/neuter programs for all New Yorkers. We need a city agency, not just one person at the Mayor's office, but a Department of Animal Welfare. We cannot depend on everyday citizens with no legal help and no legal protections to go out into every neighborhood and situation, safe or unsafe, to help these animals. We need to help New York's Kindest.

From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank Council Member Schulman, Council Member Ariola (I love that you wore the shirt!!!), Council Member Brannan, Council Member Holden, and Council Member Brewer. It seems like you all understand what we are going through, and understand that change is needed. Thank you to Council Member Schulman and Council Member Ariola for staying until the end to hear every individual testimony. And thank you to Vickie Paladino and her staff for meeting with us in July, and for always being so kind anytime I come to the office.

With sincerest gratitude,

Jennifer Rhein

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jennifer Raiten Stephenson <jenilar@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:27 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony animal welfare

[REDACTED]

Hi, my name is Jennifer Stephenson and I am a resident of Jackson Heights, and an adoptions counselor for a local Queens rescue, and a foster specializing in senior cats for puppy kitty ny city.

Recently a former adopter reached out to me after rescuing orphan kittens. He took them in and had them vetted at a local private vet.

He did not have any discretionary income but felt good obligated to care for them. He asked me about info for free spay neuter and I had to tell him the bad news that there was no such thing.

Our rescue did not have any "spots" and I could only give him the usual suggestions. I knew that whatever happened, I would not let him pay for it himself, and would of course pay out of my own pocket, but I shouldn't have had to. He was doing everything right and only wanted to keep doing everything right.

People who are good samaritans should not be constrained to do the right thing. If he had access to free spay neuter, he would have gladly sacrificed a day of work or rearranged his schedule to make it happen.

Thankfully he was able to use social media and work with the adopters to get them spay neutered but this is not always the case.

Our city, the best city in the world, needs the best resources for our animals, please make free and accessible spay neuter services available to everyone, pet owners and rescuers.

Thank you for creating the forum to hear us!

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon <jen.s.thorpe@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 3:06 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funding for low-cost spay and neuter and veterinary services

[REDACTED]

Our city is in a crisis of homeless animals. People cannot afford to get them fixed, so they breed, creating thousands of animals that will never find homes.

Adoptions are also low because veterinary costs are so high - veterinarians must earn a living and deserve to do so, but the fewer people that can afford to care for animals, the more will remain homeless. Our shelters and rescues overflow. There is nowhere else for these innocent animals to go. I volunteer for a rescue and it is devastating to see all the animals we cannot save.

I urge the city to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay and neuter and low-cost veterinary care for rescues and guardians alike.

Thank you,  
Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon  
Gravesend, Brooklyn

Jennilyn Carson

Fri., Sept 13, 2024 @10am Committee on Health

## Testimony

I've been a rescuer in East Harlem for the past 11 years. I've been in NYC for a total of 24 years and never had I imagined the extent of the cat crisis until I moved to East Harlem where you can practically trip over hungry and homeless cats just walking down the block. The amount of cats I see suffering on the street and needing help on a daily basis is heartbreaking and exasperating. The requests for help are also nonstop.

Someone has cats fighting in their backyard. Someone found a mama and kittens in an unmaintained lot. Someone saw a sick and injured cat desperately needing help under a car. It is relentless. As a rescuer I feel compelled to help them. But as a human being and a mom of two young children I can not feasibly house, care for, nor pay out of my own pocket for the ever increasing volume of cats on the street and requests for help. And yet, I will over extend myself to exhaustion because there is little to no help for these cats otherwise. I have personally spent thousands and have rescued and spayed/ neutered more than 200 cats, and it just never ends. I feel often that I'm drowning in the cat crisis with no end in sight. The people of East Harlem I know care for their pets but many just can not afford vet care or spay/neuter. The Manhattan ACC is right here in the neighborhood but they do not offer these services to community members who so desperately need them. The city must step up to provide low-cost spay/neuter and affordable vet services.

We have reached a point of maximum saturation and now is the time to act. The cats did not ask for this. They are domesticated animals who do not deserve a cruel and harsh life on the street. We are responsible for their care and safety and the city is failing them as well as their cat parents, many of whom can not afford basic vet care let alone spay/neuter, emergency care or even cremation services. Let's do the right thing and provide city-funded high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and accessible vet care.

Everyone should be able to care for their beloved animals, who are not just pets but bonafide family members and best friends. Let's throw them and the

overwhelmed and deeply fatigued rescuers and shelters a lifeline and put an end to the flood of cats on the street in this overpopulation crisis. Thank you for your time and consideration.

My name is Jenny Pierson and I live in Hell's Kitchen (District 3). My husband and I adopted [a rescue cat](#) in 2016 from the ASPCA, and, as an employee at a [nonprofit journalism organization](#) with a husband who was a mental health counselor living in middle-income affordable housing, we would not have been able to do so had the cost to us not been limited to a \$75 adoption fee and a few basic materials (litter box, food, collar, and toys). By the time our cat was in our carrier, the ASPCA had already spayed, vaccinated, and microchipped her for us.

I recently priced these services out at three private veterinary practices in my neighborhood while trying to help get a local bodega cat neutered and vaccinated, and the average cost was between \$800 and \$1,000.

I am extremely concerned that the humans who own pets or working cats won't be able to afford necessary veterinary care for the health of their animals and the rest of the community as well, since cats can reproduce so quickly.

I am TNR certified, and I feel lucky I have only needed to use my training once to rescue a cat in my neighborhood thanks to the patient, excellent, decades-long work by volunteers like those at [Urban Cat League](#) and [Greenpoint Cats](#) (which lends traps to rescuers in Hell's Kitchen). It's much worse in other boroughs, and I've seen many urgent cries for help (most importantly funding, as well as foster families, adopters, and volunteers for rescue, transportation, and holding while a cat recovers from spay/neuter surgery) by rescuers that break my heart. I've been in touch with local cat rescuers who note that the manageable stray and abandoned cat population could grow and cause unnecessary cat suffering due to neighbors who can't afford veterinary care for their cats or who have to move to buildings where landlords ban their beloved pets. [According to Stacy LeBaron of Community Cats Podcasts](#) (an excellent resource on cat rescue information as well as a provider of [TNR certification webinars](#) in partnership with [Neighborhood Cats](#), which started on the Upper West Side and has trained many of the rescuers you heard from on Friday), the "[Community Cat Pyramid](#)" indicates that the biggest building block in reducing the number of stray/abandoned cats in a neighborhood is helping everyday pet parents get access to affordable spay/neuter services. LeBaron has successfully reduced the number of cats in her area of [Merrimack River in Massachusetts](#).

I've also spoken to veterinarians and I understand the problem isn't their fault; it's systemic. Vets often have huge financial and emotional burdens due to the shortage of

veterinary professionals. [Flatbush Cats'](#) Will Zweigart has done a phenomenal job patiently explaining the systemic issue through Flatbush Cats' social media, and their education methods and clinic make for a model that should be applauded, amplified, supported, and reproduced citywide.

I would love to see more public education for adults and families (including school-age children as per the [Humane Education mandate](#)) about cat rescue and cat care. This will help increase interest in the veterinary profession for the next generation. Basic pet education solutions are not expensive and will help nip the problem in the bud for future generations. I'm also currently working on launching a nonprofit [Cat Museum of New York City](#) to supplement other humane education efforts through a combination of art exhibitions and programming featuring rescuers and vets. We hope to supplement municipal funding by helping rescue organizations/individuals and shelters raise funds too. (Please note that I'm speaking in a personal capacity in this testimony and not as the museum's founder.)

The Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare and the ACC can't solve the problem if they have insufficient funding. But more importantly, as you heard from 150 cat rescuers testifying on Friday who have been essentially doing municipal services without city resources, there is a dire need for affordable spay-neuter and other veterinary services, both for rescuers and pet parents. I know there is a lot of red tape involved even in setting up a single comfort station in a public park, so it won't be easy. But the model laid out by Flatbush Vet is a great start. I have been asked by folks in my neighborhood where they can affordably spay or neuter their pets, and I direct them to [Flatbush Vet](#) or the [Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition](#) in the Brooklyn Cat Café. But most of us don't have cars, and taking a day off work and adding the cost of a rideshare or taxi to and from another borough are hugely dissuasive for most people. We need to make this pet care a no-brainer if we're going to make a dent in the cat overpopulation crisis that's harming cats and humans alike. There are cats like mine who need homes, and many of your constituents would gladly oblige if they had a little support. There will be a lot of initial investment required for this solution. But it will pay off in spades in just a few years, other case studies in cities that fund spay/neuter many times more than our great one does have shown. Thank you for your consideration.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jere Petersen <jeremepetersen1333@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:56 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony - State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Dear NYC Council Members,

Thank you for holding the hearing on Friday which was both heartbreaking listening to all the speakers with their struggles and encouraging that so many caring individuals participated. As a cat parent and rescue volunteer (foster, adoption counselor, transporter and fundraiser just to name a few of the many hats worn) it has become increasingly difficult and nearly prohibitively expensive to provide medical care to any cats rescued. Our rescue currently has a balance of over \$10,000 with our local vet that continues to increase and for which we will have to fundraise while trying to work full-time, raise families and rescue the most neediest of cats in the Hunts Point Bronx community. We constantly have to turn away pleas for help because of limited resources beyond just medical....lack of fosters, food and litter expenses also are taxing our budget to the max. It is not sustainable for most of these volunteers who are often on fixed incomes to continue shouldering this massive financial burden and crisis. **Please provide more substantial on-going funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, especially rescue groups.**

Sincerely,  
Jereme Petersen

The New York City Council Committee On Health:

I have been volunteering for For Animals, Inc., a small no-kill, all volunteer animal rescue, for 11 years. Our funding is based purely on donations. Our main focus has been on rescuing cats from the streets, especially in low-income/under resourced areas in Queens/East New York. We also help community members take care of their animals, and, as much as we can, assist with having their cats spayed and neutered.

It's always been a challenge, the heartbreak of seeing so many cats suffering on the streets with injuries untreated, kitten age cats giving birth to litter after litter until they are so taxed that they die from disease, kittens being taken from their mamas to be used as dog bait in dog fighting rings, or being tortured by some who are unwell.

The past few years have been some of the worst. So many cats have been abandoned by constituents who can no longer afford their medical care, or are forced to move to places that don't accept pets. The number of strays we can rescue from the streets has decreased. The availability of low-cost veterinary services has dwindled significantly & there has been a decrease in donations due to income insecurity.

Every one of us, the volunteers, the people in the communities we serve, we are your constituents, voting members here in NYC. I have always considered NY to be an animal loving city, one that is concerned with animal welfare. New Yorkers love their animal companions, rely on them, and I have been grateful to those with the power to make laws to protect animals have done such a great job here.

We are asking you to consider making it a priority to provide funding for high volume, low-cost spay and neuter services for community members and for us rescuers to utilize. It is a win-win situation for the community/rescuers, and you, as council members. Less animals have to suffer, community members' happiness/ mental health increases when they don't have to give up their beloved animal family members, animal rescuers like ourselves are less burnt out, and we can get more cats off the streets. Happy constituents means happier voters.

PLEASE consider this a priority. NY is an amazing city, one that I have been proud to live in for over 20 years. The city is a role model. Let us continue this by showing others how much we love our animals, and care for each other, and utilize the creativity to come up with funding for animal welfare from the city.

Thank you!  
Sincerely,

Jernee Montoya, LCSW CASAC  
Volunteer  
For Animals, Inc.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jess Ranostaj <jessranostaj@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:24 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue - related

[REDACTED]

I am writing to add my voice to those urging city council to allocate significant funding for high volume, low cost spay and neuter services and affordable vet care for ANY New Yorker in need, and for this to include rescues and pet parents.

Thanks,  
Jess Ranostaj  
Brooklyn, Kings County

[REDACTED]

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**From:** gabe Carr <gabecarr@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 11:34 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony

[REDACTED]

I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable vet care for any New Yorker in need, including both rescuers and pet owners.

G. Carrillo

sep 13/24

Good Morning

My name is Jessica H  
and I am a caretaker of the  
neighborhood cats, I am stressed  
and tired of the suffering  
and this situation has to stop,  
the reproduction of cats, I don't  
have access to get the cats and  
I don't have a job to pay for  
the cats to get operated and  
I don't have a team to help me.

please help the animals!

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jessica Hope <theyallwanttolive@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:38 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony on animal rescue in NYC

[REDACTED]

I have spent the last ten years involved on a day-to-day basis with animal rescue here in NYC. Approximately five years ago I founded They All Want to Live for the purpose of rescuing and finding homes for domestic birds dumped in public parks, but have also been involved extensively with pulling, caring for, and finding homes for animals from the Animal Care Centers of NY (“ACC”) (both birds as well as cats) and doing TNR in upper Manhattan. I can say with firsthand experience that the situation for animals here in NYC is dire and that rescue of any kind is an uphill battle that barely makes a dent in the vast sea of sick, starving, dumped, injured, homeless, abused, neglected, or otherwise suffering animals.

Doing rescue work specifically in New York City might be more difficult than nearly anywhere in the world. The cost of veterinary care is prohibitive, the amount of space for fostering is limited, the number of low-cost spay/neuter appointments are nearly nonexistent, and transporting animals to be fixed, to vet appointments, or to foster or permanent homes is hard to come by with most people not owning cars. The cost of vet care, cost of living, buildings that don’t allow animals, and just the sheer number of people means animals are being surrendered and dumped outside at an alarming rate. Like most rescuers, I have seen most of my time, money, and energy be diverted to what feels like a losing battle. Animal rescue in NYC, especially TNR and cat rescue, is truly a losing battle despite everything that rescuers and rescue groups put into it.

We need the city to step in and assist in some way. Something has to be done to stem the number of stray and feral cats living out city streets. Something has to be done to provide more low-cost spay/neuter services as well as basic vet care. Our shelter system has to improve and needs to be able to accommodate the amount of animals being surrendered. We need enforcement in our city parks to prevent people from abandoning animals there and harming wildlife (and could be as simple as cleaning up parks of garbage and fishing gear that are deadly to wildlife). We need the NYPD to start recognizing and enforcing animal cruelty laws and the health department needs to recognize the countless health code violations perpetuated by live markets. Rescuers need to be supported in doing TNR (rather than opposed and harassed by the public and even the city itself) and the public educated about it. The City needs to cut down on the use of rat poison that is killing wild animals and putting pets at risk. Even just improvement in ONE of these areas would reduce countless suffering. I urge the city to prioritize any single one of these issues. Because the problem is so vast, even the smallest changes would have a significant and far-reaching impact on NYC animals.

[REDACTED]

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**From:**

**Sent:**

[REDACTED]  
Sunday, September 15, 2024 5:34 PM

**To:**

Testimony

**Subject:**

[EXTERNAL] To the New York City Council on the State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To the New York City Council on the State of Animal Rescue,

I strongly encourage the city government to allocate significant funding for widespread, low-cost spay/neuter services and accessible veterinary care for all New Yorkers, including animal rescuers and pet owners!

Sincerely,

A New York City Resident

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jessica Maldonado <maldonadoyj@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:17 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Jessica Maldonado and I currently live in Astoria, New York. I was raised in New York and in the last 32 years I have witnessed and experienced the hardships of being a pet parent. My pet parent journey started at a young age where my family adopted a stray cat so that it didn't have to suffer in the streets anymore especially since winter was coming. Ever since then, i have helped rescue 21 cats where I have 4 of my own right now.

There is a stray animal problem in New York City where many others including myself want to desperately change by spaying and neutering strays to stop the vicious cycle of strays and to help find homes but find it extremely difficult and overwhelming due to lack of free programs for spay and neuter, which is crucial to pivot the stray animal issue, and due to expensive veterinary care where bills rack up in the thousands for the local rescuers and where pet parents end up returning the pet due to high costs of vet care.

Now one may ask, why should I support funding when there's so many issues to address. I truly believe the stray animal issue is a direct reflection of the city officials. How can we boast that this city is one of the greatest in the world when there are thousands of souls suffering. Of course there are many things we can do to better many situations and I believe that we can start with supporting the pet and stray animal community as there are millions of pet parents who are finding themselves abandoning their pet and thousands of rescuers who have no other choice to let go of their rescue because of lack of funding and or resources. The pet parent and rescue community establish and play a big part of the city's economy. The pet industry is a multi billion industry that is growing and expected to grow in the coming years. Investing in this community especially for those in desperate need such as our local animal rescuers and organizations will help elevate these efforts and therefore the larger picture , the city's reputation , prospects and prosperity.

I urge and plead city government officials to support their city by allocating substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay & neuter and affordable / low cost veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, from families, rescuers, senior citizens and community volunteers.

May God bless those who are making the decisions for the city, regardless of the outcome.

All the very best,



[REDACTED]

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**From:** larebolera@aol.com  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:29 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] NYC Council on the State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

NYCACC needs assistance in helping the community and its pets. We're in crisis, and have been for an excruciatingly long time. People and animals are truly suffering. The lines for clinics are incredibly long and a lot of people get turned away. As a volunteer for the community pets programs, I've witnessed this firsthand, having to tell a neighbor in need, "not today". More funding for low cost spay/neuter and community pets is urgently requested. We encourage city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume/low cost spay/neuter and veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescue and private pet owners.

Thank you  
Jessica Theisen

per aspera ad astra

Joan E Deraval 5511 69<sup>th</sup> Place Maspeth NY 11378

September 14, 2024

Good day City Council Members,

My name is Joan Deraval. I am a lifelong New Yorker, a Social Worker, a cat rescuer and an advocate for animals and their caregivers. I have been doing community TNR and helping people both on- line and in person with finding resources for their pets and for stray and community cats for over 12 years. I focus my physical spay/neuter efforts on the Maspeth community where I live, nearby Elmhurst and South Jamaica where I work. I am currently working with a few friends to help a Maspeth community member who is heading for a crisis. He took in a couple of intact stray cats. Since he is on disability he does not have the financial resources for spay and neuter. As a result, he now has 8 adult / young adult cats and a litter of 5 kittens in his small apartment. At this rate he would likely have 25 or 30 cats or more in 6 months, which would put him at risk for eviction, and put the cats in the already overcrowded city shelter. We will not let that happen. We will use our combined efforts and funds to get all the cats spayed and neutered and find homes for the kittens. This is a common situation. We are lucky to have found out about it before it snowballed out of control. I work to empower people by encouraging them to learn and participate in TNR efforts, to foster and adopt. I share resources and information to help them get started. I am a New Yorker, I am committed to my city and the people and animals who live here.

I am fortunate to live in Council Member Robert Holden's District and thank him for his support of NYC animals and of local rescuers. I have called and emailed his office many times and have always gotten immediate follow up. I thank Council Member Joann Ariola for her actions to help with many animal situations in Queens as well as her support for rescues. I thank Council Members Justin Brannan and Gail Brewer for their support and Lynn Schulman for leading the committee.

NYC is experiencing a growing animal crisis. Independent rescuers and small non- profits are fighting a never-ending battle. ACC is charged with taking in all animals in need, but their limited space and resources cannot reasonably address the overwhelming need. Animals and those who care for them are suffering; physically, emotionally and financially. NYC must make a substantial commitment of funding paired with community partnerships to address this enormous problem. **The main focus must be low cost spay and neutering and accessible veterinary care. These are essential to reduce the growing number of homeless dogs and cats in NYC, reduce animal surrenders and abandonment. I urge NY City Government Officials to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable vet care for New Yorkers in need, including pet parents and rescuers.**

There are numerous issues that need to be addressed and changes that need to be made:

- The DOH is ineffective in their oversight of animal issues and humane laws. This responsibility needs to be reassigned.
- NYPD is ineffective in addressing animal abuse. They do not have the training or the resources. They also have become the only local drop off for lost pets. This makes no sense and must be addressed.
- ACC needs adequate funding and needs resources to focus on Community Services including surrender prevention and neighborhood outreach and education.

**Joan E Deraval 5511 69<sup>th</sup> Place Maspeth NY 11378**

- There needs to be greater education and community resources to support our multilingual communities.

I watched the September 13 City Council Committee Hearing. I am optimistic that this is a significant step toward the NY City Council partnering with non-profit organizations representing diverse communities to work towards developing solutions to our current animal crisis in NYC.

Thank you for your time. And your efforts.

*Joan Deraval*

September 14, 2024

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Joan E Deraval [REDACTED] Maspeth NY 11378

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Thank you for your time. And your efforts.

*Joan Deraval*

[REDACTED]

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**From:** clp110388@gmail.com  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:14 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony

[REDACTED]

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents

Sincerely,  
Joan Parisi, Bensonhurst Brooklyn  
Sent from my iPhone

# Testimony revised. 9/13. Joan Puwalski

Hi, My name is Joan Puwalski and I live in Bellerose, Queens. I am here today to express my concerns about the NYCACC who has been tasked with housing our homeless animals. I am concerned about the overcrowding and the care our voiceless homeless animals are receiving in our shelter system. **THE RE. IS**

I have been following the ACC AT RISK/Emergency Placement animals since 2016. My concern for these dogs prompted me to adopt a dog from their list who had run out of time and was set to be euthanized. I adopted him through one of their New Hope Partners in 2019. He was only a year old and his crime was that he was a leash biter and he had the dreaded kennel cough. I also discovered that he was deaf which went totally unnoticed by everyone at the ACC despite the fact that he was there for over two weeks. *and seen by doctors and shelter staff including trainers.*

The overcrowding at the shelters is of great concern. Dogs and cats being surrendered is not the shelters fault, but what happens to them once they enter the shelter system is the shelter's responsibility. There was such missed opportunity to get these dogs adopted after things started to get back to normal after Covid. The ACC kept a lot of restrictions when it came to opening up to walk in adoptions much longer than many of their counterparts. Before Covid, you could just walk into the shelter and look around at the adoptable animals. After restrictions were lifted, many of the other shelters went back to the previous walk in policies yet ACC did not. You had your make appointments and hours were very restrictive. I personally know people who became frustrated and decided to go to the Long Island Shelters or North Shore where you could just walk right in during adoptions hours and browse the adoptable animals. Even when they did finally open up and expand the hours, they still had a waitlist system and people were forced to wait outside in the elements for their turn to go view the animals.

I recently visited the new Queens shelter to see what it was like and if the process there was improved. I expected to just walk in during visiting hours and be able to walk around and see the adoptable animals. First, when I came in and approached the reception desk and asked if I could walk around and view the animals they asked if I was there to adopt. I said no, I just want to walk around and see the shelter and the animals because I heard so much about it at the board meetings. They told me we don't do that. So then I said that at the board meeting they made a point of telling people to come and see the new shelter and that was what I was there to do. They eventually relented. I had to sign in at a kiosk with my personal information, then sit and wait in a waiting room for someone to come and escort me around. I was the only visitor and I had to sit and wait for about 15 minutes for someone to come.

What happens on a busy day? *In addition, when I walked into the dog room I felt like the temperature was significantly higher in there which may be due to the glass beiling. I am not sure that was the best design choice.*

Also, the adoption reservation process needs revision. I personally know people who filled out applications on line and never heard from them. Another person recently was trying to fill out a prescreener for a euth listed at risk dog but they couldn't access it because they didn't have a google account. People give up and go elsewhere! Dogs are coming in but they are not leaving further adding

to the overcrowding. If they had opened up to walk ins sooner, allowing people to come in and view the dogs, if they made the adoption application process more accessible and if they were more responsive such as having a number people can call and which they actually answer to assist with this process and difficulties they are having, maybe this would have helped to place some of these poor souls, especially when time is of the essence and a dog is awaiting euthanasia.

In addition they do not advertise anywhere. They do not even have it in their budget! They don't share the at risk dogs on social media. They discontinued the At Risk Facebook page during Covid and then never brought it back. We rely completely on volunteers who create flyers for these dogs with the dogs's information on them and share them all over social media to get these dogs seen by the public. The public will contact these volunteer pages and they will instruct them how to go about saving these dogs using New Hope Partners. If not for the New Hope Partners and the work of these dedicated volunteers, the ACC's placement rate would be abysmal.

The ACC signed a contract to have a full service shelter in each of the 5 boroughs! The Queens shelter was delayed again and again for a myriad of reasons including a leaky brand new roof! And when it did open, all the Brooklyn dogs were moved there and Brooklyn was closed!! So, we still only have 3 shelters! And the Queens shelter has less room for dogs than the Brooklyn shelter despite being this enormous facility that could have been built to house so many more animals. Very very poor planning in a city of our size and population! When will the Bronx shelter be ready?? When will the Manhattan adoption center open? <sup>It just started housing animals, but still not officially opened.</sup> We have been waiting YEARS for these facilities that were promised to us and there is delay after delay!! And with each of these delays more and more animals lose their lives because of lack of space. They are listing so many dogs on their EP list every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday! Sometimes up to 25 and some are publicly adoptable and then end up killing highly adoptable animals again because of lack of space!

There is a lack of transparency that is prevalent throughout the ACC. In 2016, when I first learned about the NYCACC, I thought that they were no kill. I was shocked that in my progressive city animals were being euthanized at a rate that I found absolutely shocking and it has only gotten worse. When interviewed on TV they will say we have to make some "hard choices" instead of dogs are dying for space. And if people ask if they kill for space they say only for medical or behavior; but medical could be kennel cough and behavior could be leash biting, fear, or stress. Considering how stressful the shelter environment is, that gives them the ability to justify the euthanasia of almost any animal that walks through their doors. <sup>\*see last page.</sup>

They have a state of the art medical facility in their new shelter, but list medical cases on the EP for their New Hope Partners to save. The use of drugs is out of control. Trazodone and gabapentin is given in megadoses to almost every single animal that walks through their doors without any consideration of other medical factors which may make these drugs unsafe or that these drugs may even be causing some of these behavior problems. My dog had to be weened off the Trazodone when I got him by my

Joan Pukalski

vet because they sent him home to me without telling me anything about it but my vet saw it in his notes and thought it was best to slowly wean him off then to have him go cold turkey which is what happens with all the dogs they send to adopters and fosters which could explain why so many are returned, often with some kind of incident after not following rules of decompression and often leading to that animal losing their life.

The DOH does nothing to supervise the ACC. They just sign off on everything and provide absolutely no oversight!! We need new people to be placed in the positions of power at the ACC. We need people running this organization who actually care about the animals and their welfare and will work to achieve the most positive outcomes for each and every animal who walks through their doors. There should be a Department of Animal Welfare set up that has experienced and professional animal experts overseeing this shelter system and is not run by a person who was previously employed by the NYCACC for 10 years such as is the case with the current director of THE NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE OF ANIMAL WELFARE. (ALEXANRA SILVER) . Our system is broken and our homeless, voiceless and defenseless animals are the victims of this broken system.

Joan Puwalski  
JBlana@aol.com

[REDACTED]  
Bellerose NY 11426  
[REDACTED]

\* In addition, when an animal is given a euthanasia command, they are removed from the website and a search shows they are no longer available. For the EP dogs you can check the outcomes page to find out what happened to them, but some dogs are not EP and the only way to find out is to FOIL the animal. If an animal is awaiting euthanasia, then that is what the search should say. If they are killed it should say euthanized not "no longer available." They hide the killing from the Public.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Joanna Pacheco <freeroamingfelines@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:47 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee hearing

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

My name is Joanna Pacheco, I am an independent rescuer residing at 3939 Hill Ave in The Bronx, NY 10466. I wanted to attend the hearing to testify on this matter and the impact it makes on our city's animals. Unfortunately I couldn't take the day off from work at my new job. I joke around that I work to support cats, but the truth is this couldn't be any more accurate.

As a TNR certified rescuer, I manage and care for a feral cat colony in my backyard, as well as my resident rescued indoor kitties and fosters. I have single handedly rescued and rehabilitated over 300 cats from my community in the past 4 years. This has cost me thousands out of pocket, and is literally causing me bankruptcy from accrued vet bills and expenses for my grassroot rescue I run from my house.

I used to have a licensed business from home before starting to rescue, but soon realized the more cats that needed help, the more space I needed to allocate for them. So now I work outside of home so I can have the space in my house available to the cats when I rescue them and they need to be quarantined. Or need space while they await to be adopted. Or have to wait for their spay/neuter surgery date. Or recover from it before returning to their outdoor environment. Then there are the cats who weren't quite adoptable due to behavioral and/or medical issues. I took them in, and thus I'm responsible for them while they heal and recover, no matter how lengthy or expensive that may be. And that is one of the main reasons why more people don't do something to help and just walk past them. Because they know they will be "stuck" with that responsibility as well, for which we should be getting helped with.

No one does anything about it because they are not "their cats". They are nobody's cats. In fact, when I'm out trapping and rescuing at nights, on weekends, on all sorts of weather... neighbors think that is my actual paying job to do so. I explain to them it isn't, and that these free roaming felines belong to all of us in the community. That we should all do our part to help but I'm lucky if I get a compliment or praise in return, let alone assistance. Why? Because no one can afford the burden. Just like I can't, but again- if I don't help them who will?

Only with free and/or affordable veterinary care, I can continue to help the helpless and be the voice for the voiceless. I'm confident more people would too. We CAN save more lives together with your support.

Please, I urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need. Including us struggling rescuers, current pet parents, and those who have it in their hearts to combat but don't have the necessary means for the battle. Together we

can prevent and end the suffering for animals, and alleviate the struggles and challenges for those of us who love and care for them.

Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,

Joanna Pacheco

An animal welfare advocate and proud cat mom

9/16/2024

To whom it may concern:

Hello. My name is Jocelyn Amon. I have been a New Yorker since 2007 and on the rescue scene since 2008. By day, I am a Head of Product Development at Amazon Fashion, and by night and weekend, a cat rescuer, non-profit volunteer, and caretaker of the abandoned cats of NYC. Through my rescue and adoption work I am connected with citizens from all walks of life, and have seen first-hand that all New Yorkers, not just animal rescuers, want to live in a civilized, modern, society where animals are treated humanely and one does not have to walk out the door or turn on social media and see needless suffering. I am floored on a daily basis by the financial, and time sacrifices that our private citizens make to save and protect the cats that cross their paths. At the hearing we saw rescue groups but it extends far beyond- thousands of New Yorkers spending thousands of dollars per year to save their abused local bodega cat or the cat that shows up injured in front of their building. Cats that should never have been born, might I add. I am so honored to work alongside these inspiring citizens and the city should feel proud that such good resides within its boundaries. I am imploring the city to provide funding for low-cost or free spay and neuter AND vet care because I believe it is the most efficient solution and would cost LESS when compared to what rescue groups and citizens are spending at private clinics. Their money could be going back into the local economy or as donations to high volume city funded spay/neuter.

Cats are domesticated animals, no different than a pig, or a cow. They are not equipped to live outside on their own despite the fact that it has become so normalized. Every single cat out there suffers and fights for their life daily, typically with a crescendo of severe suffering at whatever end they meet, be it disease, torture, starvation, or injury. This is also why it is so expensive and time intensive to even rehabilitate a street cat for adoption. I can tell you from experience, that one needs AT LEAST \$5K in the bank per street cat rescued, and \$10K is safer, as something like a urinary blockage or similar emergency will be at least \$7K off the bat just in vetting alone. Between the spay/neuter at a private clinic, the de-fleaing, de-worming, vetting which usually requires extensive bloodwork, ultrasounds, often x-rays, extensive medications, the food, the cleaning supplies and equipment (cages, enrichment), the cab rides, the paid social media posts and ads, and potentially a year of socializing the cat, one is easily close to \$5K-\$10K all said and done. This is what incredible New Yorkers are doing all over this city. Forgoing dinners out, vacations, or having children to clean up the messes that irresponsible individuals make. Compassionate citizens are always going to do the right thing, but it is a burden (physical, emotional, financial) and it should not have to be this way. I should not have had to trap, rescue and provide vetting and hospice care to a suffering bodega cat with cancer so they could get a new healthier one to lock in the basement for life, but if not me, then who?

The long term vision is to need less of this expensive, time-intensive rescue/rehabilitation by preventing lives in the first place. The math is simple. \$5K can rehabilitate or hospice one street cat, spay 4-5 cats at a private clinic, or spay over 30 at an efficient, assembly line style facility. Multiply that with exponential breeding and it is clear that mass low cost spay and neuter is the logical, and frugal approach. Then imagine that people who make under six figures could actually afford veterinary care for a pet (which is easily a few thousand per year). It is a recipe for success - to reduce suffering for street AND owned pets, and for NYC to be best in class when it comes to animal welfare. I would be remiss not to mention the need to aggressively address backyard breeding and bodega owned cats as well however, as these are also root causes to the crisis at hand. Please help us.

Best,

Jocelyn Amon

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[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jocelyn Schulz <jocyk111@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:26 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

I am an NYC resident and I'm pleading for my city government to prioritize spay and neuter programs and affordable veterinary care for our non-human animals in need. Please allocate funding for high-volume, low-cost spay and neuter programs especially, which will save money in the long run by not needing to house/vet/adopt/euthanize the offspring of all of these animals. I work in animal rescue and so often see animals in severe pain, who can't receive the help they need due to the costs imposed on fosters, parents, and rescue organizations. I implore you to help the animals of this city (human and non-human alike) by supporting the funding of these programs. Thank you in advance!

Best,  
Jocelyn Schulz

[REDACTED]

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**From:** johanna castillo <kathyg0623@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:45 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To Whom it may concern,

We urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Dear City council,

I am from Staten Island New York, 10305. I am urging the City Council to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and I as a pet parent. I see so many cats and dogs that need our support an love.

Sincerely Cat mom,

Johanna Zumba

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jolie Warbet <jwarbet@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:13 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] SPAY/NEUTER

[REDACTED]

I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescues and pet parents!  
This is a critical emergency. Laws need to be changed and passed so we can control the over population and horrendous conditions many of these animals are found in.

Jolie Warbet  
[Lady of Grand](#)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jonathan Velazquez <jvelazquez0206@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 10:13 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Good morning, my name is Jonathan, and I am here to speak about the current state of animal rescue in our community. Animal rescue is an essential service, saving the lives of countless animals who would otherwise be abandoned, neglected, or euthanized. Yet, our efforts are often hampered by limited resources, overcrowded shelters, and a lack of public awareness.

Currently, many shelters are operating at or beyond their capacity. The number of stray, abandoned, and surrendered animals continues to rise, while the funding and staffing needed to care for them remain insufficient. Our dedicated volunteers and staff work tirelessly to provide the best care possible, but they are stretched thin.

Additionally, the lack of affordable spay and neuter programs is contributing to the problem by allowing overpopulation to persist. We need the support of the council to address these issues. First, we must invest in more spay and neuter programs, which are proven to reduce the population of homeless animals over time. Second, we need to increase funding for shelters so they can expand their facilities, hire more staff, and provide better care for the animals. Finally, we must promote adoption and foster programs more actively within the community, making it easier for people to choose rescue animals as pets.

Animal rescue is not just a matter of compassion—it is also a public health and safety issue. Overcrowded shelters increase the risk of disease outbreaks, and unrescued animals can pose threats to both people and other animals. By supporting animal rescue initiatives, we improve the overall well-being of our community. I urge the council to take these considerations to heart and to prioritize the necessary funding and resources for animal rescue efforts in our area.

The animals in our community deserve a chance at a safe and loving home, and together, we can ensure they receive it. Thank you for your time and consideration.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jone Noveck <jnoveck@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:42 PM  
**To:** Testimony; Jone Yahoo Mail  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee hearing

[REDACTED]

My name is Jone Noveck. My address is [REDACTED], New York, NY 10036

I attended the Sept. 13, 2024 NYC Council Hearing.

My testimony:

My family and I have lived in Hell's Kitchen (and paid City taxes) for decades.

New York City is world-class but has cheated its citizens in the area of effective well-managed Animal Welfare programs. New Yorkers love their pets, and animals in general, so it's time for New York City government to correct that oversight.

Over the last few years NYC's pet parents have been enduring a growing level of stress and distress. Veterinary care in NYC has become a financial burden, vet care service-costs have skyrocketed way past inflation, even basic fundamental needs like spay/neuter has become unaffordable for most working class New Yorkers. Previous discounts, vouchers, and low-cost services have all but vanished.

City governments are responsible for funding Animal Welfare programs and unfortunately NYC has fallen far behind other major cities. New Yorkers need New York City government to support them AND their extended animal/pet family members. We are asking that the City fund LOW COST, HIGH VOLUME SPAY & NEUTER and develop a program to subsidize basic veterinary services for NYC animal.

We Need Your Help; Don't Fail Us

Jone Noveck

[REDACTED]  
New York, NY 10036  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Josie Plumsted <josie.plumsted@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 10:38 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] NYC Animals

[REDACTED]

I urge the council to allocate funding to the NYC Wild Bird Fund. The center rescues and rehabilitates NYC wildlife and cares for injured birds. The center is largely run by volunteers and needs support for staffing and supplies. This is a unique service in the city to provide high quality care for injured wildlife.

████████████████████  
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11208

████████████████████  
Email: jgcitygin@aol.com

September 13, 2024

The Honorable New York City Council Speaker, Adrienne E. Adams  
and New York City Councilmen and Councilwomen

Honorable Speaker and Councilmembers,

This concerns Int 1018-2024 which incorporates State law into City law restricting pet stores from selling dogs and cats. This is my formal testimony at this hearing.

Firstly, my family and I appreciate that caring people have created this bill, and I urge you to please support it. It serves to prevent much exploitation of living souls for profit.

There has existed a mentality for centuries demeaning animals, which has gone so far as to call an animal an “it” even though they are male and female. Perhaps someday basic heart-and-mind precepts will prevail in doing away with this practice as well. This mindset derives its primary source from the belief that an animal is not, and does not have, a soul. The doctrine has been promoted from pulpits, written in articles, and employed in laboratories.

Even though, The Book Of Genesis, in the very first Chapter, states in the Hebrew that animals are, in fact, **souls**. Here is the word-for-word Interlinear Hebrew Translation:

“And-HE-is-saying ELOHIM they-shall-roam the-waters roamer-of **soul living** and-flyer...

And-HE-is-creating ELOHIM the-monsters the-great-ones (that would be big animals like whales) and **every-of soul the-living the-moving** which they-roam the-waters to-species-of-them and every-of flyer-of wing to-species-of-him...

And-HE-is-saying ELOHIM she-shall-bring-forth the-earth **soul living** **to-species-of-her** beast and-moving-animal and-animal-of-him land to-species-of-her and-he-is-becoming so.” – Genesis 1:20,21,24.

Moreover, YAHWEH spoke to the animals, blessed them, and told them to “be fruitful and multiply” when man was but a twinkle in HIS eye. – Verse 22.

In testifying, today, it is also my hope that you will work together towards forming a bill eliminating slaughter in kill-shelters, politely called “euthanasia” to conceal its sting, though it does nothing when the breath of living, sentient beings, souls, is snuffed out by force. Please place this at the forefront.

Thank you. Peace and Blessings.

Joy E. Goldberg

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Joyce Friedman <joyce@vfar.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:37 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee Hearing

[REDACTED]

**Dear Honorable City Council  
Members:**

**As a former manager at NYC  
ACC, an animal welfare  
professional for over 20 years, a  
former social worker, and a current  
VFAR Board Member, I urge you to  
pass CM Brannan's bill which  
would regulate " backyard  
breeders": it would require NYC**

**residents who are breeding and selling dogs, cats, rabbits or other animals to obtain a license to do so. These backyard breeders and apartment breeders are rampantly contributing to the huge overpopulation crisis of homeless animals in the overwhelmed shelters (who are doing their best) and on the streets . It is morally reprehensible to create more animals when there are thousands of dogs, cats, and rabbits dying to be let out of crowded cages and into warm, loving homes.**

**Moreso, these breeders are selling these animals for thousands of dollars, usually with no vaccines or medical care, never spayed/neutered, and often taken from their nursing mothers way too early. Often these overworked mother dogs are found abandoned when they can't be bred any longer.**

**If "somewhat" regulated pet stores are no longer legally permitted to sell dogs, cats and rabbits as per the NY State law going into effect in December, then completely unregulated and often exceedingly inhumane backyard and apartment**

**breeders should at least be required to have a license to sell.**

**Thank you for doing all you can to pass this bill as swiftly as possible .**

**And of course please fund high-volume, free or low cost spay neuter clinics.**

Sincerely,

Joyce Friedman

[REDACTED]

Forest Hills, NY 11375

[REDACTED]

--

Joyce Friedman  
Board of Directors  
Voters for Animal Rights

[REDACTED]

[Joyce@vfar.org](mailto:Joyce@vfar.org)

VFAR.org

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[REDACTED]

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**From:** Juan E Roman <eloyroman@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:20 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Please help us with the populations of homeless cats in New York City

[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Juan Roman, I live in [REDACTED] Hollis Ny 11423 . My neighborhood have a big problem with over population of stray cats . We have try to help hundreds of them we spend alot of money trying but there is no enough clinics or low cost vet. Please help us ! We don't have the money to help more cats, is getting too expensive . Sick kittens ,nursing moms and everyday we face this situation.

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high volumen, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you ,  
Juan Roman

Judith Lustgarten  
NY, NY 10028



We have formal city committees chaired by council members for everything ... tho nothing for animals other than a non-operative animal welfare agency consisting of one person, not a council member, who doesn't reply to public inquiries. The animal arena isn't just a business ... it's, in FACT, an ENORMOUS business .. yet the field isn't being dealt with responsibly and is treated as an appendage. It's time PROPER EFFECTIVE BUSINESS PROTOCOL be put into place, with no undermining ... along with a Civilian Review Board with the proper independent people... so this field can finally be done the right way ... successfully and responsibly to the animals.

All people of wisdom know ... as with any cause, it's always the advocates who live/ breath the cause everyday who REALLY know what's going on. PEOPLE, in general, LOVE ANIMALS. If the public knew what the advocates know ... the roar would become utterly deafening. These poor sentient beings who feel pain, joy, fear, love ... just as we do ... have no control in our kill pound over what will happen to them and their lives ... which is why ACC is often compared to a concentration camp. These poor helpless souls are at the mercy of human hands and minds.

**BASIC BUSINESS PROTOCOL 101: none in place**  
**DIRE PROTOCOLS for nearly EVERY BUSINESS are:**  
**CUSTOMER SERVICE, FOLLOW THROUGH, & CONSISTANCY.**

&

1. **MARKETING** - Not 1 line item allotted for marketing. NOTHING. Their only marketing done is if it's for free.

The majority of Nyer's **don't even know they exist**

So, ... No Marketing =  
No Public awareness =  
Little to no adoptions

**IE:** Look at **ASPCA marketing**. **Everyone** knows of them ... as they sit with ½ million dollars in their reserve fund... GROWING ANNUALLY ... yet ACC does none.

**AND**

**And 2. ...As with any successful business ... you**

Put the **proper brilliant ethical professionals** ... in this case:. Business, Admin, Marketing, and Animal professionals.

~ in the **proper positions**,...

~ with the **proper plans** ...

~ & the **proper motivational mindset** behind it, ... **honorable to the entities** of this business, which, **in this case ...are these helpless homeless animals**

Jan 2024 board meeting, regarding "marketing", Risa whined (with her feeble excuses), "We're just a small group". As a business, numbers, and systems person ... I will say this:

1. A group can be small, well run, and highly effective, when and if it's run by proper professionals .. in this case... that would be brilliant ethical business, admin, marketing, and animal professionals ... HONORABLE TO THESE ANIMAL'S LIVES. That's not the case at NYCACC. ... a feeble excuse that holds no substance ... a foolish remark.

### **But ACC ignores basic business protocols for success. There's a BLATANT LACK OF PROFESSIONALISM.**

In truth, I wish I never tripped into this arena ... as it's changed me ... not in a good way. I walk around most of the time with my heart on the ground ... while, oddly enough ... it's overseen and protected by the wall of steel of the **Dept of Human Health and Mental Hygiene**. It's quite the dichotomy and rather ironic **because**

- DOH is creating mental depression & anxiety for those who know what's happening behind those closed doors.
- NYCACC is crawling with bugs and cockroaches and DOH does nothing about it (I have videos of Manhattan ACC)
- The cages /kennels are FILTHY and too small

INTAKE is ½ OF WHAT IT WAS ... IT USED TO BE 34,000 ANIMALS. Now 17,000 ... Yet continue their whining, ... and killing just as many. As a business, numbers, and systems person ... something's very wrong here. ½ the intake yet the enormity of killings continue at an alarming rate. It simply just doesn't add up. And the list goes on and on.

Yet ACC ... with no fair bidding process ... were simply granted a 34 yr / \$1.4 billion contract After

- receiving scathing city audits,
- having filthy diseased shelters crawling with bugs/ cockroaches (I have video),
- Mega Drugging – of drugs these animals need to **be weaned off but , IRESSPONSIBLY AND VERY DANGEROUS, doesn't give the medication to the adopters, fosters, and rescues so it can be done as it should be. It goes Completely AGAINST MFGR RECOMMENDATION.** ACC is **UNBELIEVABLY IRRESPONSIBLE AND it's DANGEROUS!**,
- Missed contract deadlines and commitments ... which breaches the contract yet they're never held accountable .. & What ever happened to the **Manhattan shelter** ... the **garage** ... with the photo op and hard hats on
- They Whine about needing **volunteers** ... yet when people **apply** ... the requests go unanswered. **I have the proof / screen prints.**
- **Bad behavior- Rude / unresponsive to the public emails/ phone calls ... always on the defense - LITTLE TO NO PROPER CUSTOMER SERVICE....**

... continuing to prove their lack of shelter knowledge, organizational skills, business and financial planning skills, and how unqualified they actually are ... certainly for this business

- **Rescues** bear the brunt of saving the animals.

In a city of nearly 9 million people ... ACC only does a small handful of direct adoptions per year. And **due to the improper vetting**, many are returned or found tied to a pole... brought in ... then usually immediately kill listed. **It's an awful protocol**

**At the Jan 2024 board meeting ... it was the 1<sup>st</sup> time ever they ended the video of the** after the ACC presentation ... purposefully cutting out the entire portion of the members of the public speaking. ACC didn't want the outside public and the politicians to see/hear what was said, because it got heated. Just more proof of their continual lack of transparency

As to the **court of Ethics**, ... no one with a grain of compassion puts a poor defenseless vulnerable animal thru a spay/neuter surgery and then kills it ... sometimes immediately. This is more than mismanagement ... This is pure inhumanity ... and an utterly heartless twisted protocol. But they do it at NYCACC

they're constantly breaking laws ... always with the same (lame) excuses.

- **Section 353:** failure to provide proper sustenance or drink – wholesome shelters/cages and water.
- **Section 373:** Improperly confined and kept cages/kennels that are filthy and too small
- **Section 374:** Euthanasia & Unwanted animals: They kill a lot of animals who **were wanted ... not unwanted**
  - **Animals who people wanted to adopt**
  - **and rescues wanted to save were ... yet animals are killed** regardless of that FACT they were **WANTED ANIMALS. sears the soul**
  - **People want an animal but ACC constantly** finds excuses not to let people adopt .. & kill them instead

No follow through, no professionalism.

Can't keep sweeping these things under the carpet ... and not be accountable.

Animal advocates aren't crazy .. perhaps angry, frustrated, and disgusted at the lack of care/ concern for this ENORMOUS BUSINESS arena ... watching it run so decadently. We're supposed to protect our most vulnerable vs treating them as a disposable commodity which they're not ... yet are treated as such ... killing wonderful adoptable animals who give humans so much pleasure ... many who lived lovingly and peacefully in families with children and other pets. So animal advocates advocate for these defenseless sentient beings ... just as other people advocate for children, the elderly, and so much more.

There are solutions. ACC just refuses to entertain them.

Obvious and responsible to look at are:

~ Housing restrictions **and** Low-cost Spay/ Neuter

~ And of course NO KILL. No one can say NO KILL is impossible ... because it exists... all over our country now. It's been proven successful when protocol is implemented honorable and ethically .. and no one can argue with PROVEN SUCCESS. Austin Animal Center had actually done it ... and it was done beautifully ... it was the finest most stellar municipal shelter in our country ... I remember all their videos ... and then the green-eyed monster reared its head.

It's time animal's lives ... their rights as well as their welfare be taken seriously. There's no reason under God they shouldn't be. We need to do and be better than THIS.

IT'S ALWAYS A CHOICE.

## **THE STORY IS ALWAYS IN THE DETAILS**

**I want to thank you for having a hearing on the oversight of animal welfare in this city. I very much appreciated your interest in this on Friday.**

I was in the panel ... 2<sup>nd</sup> to last to speak in person ... at the hearing on Friday ... time stamp 7:13:00. I could be incorrect; though, BELIEVE(?) I said some things that you were interested in hearing more on?

Apologies .. in advance, ... for the long read. That said, I think you'll find that it will be highly informative for you ... so, please forgive all the important details.

I've been in this since 2012 ... and I almost don't know where to start ... there's just SO much. It's truly awful. ... It's literally a nightmare come live.

**Please note:**

**THERE ARE SO MANY TENTACLES TO THIS ... AND EACH TENTACLE RUNS VERY DEEP. IT'S QUITE CONVOLUTED ... AND A HUGE LEARNING CURVE ... TO REALLY GET TO KNOW & UNDERSTAND ALL OF THE DETAILS.**

This group at ACC has had nearly 10 yrs to get this right and they've continued to prove they're not up to the task. And this last business venture in QUEENS is just further proof of their dismal failure as successful business people.

They've shown:

### **Bad/ Illogical Business and Financial Planning**

- Limited open/ adoption hours ... **not conducive to the public's schedule**
- New location – w/ **no access to public transportation?!**
- They **closed the Brooklyn shelter, overwhelming Queens** before it was up and running properly.
- **Retractable roof** in new shelter that will definitely cause future problems w/big **leaks**. And I understand from the advocates who've been there ... it's **hot as the devil in there on a sunny day. That's very unhealthy and debilitating.**

No bright business person would have done ANY of this.

Which takes us to ....

**More Poor protocol that limits getting animals adopted ... illogical if their aim is **TRULY** SAVING ANIMALS**

- Distance perimeters – only relevant if HOME CHECKS are done. **There are n o home checks = so distance perimeters need to be eliminated.** Most pounds don't have this **unreasonable/ illogical** protocol limitations - not **Miami, Texas, California Carolinas, etc etc doesn't do them** – severely limiting the lives to be saved.

- New Hope Partners only ... further limiting ... while there are other wonderful rescues available to save our homeless animals as well. (Yes, of course there are bad rescues ... and always must be careful and do the proper due diligence ... **Ann-Margaret, the first person in the ZOOM TESTIMONY told her story. None of her references, vet, landlord were called before nor after they approved her. ACC DOESN'T DO THEIR JOB ... DON'T CHECK REFERENCES ... NO FOLLOW THRU. HIGHLY IRRESPONSIBLE – LACK OF PROFESSIONAL PROTOCOL**
- And more often than not ... they come up with reasons not to adopt animals out to people ... and kill them instead.

If you're brave enough, FOLLOW THE KILL LIST ... once called "URGENT -TO BE DESTROYED, then changed to AT RISK, and now called EMERGENCY PLACEMENT".

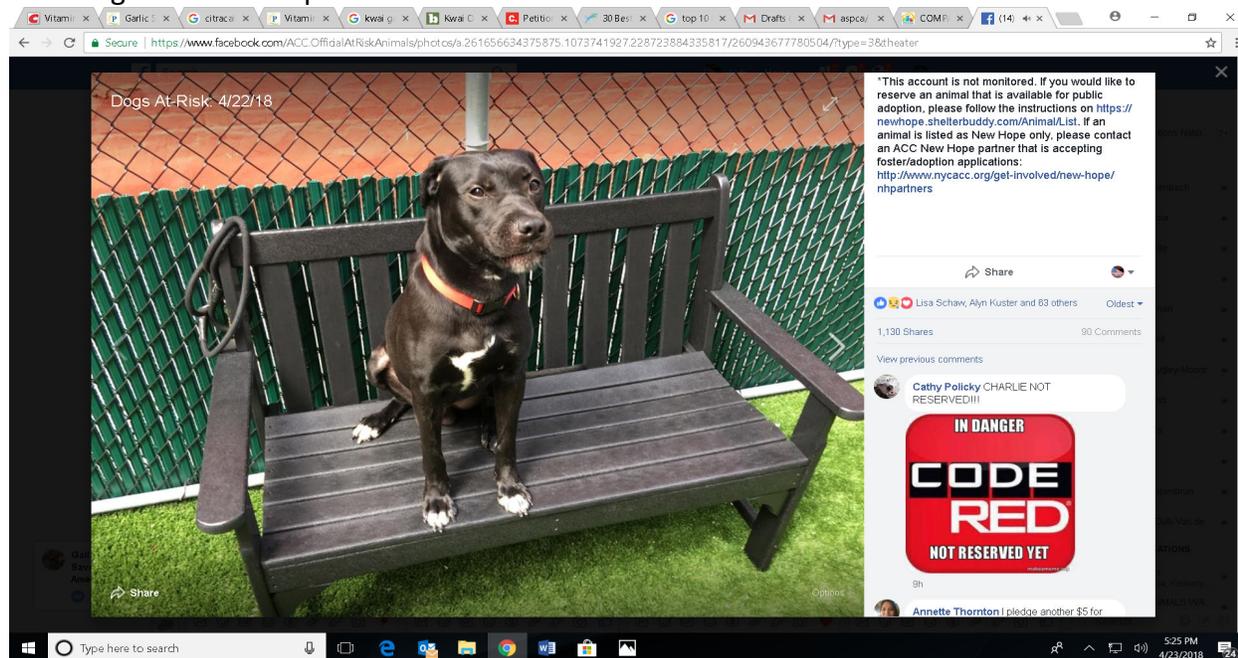
Interestingly enough, ACC keeps changing what they call it ... so it doesn't sound as awful. **Just another example of their "sugar n spice horse and pony show of smoke & mirrors that holds no substance".**

**They changed their name from Animal CONTROL Center ... to Animal CARE Center.**

Another part of their sugar n spice horse and pony show of Smoke n Mirrors. It's all for SHOW.

**So again, if you're brave enough ... please follow the emergency placement/ kill list ... for at least a week .. Unfortunately, It's the only way you'll begin to really understand ... and see how it operates. Though, I warn you ... this is VERY TOUGH stuff. Absolutely heartbreaking.**

BTW ... ACC used to have an AT-RISK FB Page ... and yet it **wasn't even monitored** by them. **HANDS-OFF** It was the ACC Official AT-RISK page: read the first sentence at the right side of the picture.



I'll put some links to the 3<sup>rd</sup> party pages ... of the advocates who work DAILY on getting these animals out safely.

- DOGS LIVES MATTER – SAVING NYC DOGS  
<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=dogs%20lives%20matter%20-%20saving%20nyc%20dogs>
- &
- Must love dogs – Saving NYC Dogs:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/787456071795044>

**Lack of BASIC BUSINESS PROTOCOL 101:** showing the **BLATANT LACK OF PROFESSIONALISM. DIRE PROTOCOLS IN EVERY BUSINESS THAT DEALS WITH THE PUBLIC ARE:**

- **CUSTOMER SERVICE, FOLLOW THROUGH, & CONSISTANCY**  
**&**

**The 2 most important things they don't do ... again, BASIC BUSINESS 101:**

1. Put the **proper brilliant ethical professionals** ... (who exist for every business arena in the world today) in this SHELTER case, ... **brilliant ethical business, admin, marketing, and animal professionals** ... HONORABLE TO THESE ANIMAL'S LIVES

~ in the **proper positions**,...

~ implementing **proper plans** ...

~ & the **proper mindset/ motivation** behind them,... **again, honorable to the entities** of this business,... **in this case: these defenseless animals**, doing everything it takes to save them.

**None of this is in place.**

AND

2. **MARKETING!:** - no monies allotted! **NONE ... It's shocking** ... NOT 1 LINE ITEM IN THEIR BUDGET FOR MARKETING and REAL COMMUNITY OUTREACH. AND, If you look at their **990 Tax Form** ... you will see that most of their monies goes to **"SALARIES AND WAGES"** They do ZERO MARKETING ... **unless it's paid for by others.**

The majority of **Nyer's don't even know they exist:**

SO, No Marketing =

No Public awareness =

Little to know adoptions

**IE:** Look at **ASPCA marketing**. Everyone knows of them ... as they sit with **½ million dollars in their reserve fund... GROWING ANNUALLY.**

As any person with wisdom knows ... as with any cause, **it's always the advocates who live/ breath the cause everyday who REALLY know what's going on.** PEOPLE LOVE ANIMALS. If the public knew what the advocates know .. the roar would be utterly deafening. ACC doesn't want that ... and that's untrustworthy dishonorable business. IT'S ABOUT THE AWARENESS THAT NYCACC EXISTS ... to save these defenseless sentient beings ... and with no marketing/ advertising ... that job is not being done.

None of this **BASIC BUSINESS 101** is in place at NYCACC.

**BTW ... Here's an example of ACC not even getting back to media at the start of the pandemic when it would have helped the animals: irresponsible/ hands-off / lack transparency – again/still**



**Why more adoptable NYC pets may be euthanized amid coronavirus**

nypost.com

WHY AREN'T YOU RESPONDING TO THE NEWS ... AND INFORMING THE PUBLIC?! ?????!!!

<https://nypost.com/2020/03/16/why-more-adoptable-nyc-pets-may-be-euthanized-amid-coronavirus>

The news reaches out to the marketing person at Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC) ... And they don't even get an answer. No proper responsible reply?!

No less at a TIME LIKE THIS ... When people need to be informed about Everything that's going on in this city right now.

Talk about a lack of ethics and transparency. It's utterly disgraceful. It's incredible that they're so hands off and HIDING BEHIND THEIR SMOKE AND MIRRORS. More proof that they do not want to work with the public. More proof of their lack of accountability.

WHY AREN'T YOU RESPONDING TO THE NEWS ... AND INFORMING THE PUBLIC?!

**Sloppy /Unprofessional– lack of accountability** – there's much more than this ... tho these are the ones that are at the top of my mind at the moment. Some of the other bullet points throughout this reading would go in this category as well.

- Contract deadlines and commitments that ACC that have yet to be met and honored – **therefore breached**
- Misused monies, disrespecting our tax dollars, on **horribly poor planning** for the QUEENS shelter. \* **Cages sizes are so critical/ so basic ... yet small dogs are in stacked cages meant for temporary grooming ... vs living quarters for 23 hrs+ per day.** & That's just one example.  
What contractor did they use? ... certainly not a company that was savvy with professional shelter planning

Would be very interesting to see how they'd treat you ... if they didn't know who you were.

**VERY Bad attitude towards the public –**

- To people interested in volunteering
- To people interested in Adopting/ Fostering
- To answering simple questions when members of the public call in ... if they actually even answer the phone
- Unresponsive to calls/ emails ... and when they do respond they're very often nasty. (someone at the hearing actually stated their / that same experience... and

that's only one of the hundreds). I have so many emails from people about their terrible upsetting experiences with them. They're NOT warm and fuzzy ... and they're **ALWAYS on the defense**

**Chatter - No follow through – they don't honor their word. LACK OF HONOR.**

**If one says something ... that word needs to be honored ... or it should never leave their lips.**

- **2019 Board meeting:** – Ellen Curtis said they, “we will no longer list small dogs... ever. We always find placement for them ... a small dog could be CUJO in a tiny body .... and we're still going to find placement”.

Board meeting below - Time stamp 1:08:17 – 1:08:28:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmYaG9bmno&t=4110s>

Clearly the word “EVER” (in the link above) didn't mean anything. It wasn't long after that they started killing them again.

- The **Manhattan shelter** ... the **garage** ... with photo op and hard hats on. That was supposed to be opened eons ago. **BREACHED** (\*They finally made mention of it yesterday at hearing)
- At **January 2024 Board Meeting** Amy Grossman, advocate –offered them space. Her family owns a shipping company. **ACC acted excited** and stated they were going to follow up with her. Not a word. They never did.

YET:

**They look outside of themselves for others to do their work**

- **Kill List** – it's difficult enough when it's an animal on the **EMERGENCY PLACEMENT LIST** who can be a **direct adoption**. That's when it's a matter of someone at ACC to reply to their emails timely ... which is an issue in/ of itself.
- **\*\*\*\*** BUT IF AN ANIMAL IS LABELED FOR **RESCUE ONLY** ... it REALLY BECOMES A MAJOR PROBLEM. **There's NO DIRECT PHONE CONTACT for any of this at ACC.** **\*ACC SHOULD BE COORDINATING THE INTERESTED ADOPTERS WITH THEIR New Hope Rescue Partners ... tho they're TOTALLY HANDS-OFF.**

**\*This is their job for God sakes** ... what our tax \$\$\$ are paying for ... **but the advocates are doing it. So people's precious time is wasted trying to pull off the kill list ... just to even FIND one of their “NHRescue Partners” who will pull the poor animal.** It's a REAL fiasco ... and it's sheer panic ... ALL THE TIME. **UTTERLY IMPROPER AND UNPROFESSIONAL BUSINESS PROTOCOL.**

**\*\*\*** **... WHILE THESE DEFENSELESS ANIMAL'S LIVES ARE ON A TIME CLOCK.**

**THIS BUSINESS CAN CERTAINLY BE RUN FAR BETTER THAN THIS ... WHEN RUN AS A NORMAL BUSINESS ... WITH LOGICAL HANDS-ON /**

**ORGANIZED PROTOCOLS PUT INTO PLACE ... WHEN BRILLIANT ETHICAL BUSINESS PEOPLE RUN BUSINESS. As it is ... this is a dark circus.**

New Hope Rescue Partners: lists about 300 rescues (sounds great, ... doesn't it?) ... **BUT only a handful of rescues are actually pulling animals.** If the public knew that this is how they operate this business ... they'd be furious/shocked. They wouldn't believe it. **When I discovered how they run this business ... I said, "No way ... this can't be how it works ... it's just unreasonable irresponsible insanity".**

ACC is about **CONTROL ... not CARE.**

- **Volunteers** – ACC whines about needing volunteers **... yet when people apply ... the emails/calls go unanswered. I have the proof / screen prints.** And I was made to understand that the few volunteers who are brought in are put on laundry duty for 4 months before being allowed to engage with the animals.
- When people complain about the ACC to the, what I call, "ACC RAH RAH people" ... their **trained verbiage** is, **"and what do you do for ACC?"**. It's as tho you've entered the twilight zone. And meanwhile, they have 65 more employees than they used to (**which I discovered at the hearing on Friday**)... and they still complain.
- The employees are made to sign contracts that don't allow them to discuss things going on at our city shelters ... and that only happens when they want something hidden from the public. **And THAT'S unethical dishonorable irresponsible to the business ... as it is to us, the tax payers.**
- **Rescues** – bear the brunt of the work saving these defenseless souls.

**In a city of nearly 9 million people ... ACC only does a small handful of DIRECT ADOPTIONS per year. \*THERE'S A REASON FOR THIS ... THE MAJORITY OF NYerS LITERALLY DON'T KNOW THEY EXIST ... which I discussed earlier, NO MARKETING!**

- And, **due to their improper vetting of the adopter** ... many of these animals who they adopt out directly are returned or found tied to a pole, brought in .... then usually immediately kill listed. **It's an awful protocol.**

As a highly detailed, hands-on business, systems, and numbers person ... from a very professional family and from the old school of TRUE PROFESSIONALISM, , everything I discuss is **BLATANTLY** obvious to me ... and incredibly frustrating.



## DRUGGING: - LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Excessive** Gabapentin, Trazodone, Clonidine: VERY often all given within the same day. HIGHLY IRRESPONSIBLE:

A) One must have a medical history of an animal prior to dispensing psychophara drugs. AND ...

B) Blood work should also be done ... to see if the animal has any underlying conditions: IE: renal, heart, kidney, ... etc as per manufacturer warnings ... **which they don't do!**

Mega drug doses - **These are drugs that need weaning off of. YET, ACC releases these poor souls to adopters and rescues GIVING THEM NONE.** That goes completely against the manufacturer's recommendations (see below).

**HIGHLY IRRESPONSIBLE AND DANGEROUS!** - see some info on these drugs:

### "Overview on TRAZADONE

... you should gradually reduce your dose of trazodone before stopping it completely. This is to help prevent withdrawal symptoms, which can include:

- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Numbness or tingling in the hands or feet
- Trouble sleeping
- Agitation or anxiety
- Headaches
- Shaking"

**GABAPENTIN:** "Symptoms of gabapentin withdrawal may include nausea, dizziness, headaches, insomnia, and anxiety. The safest way to stop using gabapentin is to taper off the medication under the supervision of a doctor."

**CLONIDINE:** "Stopping clonidine. It can also cause withdrawal side effects such as restlessness, heart palpitations, agitation, nervousness, tremor or shaking hands, headaches or feeling sick (nausea). Do not stop taking clonidine without talking to a doctor. If you need to stop taking it, you'll need to reduce your dose gradually.

[How and when to take clonidine - NHS](#)

[https://www.nhs.uk > Medicines A to Z > Clonidine "](https://www.nhs.uk > Medicines A to Z > Clonidine)

- My "go to person" on **shelter science highlighted** the following:  
" It was supposed to last as a pilot program for 3 months. It was a flawed Master's thesis written by the behavior supervisor, which was never validated by medical professionals. It was supposed to be a minor amount of trazodone for a couple of days to ease stress. In cats, Gabapentin was utilized with the same criteria. Then discontinued unless needed. Yet it has now ratcheted up to **astronomical amounts of drugs being given, no medical history is known or underlying conditions over the full length of time of being at ACC. It is dispensed at large dosages** at intake or within a couple of Just svvmvmvmvways depending on the behavior personnel claiming they are hyper stressed. Often evaluated the first or second day, without any opportunity for a dog to adapt. Very young dogs, (1 year or younger has no

understanding they are active without any energy relief of being outside a kennel) are highly medicated, labeled, and killed.”.....

Horribly sad and unfair to these poor souls.

And it's illegal to do research on/ with shelter animals. THIS WAS MOST CERTAINLY RESEARCH.

### Just some of the atrocities:

- **Animals Languished and suffered** in pain in the shelter for days without proper treatment
- **Botched surgeries** at the NYC ACC Animal Shelter and ASPCA (lots of proof)
- **Died** inside the facility or during transport **due to lack of care**
- **Died** shortly after leaving facility **of virulent disease** ... that they **contracted in the shelter**
- **Nearly died** & required life saving measures once pulled ... **due to the shelters lack of care**
- Filthy Cages &...too small – in there for hours upon hours a day – **Breaks the law**
- No water ... or dirty water ... for hours on end – **Breaks the law**

### **Breaking the law: and no one is holding them accountable nor responsible:**

- **Section 356:** failure and neglect to provide proper sustenance or drink – wholesome shelters/cages and water (the picture went viral. And it's always the same (lame) excuses.



Other shelters are able do better than this ... **with a lot less support and funds.**  
**§ 356. Failure to provide proper food and drink to impounded animal**

A person who, having impounded or confined any animal, refuses or neglects to supply to such animal during its confinement a sufficient supply of good and wholesome air, food, shelter and water, is guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment for not more than one year, or by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars, or by both.

- **Section 373:** Improperly confined or kept – CAGE/ KENNEL sizes.  
**THEY'RE TOO SMALL.**

- **Section 374:** Euthanasia & **Unwanted** animals:  
Killed regardless of the FACT that they were **WANTED**.
  - ~ Animals who people **wanted** to adopt - KILLED
  - ~ Animals Rescues **wanted** to pull – KILLED
  - ~ Animals that have applications in process – KILLED
  - ~ Animals used as “greeter dogs” - KILLED

~ AND they come up with excuses not to adopt to people. ACC's write ups on the animals are **inaccurate ... which is constantly being proven incorrect once they're out of the shelter and decompress.** Most of their **issues are due to BEING AT THE SHELTER.**

- And then there's the **COURT OF ETHICS** ... what's **morally, honorably and ethically the right thing to do** ... and **NO ONE** with a grain of compassion would put a defenseless vulnerable animal thru a surgery to spay/neuter ... only to kill him/her shortly after ... sometimes immediately. IT'S ILLOGICAL ... twisted AND **CRUEL.** **(I have an excel sheet ... I also have back and forth correspondence between Risa Weinstock, Matthor and Bershader/ ASPCA and Senator Tony Avella, at that time that highlights their lack of integrity to these animals.)**

Horribly **IRRESPONSIBLE PROTOCOL** ... TO THE ANIMALS AND THE TAX-PAYERS {especially those of us who are aware this is happening}. This is more than mismanagement ... This is pure inhumanity ... and an utterly heartless twisted protocol. **We're supposed to protect our most vulnerable vs treating them as a disposable commodity** ... which they're not ... yet they're treated as such ... killing wonderful adoptable animals who give humans so much.... **many who lived lovingly and peacefully in families with children and other pets.**

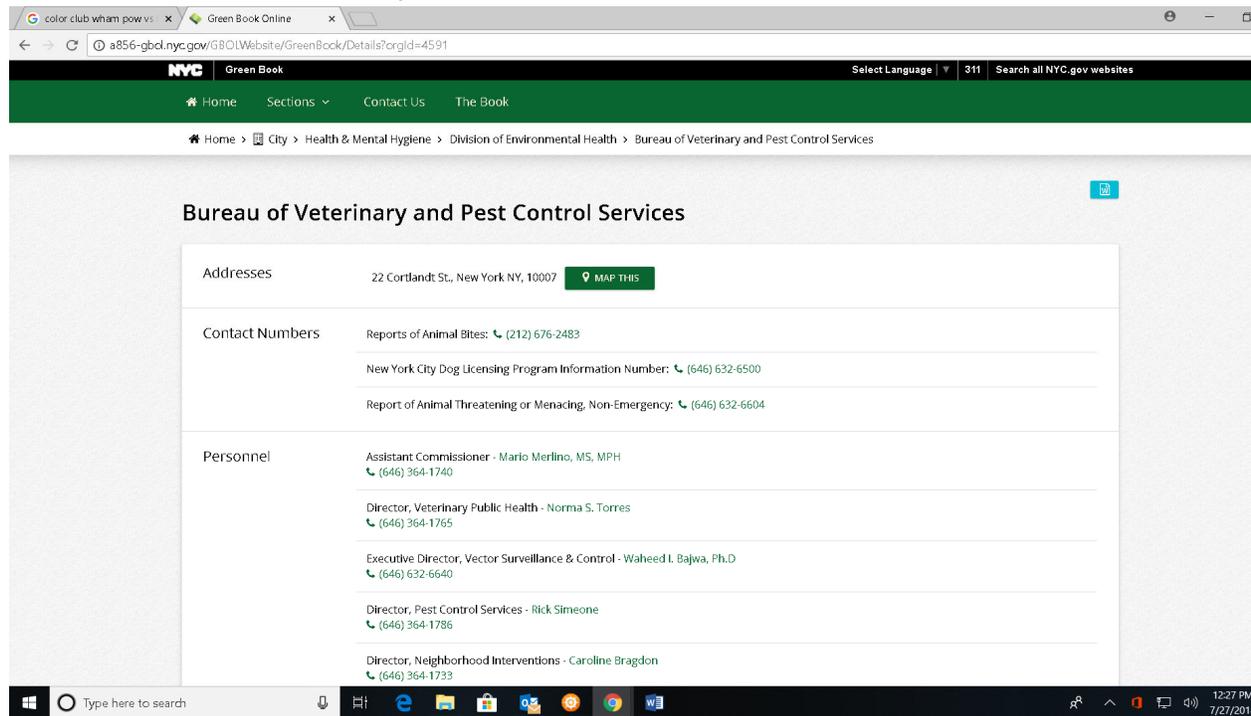
All this, literally a living nightmare ... for those who know what goes on daily ... is overseen by the **Dept of Human Health and Mental Hygiene** ... and protected by their wall of steel ... allowing this mismanagement, and unaccountable, unprofessional, dishonorable protocol to continue.

I wish I never tripped into this arena ... as it's changed me ... not in a good way .. as I walk around depressed most of the time with my heart on the ground ... while, oddly enough ... it's overseen by **Dept of Human Health and Mental Hygiene** ... which is completely misdirected.

Quite the dichotomy and rather ironic ...

that it's overseen by **Dept of Human Health and Mental Hygiene** ... everything that goes against HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE as it:

- is creating mental depression & anxiety for those who know what's happening behind those closed doors.
- The cages /kennels at NYCACC are FILTHY
- NYCACC is crawling with bugs and cockroaches (**I have videos of Manhattan ACC**)
- At DOH ... the ACC is titled under Veterinary and Pest Control ... 2 words which don't belong together. Comparing wonderful companion animals to bugs?!  
This shows their mindset ... says volumes in a nutshell:



None of this makes sense ... and would never be considered PROPER BUSINESS in a world of true PROFESSIONALS ... no less who are really in this to save these animals.

So, from:

- scathing city audits,
- filthy diseased shelters crawling with bugs/ cockroaches (**I have video**),
- to inconsistent and ineffective protocols
- mismanaging monies ...
- and on and on and on .....

they're YET granted a 34 yr / \$1.4 billion contract that was never sent out, as it should have been, **for the FAIR BIDDING PROCESS**. I'm trying to understand the logic behind this ... because it makes no ethical honorable business sense at all. Therefore, as professional logic would show, it's clear/ obvious something else was behind that contract approval .....

Now, ... INTAKE is ½ OF WHAT IT WAS ...it's 17,000. IT USED TO BE 34,000 ANIMALS. Yet they're killing just as many now. Whether they're taking in 34,000 animals or 13,000 animals or the now 17,000 animals ... they're always whining for help. One cannot expect others to take care of their business. If they can't do it properly on their own ... and this group has had, as I stated, nearly 10 yrs to figure it out and do just that ... then it's time for them to step out of the equation and put the proper brilliant ethical honorable responsible professionals in there who can. As a business, numbers, and systems person ... this makes absolutely no business sense whatsoever. Illogical / irresponsible ... None of this ADDS UP. It does not compute. ½ the intake yet the enormity of killings is happening at an alarming rate.

Below, look at the **TOTALS** from 2015 - 2021: and they were even higher prior to 2015. **\*please note: ... they never include OWNER SURRENDERS in the kill numbers so the numbers are actually inaccurate.**

5:50 5GUC 42%

NYCAC...

Table 1

	Intake	Killed	Percentage Killed
2015 Dogs	10258	1759	17.15%
2015 Cats	20263	3596	17.75%
2015 Total	30521	5355	17.55%
2016 Dogs	9730	1602	16.46%
2016 Cats	19806	2728	13.77%
2016 Total	29536	4330	14.66%
2017 Dogs	8807	1716	19.48%
2017 Cats	14694	1427	9.71%
2017 Total	23501	3143	13.37%
2018 Dog	8372	1685	20.13%
2018 Cats	14722	1509	10.25%
2018 Total	23094	3194	13.83%
2019 Dogs	7787	1412	18.13%
2019 Cats	14623	1567	10.72%
2019 Total	22410	2979	13.29%
2020 Dogs	4945	1049	21.21%
2020 Cats	8586	1207	14.06%
2020 Total	13531	2256	16.67%
2021 Dogs	4939	1179	23.87%
2021 Cats	8608	1322	15.36%
2021 Total	13547	2501	18.46%

Remember, as I stated, THERE ARE SO MANY TENTACLES TO THIS ... AND EACH TENTACLE RUNS VERY DEEP.

AND IT'S A HUGE LEARNING CURVE TO REALLY GET TO KNOW ALL OF THE DETAILS.

There are solutions.

Obvious and responsible to look at are:

~ Housing restrictions **and** Low-cost Spay/Neuter (city needs to get involved)

~ **NO KILL:** No one can say NO KILL is impossible ... because it exists. It's been proven successful when protocol is implemented honorable and ethically ... and no one can argue with PROVEN SUCCESS. NYCACC refuses to entertain this. Austin Animal Center did it ... and did it beautifully ... it was the finest most stellar municipal shelter in our country ... until the green-eyed monster reared its head. (IF YOU WANT TO KNOW THOSE DETAILS ... PLEASE ASK ... I have the videos they did when they converted it to NO KILL. It was absolutely sensational)

“You can't say its  
Impossible  
if it exists



Over two million people live in communities saving between 98% and 99% of dogs and cats in their shelters (over two million saving at least 98% of dogs).

**NO KILL:**

And to **correct what was said at the meeting** by Libby Post, the definition of NO KILL IS **NOT 90% LRR (live release rate)** as she stated. Hasn't been that in years. **The current definition is:**

- Only killing an animal if it's terminally ill, suffering w/ no quality of life
- Or **TRULY** a dangerous/ vicious animal. **And as per the field director at Austin Animal Center in 2018 ...** truly dangerous/vicious animals are few and far between. It's actually an incredibly small % percentage.

Libby Post is more concerned about a shelter's reputation vs the animals behind their doors. When a shelter is a good or bad shelter ... the evidence speaks for itself.

ANIMALS SAVED	NO KILL SHELTER	KILL SHELTER
Healthy animals	✓	
Community dogs and cats regardless of whether they are social or unsocial with humans ("feral")	✓	
Orphaned animals, pregnant animals, in awe animals, or animals with neotomas	✓	
Animals suffering from or exposed to a treatable, contagious illness	✓	
Poorly socialized dogs, shy dogs, or traumatized dogs	✓	
Animals surrendered for "euthanasia" (the animals must be independently evaluated by a veterinarian and determined to be irretrievably physically suffering)	✓	
Treatable animals labeled "behavior" or "medical"	✓	
Animals with "behavior" or "medical" impediments even if they have been signed over "for euthanasia"	✓	
Animals based on arbitrary criteria such as color, age, or breed	✓	

*A better and ethically consistent future in animal sheltering inevitably awaits us if the No Kill movement can continue to do what it has always done well every last animal entering our nation's shelters—whatever the species, whatever the challenge—no longer faces killing: overcome the flawed but malleable traditions we have inherited from prior generations. The secret we recognize the need for change and further innovation, the secret we will find the motivation and tools to bring that brighter future into reality.*

[nokilladvocacycenter.org](http://nokilladvocacycenter.org)

**No Kill:** An end to the killing of all non-irremediably suffering animals.

"Irremediable suffering" means an animal who has a poor or grave prognosis for being able to live without severe, unremitting physical pain even with prompt, necessary, and comprehensive veterinary care.

These poor sentient beings (as, that's what they LITERALLY are) who feel pain, joy, fear, love ... just as we do ... have no control over what will happen to them and their lives ... and we've known what this equates to ... it's constantly COMPARED to a human concentration camp. These defenseless souls are at the mercy of human hands and minds.

So animal advocates advocate for these helpless souls just as other people advocate for children, elderly, and so much more. Animal advocates aren't crazy ... angry, frustrated, heartbroken and disgusted perhaps ... at the lack of care/ concern for this **ENORMOUS BUSINESS arena**.

### **IT'S ALWAYS A CHOICE**

It's time animal's lives ... their rights as well as their welfare be taken seriously. There's no reason under God they shouldn't be. We can talk and chew gum at the same time. In our world today, we have the proper brilliant professionals for every business field/ arena that exists. It's a matter of putting those proper professionals in place: in this case: Business, admin, marketing, and animal professionals...brilliant business PROFESSIONALS ... who also know how to be honorable to the animals. Sure, have an in house attorney ... but this organization needs to be run by brilliant ethical honorable business people.

We've formal city committees chaired by council members tho nothing for animals other than a non-operative animal welfare agency consisting of one person, not a council member, who doesn't reply to public inquiries. This arena isn't just a business ... it's, in FACT, an ENORMOUS business .. yet the field is not being dealt with responsibly and is treated as an appendage. It's time PROPER EFFECTIVE BUSINESS PROTOCOL be put into place, with no undermining ... along with a Civilian Review Board with the proper people so this field can finally be done the right way ... successfully and responsibly to the animals. AND IT CERTAINLY SHOULDN'T BE OVERSEEN BY THE **Dept of Human Health and Mental Hygiene. THAT'S completely ILLOGICAL businesswise.**

Without sneaky undermining of any sort ... it's time to get the proper professionals to take over. I've no doubt our pounds would become very different .... and far happier places to come to ... because NYCACC, as it is, is not a warm and friendly place ... NOT IN THE LEAST ... as it should be. You can cut it with a knife when you enter. A friend of mine went to see the new shelter in QUEENS. They weren't nice. They said she couldn't walk around by herself. She told them that at the board meeting ... they said that people should come and see the new shelter and look around. After she said that, they got a bit disgruntled ... and finally lead her through the shelter. They wouldn't even let her walk around by herself. **IT'S ALL ABOUT CONTROL.**

Successful business runs very timely and it doesn't drag their feet. Those with NYCACC continue to prove their lack of shelter knowledge and organizational skills, planning skills, and how unqualified they actually are for this, maybe any, business ... throwing good money on top of bad down the toilet. And still always whining with the same feeble excuses and verbiage. JUST

DOESN'T MAKE SENSE ... businesswise, logistically nor otherwise. If I ran my business expecting outside people to do things for me ... I'd be out of business.

Advocates across the country/world are networking our animals .... people in Australia, demark, Holland, the UK, Italy ... even the Italian Senator Carla Rocchi sent a video plea to De Blasio saying you're supposed to be the greatest city in the world ... but your shelters are an utter disgrace! **We have a vile reputation.** She is also President of their NO KILL ANIMAL WELFARE organization IN ITALY. Senator Carla Rocchi reached out to me asking if we could do some zoom meetings ... which we did. **(If you'd like to know more ... please ask).** She wrote a beautiful letter to everyone City Council member at the time. She received only 2 replies, which I have. One was a beautiful reply from Robert Holden .. and the other was a Boiler Plate reply from Corey Johnson.

**Surrendering Animals:** ACC has told people surrendering that they will get the animal into foster care of adopted ... and then they show up on the kill list.

**THIS SIGN SHOULD BE POSTED FOR PEOPLE SURRENDERING THEIR ANIMALS.** They don't inform person surrendering the truth ... ACC doesn't tell them protocol AS IT ACTUALLY IS / Kill list



My father was a judge and Asst US Attrny. My great Uncle was US Ambassador to Siam and Bolivia. As I always say, that and a token won't get me on a bus or a subway ... but what I do very well know about is Ethics, integrity, accountability, transparency, honor, responsibility, and PROFESSIONALISM ... AND IT ISN'T HAPPENING HERE.

It's about the Moral compass and professionalism. Motivation and mind set must change!

Time for a NEW REGIME ... OF Wisdom, moral and ethical integrity and responsibility, humanity, compassion, and justice for every animal who is unfortunate enough to have to walk thru those diseased riddled shelter doors.

**PLEASE SCROLL BELOW**

Thank you ...

Nothing has changed. Here are some examples of things that are utterly unacceptable.

Here are some before and after pics:

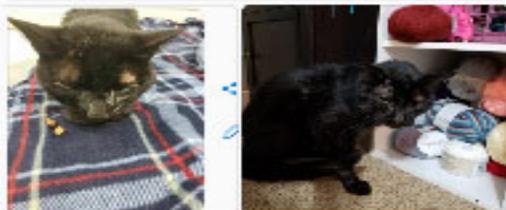
This (below) only occurs due to sheer and utter neglect, ... no less in such a SHORT PERIOD OF TIME:

**BEFORE** {top pics} / **AFTER** {bottom pics: less than 1 wk time -2 wks tim



**ROMAINE – 31709**

SAFE 7/2/18 ROMAINE was abandoned in an apartment when his owner moved away. He has a severe heart murmur and needs a follow up vet check. He is only 3 yrs old and ...  
[nyccats.urgentpodr.org](http://nyccats.urgentpodr.org)



**THIS IS HIM NOW**

These cats entered NYC ACC Animal Shelters in beautiful condition. In just 2 weeks, often less time than time than that ... due to virulent disease and utter neglect ... they become so ill ... creating enormous vet bill for the adopters or rescues who "pull" them



And from our most brilliant minds:

—**Arthur Schopenhauer, German philosopher (1788–1860)** All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.

**Leonardo da Vinci:** "The time will come when men such as I will look upon the murder of animals as they now look upon the murder of men."

~**Albert Schweitzer, *The Philosophy of Civilization***-- We must fight against the spirit of unconscious cruelty with which we treat the animals. Animals suffer as much as we do. True humanity does not allow us to impose such sufferings on them. It is our duty to make the whole world recognize it.

-**Albert Einstein (1879-1955):** "It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity." –

**Jeremy Bentham, 19th century Philosopher, Oxford University** "The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? But rather, Can they suffer?"

**Victor Hugo (1802-1885):**"First it was necessary to civilize man in relation to man. Now it is necessary to civilize man in relation to nature and the animals."

—**Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862:)** It takes two to speak the truth: one to speak, and another to hear.

– **Martin Luther King:** Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

—**Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968)** The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

–**Albert Einstein:** **The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.**

**Albert Schweitzer:** Think occasionally of the suffering of which you spare yourself the sight.

-**Arthur Schopenhauer:** The assumption that animals are without rights, and the illusion that our treatment of them has no moral significance, is a positively outrageous example of Western crudity and barbarity. Universal compassion is the only guarantee of morality.

-- **Mohandas Gandhi:** "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." Only humans have the arrogance and ability to deem another living thing "useless" and to condemn it to extinction simply because it's in the way of something we want more.

—**Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948)** To forgive and accept injustice is cowardice.

—**Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948):** It ill becomes us to invoke in our daily prayers the blessings of God, the Compassionate, if we in turn will not practice elementary compassion towards our fellow creatures.

**Buddha (563? - 483? B.C.)**"When a man has pity on all living creatures then only is he noble. "--

—**Buddha:** All beings tremble before violence. All fear death, all love life. See yourself in others. Then whom can you hurt? What harm can you do?

—**His Holiness The Dalai Lama:** Life is as dear to a mute creature as it is to man. Just as one wants happiness and fears pain, just as one wants to live and not die, so do other creatures.

—**Margaret Mead, American cultural anthropologist:** Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

-- **Thomas Edison:** "Non-violence leads to the highest ethics, which is the goal of all evolution. Until we stop harming all other living beings, we are still savages."

- **Winston Churchill:** "Please put the ladybug outside without harming her. (to his butler)"

**Charles Darwin:** The love of all living creatures is the most noble attribute of man.

--**Charles Darwin:** "There is no fundamental difference between man and the higher animals in their mental faculties... The lower animals, like man, manifestly feel pleasure and pain, happiness, and misery."

—**William Penn:** I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness or abilities that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

**Chief Seattle to U.S. President Franklin Quote:**

"If all the beasts were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit, for whatever happens to the beasts also happens to the man. All things are connected.

**Nelson Mandela:** "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world"

—**Ralph Waldo Emerson:** "You cannot do a kindness too soon, because you never know how soon it will be too late."

–**Michael Pollan**: A growing and increasingly influential movement of philosophers, ethicists, law professors and activists are convinced that the great moral struggle of our time will be for the rights of animals.

~**Bradley Millar**: Teaching a child not to step on a caterpillar is as valuable to the child as it is to the caterpillar.

~**Pierre Troubetzkoy**: Why should man expect his prayer for mercy to be heard by what is above him when he shows no mercy to what is under him?

–**William Ralph Inge**: Deliberate cruelty to our defenseless and beautiful little cousins is surely one of the meanest and most detestable vices of which a human being can be guilty.

–**Anatole France**: Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened.

–**Samuel Johnson, English author (1709–1784)**: To cultivate kindness is a valuable part of the business of life.

–**Matthew Henry, English clergyman (1662–1714)**: None so blind as those who will not see.

–**Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German writer (1749–1832)**: There is nothing more frightful than ignorance in action.

–**Elie Wiesel, writer and Nobel laureate (1928–)**: There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.

–**Isaac Bashevis Singer, writer and Nobel laureate (1902–1991)**: Even in the worm that crawls in the earth there glows a divine spark. When you slaughter a creature, you slaughter God.

–**Isaac Bashevis Singer, writer and Nobel laureate (1902–1991)**: As long as people will shed the blood of innocent creatures there can be no peace, no liberty, no harmony between people. Slaughter and justice cannot dwell together.

–**Isaac Bashevis Singer, writer and Nobel laureate (1902–1991)**: When a human being kills an

animal for food, he is neglecting his own hunger for justice. Man prays for mercy, but is unwilling to extend it to others. Why then should man expect mercy from God? It is unfair to expect something that you are not willing to give.

—**Brigid Brophy (1929–1995)**: I don't hold animals superior or even equal to humans. The whole case for behaving decently to animals rests on the fact that we are the superior species. We are the species uniquely capable of imagination, rationality, and moral choice – and that is precisely why we are under an obligation to recognize and respect the rights of animals.

- **Alexander Hamilton** : **Man** is a reasoning rather than a reasonable animal.

~**George Orwell, *Animal Farm***; Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough, he cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet he is lord of all the animals.

-- **Emile Zola** "The fate of animals is of greater importance to me than the fear of appearing ridiculous; it is indissolubly connected with the fate of men."

-- **Samuel Johnson** "Men who have practiced tortures on animals without pity, relating them without shame. How can they still hold their heads high among human beings?"

-- **Jacques Cousteau** "Perhaps the time has come to formulate a moral code which would govern our relations with the great creatures of the sea as well as with those on dry land. That this will come to pass is [my] dear wish."

-- **Ernest Thompson Seton** "We and the beasts are kin."

~**Jimmy Stewart**: Animals give me more pleasure through the viewfinder of a camera than they ever did in the crosshairs of a gunsight. And after I've finished "shooting," my unharmed victims are still around for others to enjoy. I have developed a deep respect for animals. I consider them fellow living creatures with certain rights that should not be violated any more than those of humans.

-- **Richard Gere** "As custodians of the planet it is our responsibility to deal with all species with kindness, love, and compassion. That these animals suffer through human cruelty is beyond understanding. Please help to stop this madness."

-- **Mark Twain:** "In studying the traits and dispositions of the so-called lower animals, and contrasting them with man's, I find the result humiliating to me."

**George Bernard Shaw:** "Human beings are the only animals of which I am thoroughly and cravenly afraid."--

--**Leo Tolstoy, author:** "What I think about vivisection is that if people admit that they have the right to take or endanger the life of living beings for the benefit of many, there will be no limit to their cruelty."

"--**Fred A. McGrand (1895- )**"Cruelty has cursed the human family for countless ages. It is almost impossible for one to be cruel to animals and kind to humans. If children are permitted to be cruel to their pets and other animals, they easily learn to get the same pleasure from the misery of fellow-humans. Such tendencies can easily lead to crime."

--**George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)**"When a man wants to murder a tiger, it's called sport; when the tiger wants to murder him it's called ferocity."

**George Bernard Shaw,** "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man."

**President Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)** "I could not have slept tonight if I had left that helpless little creature to perish on the ground" (President Lincoln's reply to friends who chided him for delaying them by stopping to return a fledgling to its nest).

**William Wordsworth** - That best portion of a good man's life; his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love.

**Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)**"If [man] is not to stifle human feelings, he must practice kindness toward animals, for he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men. We can judge the heart of man by his treatment of animals."--

--**Thomas Jefferson, 3rd U.S. President** "Until we stop harming all other living beings, we are still savages."

**Hippocrates (ca. 460-377 BCE).**] "The soul is the same in all living creatures, although the body of each is different."--

--**Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC)**, *Parts of Animals* "In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous"

**Pythagoras (ca. 580-520 BCE).** "For as long as man continues to be the ruthless destroyer of lower living beings, he will never know health or peace. For as long as men massacre animals, they will kill each other. Indeed he who sows the seeds of murder and pain cannot reap joy and love... *Primoque a caede ferarum incaluisse puto maculatum sanguine ferrum* ('I think the blood of animals was the first to stain our weapons')."

—**T. Casey Brennan (1948–)**: Poor animals! How jealously they guard their pathetic bodies...that which to us is merely an evening's meal, but to them is life itself.

To City Council,

I've been a part of the cat rescue community in Brooklyn since 2022. When I started, it was because I saw no other option – there were sick kittens near my house that were clearly on the verge of death, and as a compassionate person I couldn't leave them outside. While getting them vet care, I experienced the baptism by fire that comes with trying to help vulnerable animals in this city. I went through the process of calling rescue organizations and looking for affordable vet care, and it became immediately clear that everyone was already stretched to their limit and no one was going to fix this for me. There was no cavalry to come save us – whatever was going to happen for these kittens would have to be done by me.

I built connections – I bartered with rescuers, exchanged transportation for vet appointments, got tips on how care for these cats from the kindhearted people who already had experience. I taught myself the rest by scrolling the internet, and ultimately came out feeling confident. But in the process of learning all this information, I also learned how dire the state of animal welfare is in New York City. All of the rescuers I interacted with were good Samaritans who had jobs and often families, who were taking care of the cats around them because they wanted to take responsibility for this problem. They were paying for everything with a combination of donations from friends, and money out of their own pocket. Some were going into debt to help these animals.

That shouldn't be necessary. The cat overpopulation crisis is an issue of public health, and a symptom of broader systemic issues in our city. Many of the cats that end up on the street are put out because their owners are facing eviction, and can't afford to keep them. Many are put out because vet care is prohibitively expensive, and it's too much for their owners to bear. Often, it's low-income areas that are overrun with cats who, when unfixed, are a health nuisance. Individuals who just want to help should not be the ones who are primarily responsible for responding to these problems. They're simply too big for private citizens to handle alone.

New York should be supporting these rescuers, and allocating funds to larger groups to relieve their financial burden and make it possible for them to expand. To address the underlying issue of vet care, the city should subsidize spay & neuter for low-income households, which will help reduce the number of kittens that end up on the street and stop the cycle. The city should also allocate more funds to the ACC, who are truly the stopgap keeping the entire rescue community afloat. They are doing so much to help both animals, and the community members who need to surrender their animals, but they're completely overwhelmed and are asked to do far more than they're able to with their current budget.

Additionally, the city should allocate funds to allow organizations to help with hoarding cases. I now work with rescuers across the city as a socialization coach, guiding them through the process of acclimating potentially adoptable cats to life with humans. This work often takes me to hoarding situations, where there are often many "indoor ferals" – cats who have grown up with hoarders who have spent little time with people (because they're mostly around other

cats), but also have no skills for living outdoors and so can't be safely TNRed. I help fosters work with these indoor ferals to get them comfortable with people, and in doing so, I've seen exactly how dire and overwhelming hoarding situations can be. The volume of cats is often so high that there aren't enough fosters to help every cat, and rescues will often avoid these cases because they'll flood the system and make it impossible to take on anything else. Additionally, high-volume cases are truly a public health problem, as they create filth and spread disease for anyone who lives near the hoarder.

Long term, I would love to see the development of a team – perhaps a partnership between the ACC, nonprofit animal rescue orgs, and city mental health or social work services – that is dedicated toward addressing the many hoarding situations in our city. Given the mental health issues at play, these cases are often too sticky for an animal welfare organization to handle alone. And to handle the sheer number of cats, city resources are necessary, because it's just too much for a private group to handle.

I believe there is a way for the city to support the grassroots initiatives that already exist, and work symbiotically with the rescuers who know the communities they're in. Monetary support and subsidies would make it possible for rescuers to dedicate more of their time and attention, and would also allow more caring people to take action. It's vital that the city take ownership of these public health issues, rather than continuing to sweep them under the rug.

Thanks so much,

Julia Specht



Brooklyn, NY 11215

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Juliana Vargas <julianavargas821@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 3:42 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony

[REDACTED]

As Pet Parent I Really ask you for help we need your help the crisis with the cats in the City is Horroble we need your immediatly attention we can't afford it the high cost of the vet , the spray l/neuter are extremely high we can't Pay the unreasonable cost of vets . PLEASE HELP US!!!

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Julie Schaul <julieschaul@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 6:02 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] written testimony re: state of animal rescue

[REDACTED]

I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need including rescuers and pet parents.

Julie Schaul

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Justin Harry <justinharry@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 11:14 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Welfare Hearing Testimony 9/13/2024

[REDACTED]

Hi, my name is Justin. My partner and I live in Washington Heights and have been active in animal rescue via cat fostering for the last 6 years. I have seen firsthand the way this grueling work affects the caring people that dedicate their lives and free time to it via my partner, and it is my wish to see the city provide support by way of funding and resources to help the innumerable rescue organizations and individuals that do this work. Help is so desperately needed. Animal rescue is both emotionally and financially draining work and the countless numbers of New Yorkers that dedicate their life to it and are faced with a deluge of responsibilities that are, quite frankly, insurmountable. I use to feel proud of the animals that I have helped, but as I've learned more about the current state of animal welfare in NYC, it is hard to feel like the little I've done is much of a help given the amount of animal suffering on the streets of NYC. This is no doubt due to the outrageous costs of veterinary care. Rescue organizations cannot afford to help the animals they wish to when a spay surgery costs \$1000. We need help by way of organized department oversight, financial support, and the creation of city-funded vet clinics to overcome this problem. It is a solvable problem, but we will never get there without massive changes to our current approach.

Thank You,  
Justin Harry

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** justin shay <justinshay480@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 5:15 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Council hearing on the State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Good Morning,

I am Justin Shay from Staten Island, New York. I live in a household with 2 dogs and have a lot of family and friend pet owners as well. A lot of people decide to become pet owners to lower their stress, improve their mental health, and to even make their children or parents happy. Bringing your pet to the vet is vital for any animal's health. Whatever the city can do to lower vet costs would really help animal rescuers and pet owners. Allocated funding for veterinary costs would not only benefit all pets in NYC but it can also help pets find a home to live in.

Very respectfully,

Justin Shay

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Kaitlyn Ahrens <kaitlynahrens92@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 9:30 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue Hearing Testimony

[REDACTED]

Good morning,

My name is Kaitlyn Ahrens and I am a resident of Astoria Queens. I am reaching out to give my testimony regarding animal rescue. The city should allot a significant amount of funding for high volume low cost spay and neuter. As well as affordable veterinary care for any new yorker in need including rescues and individual people. The state of animal welfare is in need of funding to keep rescues operating and allowing individual people who may have fallen on hard times to keep their much loved pets. Please consider this testimony when decided whether to allocate funding for animal rescue and welfare.

Thank you.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Karen Schay <karenschay@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:43 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony for Pets !!

[REDACTED]

Dear city council,

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high- volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care services for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet pat parents!

Thank you!

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Karen Sokota <[ksokota@gmail.com](mailto:ksokota@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:09 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue - My comments

[REDACTED]

I urge NYC government to provide substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay and neuter and affordable vet care. Its clear that the populations of animals is exploding and animals are being abandoned, abused and overall adoption rates slowed. And providing adequate funding for high volume and low cost spay and neutering does provide a return on the city's investment, by providing these funds, the results are instantly quantifiable and the exploding problem can be managed. As a New Yorker and a tax payer, and an animal parent my whole life the funding must be provided, there is no other way to solve the problem. Ignoring it or providing band aid approaches makes it impossible to get ahead of this situation as well as impossible for the rescue groups that work so hard but can't get out in front of the problem no matte how hard they try.

Mahatma Gandhi said "the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated". Lets show our greatness as a city and finally do something to reduce the huge overpopulation, provide the necessary low cost care to animals that need it and allow our strays and unwanted animals to be helped and adopted to loving homes. This situation is sadly out of control, but can become manageable if you provide funding and do something now. Lets not wait.

Karen Sokota  
[ksokota@gmail.com](mailto:ksokota@gmail.com)

[REDACTED]

Karie Henderson  
Testimony

## **Hearing of the New York City Council Committee on Health: The State of Animal Rescue in New York City**

**September 13, 2024**

Thank you Speaker Adams, Council Chair Schulman, and members of the Committee on Health for holding a meeting on, *The State of Animal Rescue in New York City*.

My name is Karie Henderson and I have been a resident of District 36, Community District 3 for over 13 years. I was unable to attend the Sept 13<sup>th</sup> meeting in person, yet wanted to share a couple experiences I recently had regarding the wellbeing of cats, and animals in general, in my neighborhood, which I think highlights the need for low-cost veterinary care in NYC.

First, I am a mother to 3 cats, one a former stray, Bitty, who moved with me to Brooklyn, and one domesticated feral, Hopper, who was 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Brooklyn bodega-basement kitten rescued by Bushwick Street Cats, and who was only supposed to be a foster during the pandemic. The third cat is a TNR'd street cat, "Buddy" who adopted me roughly five years ago and who I have been feeding and slowly socializing ever since.

In May of this year, I was sitting on my stoop one afternoon enjoying the spring, as you do in Brooklyn, and noticed three women walking on the other side of the street towards Malcolm X Blvd headed towards the bodega. I noticed them because one squealed then jumped back a bit, and I swore I heard them say, "That's a dead rat." I didn't pay too much attention after they past because again, this is Brooklyn, rats happen. Then I noticed other people walking near the area, which was obscured by parked cars from my vantage point, trying to circumvent what ever was lying on the sidewalk. Then five or ten minutes later the same three women walked backed by the spot and said, "That's a cat!" This caught my attention and I ran down the stoop across the street where the women were and asked if they said, "cat" as I looked in the direction they had just come from I could see an animal lying listless on the hot spring sidewalk.

This cat, an emaciated, friendly black and white cat was visibly ill, dehydrated and starving to death. She seemed a bit delirious, walking towards the street for shade but stopping then flopping down on the sidewalk. *It was a traumatic sight, and I, being cat rescue inclined, had no idea what to do to help her.* I got her water. I got a box to put her in. I had a neighbor watch her to keep her out of traffic while I went and got her more supplies to make her more comfortable. I DM'ed a handful of cat rescue people and my Vet asking for help in how to handle this situation, and all of them busy either didn't respond, or responded with a list of cat rescues to hunt down for help.

By happenstance, or miraculously, Ilene Richman, the founder of NARN-CB (Neighborhood Animal Rescue Network of Central Brooklyn) walked past the street as other people were beginning to circle the cat lying on the side walk, and a whole new layer of understanding animal rescue in NYC opened up to me.

Ilene and I got the cat to an emergency Vet care at VEG in the Flatlands - and had to make a choice to either pay for any and all treatment, base of over \$2300, or to surrender her and any future knowledge of her outcome. Before surrendering Princess we learned the cat's name was Princess, she was a domestic older cat, and she was covered with cancerous tumors throughout her lungs and gut and was past any treatment other than palliative care. She was someone's house cat who had been put out- most like due to her illness and the cost it take to treat her.

In my neighborhood, on my block, there are countless cats that roam at night through the backyards, intact and often out of reach. Also on my block, there are multiple pet owners who have intact dogs and cats who are also, mostly, unvaccinated. One such neighbor, who is also on governmental assistance, has been trying to get a low cost spay appointment for over a year. Her cat is now in heat and has a knack for getting out. Another neighbor has an intact male cat who would like to neuter their cat but can't find an appointment under \$500, not including office visit and vaccinations costs.

I have another neighbor who ended up surrendering their son's semi-feral cat to ACC because they couldn't find a wellness & spay appointment in a timely enough manner to be able to integrate with their other cats.

These are just a few, recent, experience's I have had regarding animal rescue in NYC. Every block has a story like mine. Every block has a need for low-cost veterinary care. I think warrants greater care and financial support from the city to help with rescue and care of NYC animals.

## **Testimony to NYC City Council: Support for Affordable Spay, Neuter & Veterinary Care**

Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony and express my strong support for affordable spay, neuter, and veterinary care in New York City.

My name is Karina Zambrano, and I am a Bronx native, entrepreneur, animal owner, rescuer, and advocate with deep ties to my community. Currently, I volunteer as treasurer for rescue group Little Wanderers NYC. Since 2015, my husband and I have fostered over 50 cats and dogs, giving us firsthand experience in the crucial role affordable veterinary care plays in the well-being of our animals and our neighborhoods.

### **The Impact of Overpopulation**

When pet owners can't afford to spay or neuter their pets, it leads to unwanted litters, which in turn contributes to overpopulation. This strains our animal shelters and rescue organizations, leading to higher intake numbers and, tragically, increased euthanasia rates for healthy animals that could otherwise find loving homes. Affordable spay and neuter services can dramatically reduce these unwanted litters and ease the burden on our shelter system.

### **Burden on Shelters & Rescues**

Many families are forced to surrender their pets because they cannot afford routine or emergency medical care. As an advocate, I have witnessed families make the heartbreaking decision to give up their pets, not out of neglect, but due to financial constraints. Affordable veterinary care would allow more families to keep their pets at home, reducing shelter populations and ensuring beloved animals remain with their families, where they belong.

### **Public Health & Community Interest**

Unspayed and unneutered pets are more likely to roam, which increases the risk of injuries, fights, and even fatalities. This poses a public health concern, one that affordable spay and neuter services could greatly alleviate. In addition, the high volume of requests for help received by rescue organizations demonstrates the public's strong interest in supporting these animals. By increasing access to affordable care, we empower the public to contribute to a safer, healthier environment for everyone.

### **The Benefits to Our Community**

Making spay, neuter, and veterinary care more affordable will have far-reaching positive effects on our city. It will reduce the overpopulation, lower the number of

animals entering shelters, reduce euthanasia rates, improve public safety, and ensure that pet ownership remains a joy, not a financial burden, for all families—regardless of their income level.

I strongly urge the City Council to prioritize affordable spay, neuter, and veterinary care in our community. By taking action, we can build a more compassionate, healthy, and safe city for both our residents and their pets.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this important matter.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Kate Fitzer <kfitzerrodriguez@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:34 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]

[REDACTED]

More funding for spay/neuter programs!! Thanks!!

Katelyn Mirabelli

Brooklyn, NY 11216

[katelyn.mirabelli@gmail.com](mailto:katelyn.mirabelli@gmail.com)

September 15, 2024

Council Member Lynn Schulman  
New York City Council  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

**Subject: The State of Animal Rescue in New York City**

Dear Council Members,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing in support of Int 1018-2024 to prohibit the sale of dogs and cats in retail pet stores and Int 967 Ryder's Law prohibiting the operation of horse-drawn cabs. Finally, I am writing to express my strong support for the expansion and city-subsidized low/no-cost spay and neuter and veterinary services throughout New York City.

I have lived in NYC for 15 years—14 of them in Brooklyn. I got involved in cat rescue when I took in a semi-feral cat while living in East Williamsburg in 2016. I got certified in TNR in 2017 and moved with my cat, Rhonda, to Crown Heights. In 2018, I adopted a second cat, Rosie, from ACC's Brooklyn shelter.

In 2017, someone abandoned a cat in my building in a box by the trash and I brought that cat to ACC to be rehomed. I was so grateful that the process was simple. But now that shelter is closed, which is very disheartening. In 2019, I came across some unfixed cats in my neighborhood and was able to connect with a more experienced rescuer (via Neighborhood Cats) to TNR three cats and adopt one friendly cat to a neighbor after we vetted the cat and had her spayed. This single project came at great personal expense, costing over \$1,000.

For this TNR project, I had to:

1. Make several attempts to secure ASPCA appointments for spay/neuter. When new appointments were released, they were often booked up by other rescues in under a minute.
2. Once appointments were finally secured, I had to travel to downtown Brooklyn to pick up traps from a volunteer-run trap bank and take cabs back to my apartment with them.
3. I had to rent Zipcars for transport to get the cats up to Queens for drop off/pick up (and take the day off of work).
4. Finally, I spent additional money on private vets for one cat who had a leg injury that the ASPCA didn't cover.

I realized quickly that, though I wanted to continue to help, financially the barriers to continuing TNR projects were too high given the lack of local resources in my neighborhood. However, since 2020, I've fostered over 30 cats, mostly via Heidi Systo's rescue organization Heidi Wrangles Cats. Fosters are a vital part of the rescue world's ecosystem because, without them, cats would remain on the street or face going to an already over-burdened animal shelter system. I also manage Heidi's medical records for the hundreds of cats she rescues each year and see the astronomical cost of services some of the cats require. Heidi works tirelessly to fundraise and place friendly street cats in loving, safe homes and to TNR cats

and help control the population without any government funding. Heidi is just one of the hundreds of volunteer organizations and independent rescuers doing this important work for the city without compensation.

Lately, on social media and apps like Next Door, I can't go a single day without seeing reports of multiple friendly animals who have been abandoned. I'm seeing people offering "free cats" and "free dogs" and can only imagine the breeding situations they may be coming from. I'm seeing more stray cats in my neighborhood. Private vet costs are rapidly increasing due to inflation and private equity taking over the space, which makes my own pet ownership increasingly challenging and anxiety-inducing.

Simply put: there is a crisis and we need the city council to act. The state of animal rescue in this city is one of precarity and heartbreak. Dedicated rescuers need support, and ordinary citizens need local resources and education to know what to do when they encounter a stray animal so that everything doesn't have to fall on rescue organizations that are already over-burdened. Please make it easier for people to do the right things for animals in our city.

As you know, affordable spay and neuter services are critical in addressing the overpopulation of stray and abandoned animals. These programs not only prevent the unnecessary suffering of animals but also save taxpayer dollars by reducing the number of animals that end up in shelters, where the costs of care and housing are significant. Additionally, spay and neuter services help protect public health and safety by decreasing the number of animals roaming our streets.

Despite the proven benefits of these services, many New Yorkers, particularly those in low-income communities, cannot afford the procedure for their pets. By increasing funding for low/no-cost spay and neuter programs, the City Council can help make this essential service accessible to all residents, regardless of their financial circumstances. The long-term impact of such funding will not only benefit animals but also help create a safer, healthier, and more compassionate city.

I respectfully request that you and your fellow Council members prioritize this issue in the upcoming budget discussions. Investing in the expansion of spay/neuter and other veterinary services in all boroughs of the city is an investment in the well-being of our entire community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KM', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Katelyn Mirabelli

Cat Parent, Foster & Rescue Volunteer,  
City Council District 35 Constituent

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Katie Odjakjian <kodjakjian@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 10:22 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Importance of animal rescue

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to urge city government to allocate substantial funding for affordable spay/neuter and veterinary care for any New York residents in need. City-funded veterinary care could help end the current animal shelter crisis. This is a matter of utmost importance to me as an NYC resident and I thank you in advance for your consideration.

Katharine Odjakjian  
NYC Resident

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Katherine Nehring <katherine.e.nehring@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 10:04 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony on state of animal rescue

[REDACTED]

Good morning,

I learned from a beloved local rescue, Cat Republic, that the city council is hearing testimony on the state of animal rescue in New York. I'm writing to ask the council to allocate as much funding as possible to low-cost vet services and spay/neuter appointments; struggling families that want to take care of their animal companions need affordable ways to do so. I'm a constituent of Justin Brannan and want to say a particular thanks to him for funding the Flatbush Veterinary Clinic - I'd love to see this model scaled up all over the city. Please help loving families give their pets the care they need!

Thank you again,

Katherine Nehring  
[REDACTED]  
Brooklyn NY 11220

Hello. My name is Kathryn Casey and I'm a volunteer with the Manhattan Animal Care Center on East 110<sup>th</sup> Street.

I'm writing in support of funding for spay/neuter programs, for public shelters, and for individuals/families at risk of losing their pets because they cannot afford the cost of food and medical treatment.

Our shelter has for months now been beyond capacity, with dogs and cats lining the corridors and adoptions/rescues offering relief at a remarkably slow rate. We do the best we can with the resources we have, but the need is overwhelming and the overcrowding can make the shelter – already a sad place for most – noisy, chaotic, and unpleasant for people and animals alike.

Part of the reason shelters are so crowded is that pet owners are finding pet care too costly or late. It's always heart-wrenching to see people arrive at the shelter to give up a pet because they simply can't care for him or her any longer. Helping folks keep their four-legged family members is a win for all concerned.

Finally, the proliferation of homeless and unwanted animals has long been a scourge of this city and, of course, of the world outside it. Spay/neuter programs are a smart and efficient way to prevent unnecessary costs of controlling, caring for, and/or finding homes for these animals and, most importantly, of preventing so many animals from suffering the pain, illness, and loneliness of having nowhere safe to go and becoming a target for people who would do them harm. These programs should be part of any progressive city's urban plan.

Thank you.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Kathryn McKinney <kathryn.mckinney@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 12:31 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council,

I urge you to allocate substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and fosters.

This is an urgent need, and we owe the animals of NY, regardless of the financial status of their guardians, the right to healthy lives. Spaying and neutering is critical to prevent the unnecessary deaths and suffering of animals.

Thank you,  
Kathryn McKinney

[REDACTED]  
Brooklyn, NY 11225

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Kayla Mann <kaylamann16@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:14 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Hello,

Thanks in advance for taking the time to read this note.

Currently in my parents' backyard in Rego Park, Queens there is a colony of cats for which we've been trying to get spayed/neutered since February of this year. The lack of available options for this service, particularly in that part of Queens, has made it impossible. We have even tried to do this on our own but it is too overwhelming when you are not trained in the process. As a result, two of the cats gave birth to litters in the spring. One of those litters had only 3 surviving members. One kitten we had to bury in our backyard after its mother rejected it at only a week old. This situation has brought a lot of pain and suffering to us and all we want to do is help these cats. The lack of city organizations for this issue has meant we've had to reach out to small rescue groups/individuals who so far have been too busy to help.

I urge city government to allocate substantial funding bc or high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you,  
Kayla

**Kayla Mann**

My name is Kayla Walsh and I live in Queens NY. The number of feral cats I've seen in Queens and Brooklyn the past 5 years has skyrocketed and it's prompted me to take in 4 cats rather than allow them to suffer on the streets. Even working full time with a college degree, I would not be able to afford their veterinary care if it weren't for affordable/accessible vet clinics with high quality care standards. People like myself who spend money from their own pockets to mitigate the animal neglect/abandonment/proliferation issues we have in our boroughs need accessible veterinary support. And in order to address the larger issue, people of all incomes need affordable ways to care for their domestic pets.

Please keep increasing affordable/accessible care for pets so we can continue to do good work for our communities and keep our families together. Thanks.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Kellie O'Rourke <orourke.ka@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:26 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] NYC animal care

[REDACTED]

Hi there,  
I am a longtime resident of queens (Sunnyside, Woodside, now Astoria), and parent of a cat. I am writing to ask for more funding to support and care for the outdoor animals of NYC.

Specifically, that the city government allocate significant funds to ensure we can better provide high volume, low cost spay/neutering and vet care for any New Yorker, from rescuers to pet parents.

We are the greatest city in the world and our animals deserve the best we can provide.

Best,  
Kellie O'Rourke

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Conaty, Kelly <kconaty@ap.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:18 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Please allocate funding for low cost animal care

**Importance:** High

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my sincerest support [through first person understanding of how urgent this need is, as a volunteer & foster for both NYC ACC & local feline rescue groups in Brooklyn] for city government to allocate SIGNIFICANT funding for high-volume, low-cost spay & neuter resources for New Yorkers. As a volunteer at NYCACC, I'm sure you are well aware – the magnificent & most anticipated/long overdue shelter in Ridgewood, Queens finally opened its doors and is already over-capacity [and was on the first day] due to the incredible number of New Yorkers who cannot afford vet care and surrender their pets – to the only place that has to take all of them.

ACC's capacity then trickles into all the rescue groups – most of those being run by big-hearted people with full time jobs, but such a love for animals and an awareness of the lack of resources from the city.

This is so urgent; funds for low-cost spay-neuter services & low cost vet care is INCREDIBLY urgent. Please do allocate significant funds for this cause at the forefront of quality of life for all New Yorkers – human and animal.

Thank you,  
Kelly Conaty

[REDACTED]

My name is Kelly Davis, and I'm a resident of Astoria, Queens. My partner and I own three rescued cats (Curtis, Igor and Naranja). I volunteer weekly at the Manhattan ACC, and I donate monthly to an independent cat rescue in my community. I'm submitting this testimony to implore the City Council to act on the urgent need for accessible, affordable veterinary care, especially spay and neuter services, throughout NYC.

As a cat owner, I have seen veterinary costs skyrocket in the five years since I adopted my cat, Curtis. A dental cleaning and extraction of a single tooth last year cost more than \$1,000 at our local vet's office, which was recently acquired by a corporate parent company. This office charges between \$200 and \$300 for spay/neuter, which is often the first of many escalating vet bills pet owners will need to pay over the course of their pet's life. If these financial burdens are not alleviated, pet ownership will become a luxury affordable only to the city's wealthiest residents, and the overcrowding of shelters will get worse.

As an ACC volunteer, I witness firsthand the effects of New York City's lack of access to basic, affordable veterinary care. When I greet people visiting the shelter, I often speak to New Yorkers desperate to access medical care for pets who are suffering and in pain due to illness or injury, but who have been quoted staggering fees by private veterinary practices, and cannot afford the care their beloved companions need.

I also meet New Yorkers who arrive at the shelter eager to adopt a cat or dog, who are discouraged to learn they have to wait for the animal they've chosen to be spayed or neutered and come back another day to pick them up. This is not a failure on the part of ACC, which is required by law to perform these procedures before adopting out animals. The number of animals surrendered or abandoned by previous owners who never had them spayed or neutered not only adds to the shelter's capacity problems, but it also creates a barrier to facilitating a prompt, easy adoption process.

As the veterinarians, rescuers and others who testified at Friday's City Council hearing demonstrated with such passion and conviction, the animal rescue community is in crisis. Of the many actions that need to be taken to alleviate this problem, increasing access to affordable spay and neuter services should be at the top of City Council's list, followed by subsidizing clinics that provide other affordable veterinary services throughout the five boroughs.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and I look forward to seeing the Council's response.

ACC recently opened its new Queens shelter, heralded as a state of the art facility that would be the "go-to" place for Queens animal lovers. Even better, ACC claimed that the building would entice people to work and volunteer there. What a refreshing change that would be for an ACC shelter!

Those hopes quickly faded. The Queens Shelter is no Field of Dreams.

ACC has transferred all its core weaknesses to Queens. ACC cannot attract enough staff and volunteers. And volunteers who transferred over from the closed Brooklyn shelter report tension between them and kennel staff, which alone is a gross failure of management.

### A NATIONAL CRISIS MADE EVEN WORSE AT ACC

Shelters across the U.S. are experiencing a deluge of surrendered or abandoned pets combined with stagnant or lower adoptions. ACC is no exception. The Queens shelter quickly filled with twice the number of dogs it was designed to hold. Lacking enough staff and volunteers, many cages are filthy, the smell of animal waste can be overwhelming, and frantic dogs go unwalked.

### ALWAYS TRUST THE DOH NEVER TO BE TRUSTED

One thing is certain about the City's Department of Health (which funds and effectively controls ACC): if left to its own devices, the DOH will always underfund ACC. Nor will the DOH spend a nickel for ACC services that help reduce the number of animal surrenders and abandonment. Those services start with trying to make basic vet care -- spay/neuter and vaccines -- affordable to low income pet owners.

### "NICE" DOESN'T CUT IT

Another thing that's certain about the DOH is that it will not tolerate push back from ACC.

The ACC Board of Directors is filled with nice people. You'd have fun sharing a beer with any of them. Even the 3 government Directors (representing DOH, NYPD and PARKS) are nice. But they violate their fiduciary duty to ACC because their first loyalty is to the City.

The non-government directors the DOH allows on the Board are well-meaning. Yet, they know better than to challenge the DOH.

A well-run, truly independent charity inspires a feeling that "we're all in this together," from the Board and the Executive Suite down to minimum wage workers and volunteers. If any

message trickles down from ACC's executive office, it's "keep your head down and lips zipped."

## OVERSIGHT BY THE CITY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE

The Council's Health Committee is charged with oversight of the DOH, and by extension, DOH's control over ACC. Animal advocates recently contacted elected officials about the crisis at ACC. In turn, some officials responded by demanding a hearing by the Health Committee.

If ACC cannot run the Queens Shelter, why should we expect a different outcome when the Bronx Shelter comes online in 2026? Or when the replacement Brooklyn Shelter opens a few years after that? Or if the long promised Manhattan Adoption Center ever opens? (All these promised capital improvements were championed by the DeBlasio Administration and composition of the prior City Council (but not the DOH)).

ACC has been in crisis since its creation in 1994. It's always been overcrowded, underfunded, understaffed, with demoralized workers and volunteers. Not a good recipe for an animal shelter systems.

What's needed is a true charity that selects its own leadership, operates in the best interests of homeless animals and pet owners, can stand toe-to-toe when bargaining with the City, and can attract loyalty and support from animal advocates, businesses and City government itself.

Kelsey Brown

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Kerri Pacello <kerripacello@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 9:33 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue in NYC

[REDACTED]

Dear NYC Council,

As a tax-paying resident of NYC on the **Upper East Side**, I urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for **any** New Yorker in need, **including rescuers and pet parents**.

I appreciate your sincere consideration for these animals that we love.

Kind regards,

Kerri Pacello  
Upper East Side resident of NYC since 1997

## **The Imperative for a Low-Cost Trap-Neuter-Release Initiative in NYC**

**In the bustling urban landscape of New York City, the echo of human progress often drowns out the heartbreaking plight of its often-overlooked feline inhabitants. The streets are home to an estimated 600,000 to 1 million stray and feral cats, individuals who roam the concrete jungle, surviving amidst challenges that humans can hardly fathom. As advocates for animal welfare push for sustainable solutions, a low-cost Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) initiative becomes imperative for both the community and the ecosystem.**

### **A Human-Centric Perspective on Animal Welfare**

**The growing stray cat population in NYC presents not only ethical concerns but also practical issues. Strays can contribute to the increased prevalence of disease, the disruption of local wildlife, and the impact on neighborhood cleanliness. Sterilizing these felines through an accessible and affordable TNR program not only makes good sense for the animals but also serves the interests of the community. By managing the cat population responsibly, we reduce health concerns and promote a healthier urban environment for all residents.**

### **A Compassionate Solution for Cat Overpopulation**

**TNR has proven to be a vital strategy in humane animal control, allowing community members to take an active role in advocating for animals. Through TNR, both strays and ferals are safely trapped, neutered, and returned to their original locations, where they can live out their lives free of the burden of breeding. This significantly decreases future litters — a key factor in curbing overpopulation.**

**However, many potential caregivers are deterred by the costs associated with veterinary services. A low-cost TNR initiative removes the financial barrier,**

**enabling individuals and small groups to engage actively in preventing future generations of strays. By empowering communities and reducing the overall number of cats on the streets, NYC can foster a cooperative spirit that brings neighborhoods together in support of a common cause.**

### **Economic Benefits for a Vibrant City**

**Implementing a citywide low-cost TNR initiative does not just benefit our furry friends — it ultimately serves to save money and resources for the city at large. Stray animals can create a heavy financial burden through public health interventions, increased animal control services, and environmental management requirements. By investing in TNR, NYC can allocate funds more sustainably toward preventative measures rather than reactive solutions.**

**Moreover, NYC stands to benefit from how such initiatives can enhance its reputation as a compassionate and progressive city. A culture that prioritizes animal wellbeing elevates the city's stature, encourages tourism, and creates a more inviting atmosphere for residents and visitors alike.**

### **A Collaborative Path Forward**

**To establish a successful low-cost TNR initiative, collaboration between government agencies, animal welfare organizations, and local communities is essential. Public education campaigns must accompany subsidization, raising awareness on the benefits of TNR and community engagement. It's time to create a grassroots movement, driven by passionate individuals and groups committed to animal welfare, public health, and community vibrancy.**

**Creating a low-cost Trap-Neuter-Release initiative will bring New Yorkers together, shaping a more emotionally connected and environmentally stable city. By embracing this strategic approach, we can foster a compassionate legacy for future generations — one where the stray cats of our city are cared for and respected, not just seen as a problem to be solved. New York City deserves a future where all its inhabitants can thrive together, unfettered and at peace.**

**Khrystal Crowell**



## Testimonial Letter to the New York City Council Committee

Attention: Health Committee Chair Lynn Schulman and Speaker Adrienne Adams

September 12, 2024

Dear Speaker, Chair and Committee members,

As a NYC cat behavior consultant, I work closely with the rescue community, fosters and recent adopters. I see first hand the effects of not having a government subsidized program for spay and neuter programs for cats. Simply put, it's devastating.

Shelters are overwhelmed with pets available for adoption. The streets of Brooklyn are flooded with cats who have lost their homes or never had one. This is not only unfair to the animals suffering, but to the city residents who are trying to help them. Cost of veterinary care has surged in recent years and is a top concern among pet guardians. Spay and neuter is surrender prevention, and a desperately needed resource for NYC residents and their pets. It can help dramatically reduce the number of cats struggling to survive on our streets.

I strongly encourage our city government to provide resources to support low cost (or no cost) spay and neuter programs. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Jennifer Van de Kieft, CAFTP, FFCP, PNCC

Lifelong New Yorker

Feline Behavior & Feeding Coach

**TRAINING CATS AND THEIR GUARDIANS TO  
CREATE HEALTHIER, HAPPIER HOMES**

195 Adams Street #6J, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Cell: 917-439-3878 / [info@cat-advocate.com](mailto:info@cat-advocate.com) / [www.cat-advocate.com](http://www.cat-advocate.com)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** L <adventuresalways1234@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:44 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Allocate substantial funding for high volume spay neuter

[REDACTED]

Hello

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need rescuers and pet parents. thanks Kim and Karen Williams

Our director received a call that there were two kittens outside of her home. Undoubtedly dumped by someone who knew that she would help them. She immediately removed the food that she leaves for the neighborhood cats and set traps. She successfully trapped one kitten and the other, likely hit by a car, died that same evening on her front stoop. The pure poetry of it. Rather than focusing on the life saved, she beat herself up about the fact that she pulled that food and that the kitten suffered and died hungry, never knowing a safe place. She has been rescuing animals for over twenty years. She has saved countless lives. But she is continually haunted by the losses. The surviving kitten took months to rehabilitate, but she is now in a loving forever home.

Next to my jobs as public school teacher and new mother, my third full-time job is my volunteer work for For Animals, Inc., a TNR-focused rescue in Queens. I foster our most challenging intakes, coordinate adoptions, and hand-hold adopters and fosters as they learn to be better cat guardians.

Many people say, I couldn't do what you do. I get it. I see photos of rescue kittens and instead of thinking about how cute they are, I think about the unsprayed mother who will be having more litters. About the other suffering kittens outside who won't make it through their first year of life, or who will suffer for longer.

While the work that I do is challenging and often heartbreaking, my response is, "I couldn't do what **they** do." I am referring to the women I know who are out on their knees setting traps at 5 in the morning before work. Seeing the suffering every day first hand. Having to make the decisions to put friendly dumped cats back on the street because there is nowhere else for them to go. Euthanizing sick kittens. Many of these women have barely enough money to live on. They are not better equipped to handle the pain of this work. On the contrary, they feel even more deeply and this is why they do this work.

We cannot adopt our way out of this crisis. There are too few homes, and too many homeless, traumatized cats in New York City. We need support for TNR. We need affordable vet care. We need to compensate the people who are doing the city's work for free.

Kimberly Brooks

[REDACTED]

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**From:** lesrepresent <chamorro\_kimberly@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 12:58 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] NYC RESIDENT

[REDACTED]

Hi we urge city government to allocate substantial city funding for high volume low cost spay /nuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need including rescuers and fosters and pet parents !!

# **Testimony to Friday, Sep 13 10:00am Committee on Health**

## **Subject: NYC Animal Rescue**

Dear New York City Council,

I write to express my concern surrounding the state of Animal Rescue. Animal welfare in NYC is suffering due to the stray and owned cat crisis, large dog surrenders, stagnant adoption rates, overburdened shelters, unaffordable vet care, and the need for pet-friendly affordable housing.

In NYC, we are in the midst of an overpopulation crisis of cats. Shelters are full and rescuers are saying no to cats in need because of lack of available resources, and this problem is getting worse every year. If you're a pet owner, getting your pet fixed can be an enormous financial burden, or outright unaccessible if you can't afford the thousands of dollars it can cost at private vets to get a pet fixed.

The reality is that NYC is in dire need of city-funded, high-volume, affordable spay/neuter. We need access for regular New Yorkers to help their own pets or the cats on their block.

As a cat owner myself, I can attest firsthand to the struggle that local, community rescue groups are facing. I have adopted two cats rescued from the street by these community groups, and I'm currently fostering a third. These groups are stretched thin, relying entirely independent donors, volunteers, and fosters to continue their operation and save the lives of thousands of stray and/or abandoned animals.

I urge NYC Government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter.

Sincerely,  
Kirsten Hernandez

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Kishouna Landais <kishounal@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 6:42 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funding for pet care

[REDACTED]

Hi there, my name is Kisha

I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Hearing Testimony - September 13, 2024

In 2008 I started caring for a feral cat colony of about 12 in Sunnyside, Queens. I'm indebted to the person who helped get them all trapped, spayed/neutered and vaccinated for free on the ASPCA mobile clinic van. Then I adopted 2 kittens, also spayed/neutered at no cost to me, so I benefitted twice over. Now 16 years later the last feral died at a ripe old age leaving no descendants or colonies on our block. This attests to the success of TNR and necessity of low- or no-cost veterinary services. Without them, a high volume of rescues, caretaking and adoptions would not be possible.

K. Katz, 9/6/24

[Katzfoto@yahoo.com](mailto:Katzfoto@yahoo.com)

On May 23, 2024 The Emergency Placement program was updated to include the Priority Placement List (PPL) and the At-Risk of Euthanasia List (ARL). At this time, NYCACC listed the steps below as the protocol they use to place animals on these lists.

**What type of Quality Assurance (QA) is conducted before an animal is humanely euthanized from the at-risk list?**

ACC is committed to ensuring the integrity and accuracy of all processes and programs, including humane euthanasia for animals identified from the At-Risk list. Humane euthanasia will only be performed on animals for whom no other placement options have been established and for whom no outstanding issues regarding intake, ownership, or holding exist. ACC's Quality Assurance (QA) department performs a meticulous review of the record for any animal identified from the At-Risk list prior to euthanasia.

**What steps are taken before an animal becomes at-risk?**

Our team tracks several items to ensure we are doing all we can to help the dogs have a positive outcome, including, but not limited to:

- Intake Date to track how long they have been in our care.
  - Does dog receive daily in-kennel enrichment?
  - Does the dog have a behavior management/modification plan in place?
  - Has the dog been placed on behavioral medications to assist with adjusting to shelter environment?
  - Have we pursued reclaim options?
  - Does the dog have a bio on the website as well as photos?
  - If possible, does the dog have a video?
  - Have we made a plea to rescue groups or other shelters?
- 
- The public has no idea if the steps above are followed, the steps above are not made public. Some behavior info is there when a 42hr notice of euthanasia is announced. **No transparency.**
  - When a person or rescue looks at a dogs profile on the app there is nothing to attract an adopter.
    1. Bad and unappealing names are given to dogs such as Windex and Metal Gear Solid.
    2. **IF** there is a summary bio, the verbiage used is rote and generic, not much help to appeal to a potential foster or adopter. *Currently online (9/9/2024) there are 19 dogs with **NO summary at all, NO information about the animal other than est. age, sex, weight, location***
    3. Commonly used descriptive phrases like "I have medical needs that staff can address with you when you meet me" - **this creates a question in your mind, no clarity on the animal. No transparency.**
    4. **Currently online (9/9/2024) there are 32 dogs with 1 picture upon intake** - when animals are frightened or confused- many sit at this for 15-25 days after listing. There are 100 dogs with no video, this is what people like to see, behavior in action.
  - There are **no intake notes, medical notes or specific behavior notes** to help an adopter make an educated decision about re-homing an individual animal.
  - Currently online there are 14 dictionary definitions listed in use for describing dogs. If you look at the dogs currently on the PPL listing there are at least 10 abbreviations used with no definitions listed. (PBI, LB,PIC,DA,RB,HTS,T/S,LR,BHX) NO one outside of a select few in NYCACC know what these mean. **No transparency.**

## **EXAMPLES**

### **Case #1**

Lisa #206966 <https://nycacc.app/#/browse/206966>

Lisa has been at MACC for 31 days with one photo AND NO summary/bio at all, no networking, no public pleas.

Listed At Risk with one photo on 9/5/24

When ACC says her behavior deteriorated.

Only the same generic verbiage used for all puppies or young active dogs who are killed at the highest rate at NYCACC. 1yr old

### **Case #2**

Ella #204576 <https://nycacc.app/#/browse/204576> 37 days at QACC

“Noted to be friendly, playful, shy and actively avoid”

What does that even mean?

2yr old

### **Case #3**

Milo #206621 <https://nycacc.app/#/browse/206621>

36 days at Queens, does have 2 photos

Sadly, “Sorry, Milo does not have a summary”

1 yr old

### **Case #4**

Daenerys #208158 <https://nycacc.app/#/Browse/208158>

19 days at QACC , does have 2 photos

Sadly, “Sorry, Milo does not have a summary”

2yrs old

What a BAD photo, would this encourage you to save her?



Case #5

Leah #208295 <https://nycacc.app/#/browse/208295>

17 days at MACC , one photo

7yr old



Case #6

Mr Sweetness #207635 <https://nycacc.app/#/browse/207635>

25 days at MACC, only one photo

2yr old



Here is an example of a great post on NYCACC app

Cookies 'N Cream #195141 <https://nycacc.app/#/browse/195141>

186 days at MACC, a long stay w/ videos, photos, great notes  
But not taken to adoption events or networked until recently

### Cookies N' Cream

Id	Species	Age	Gender	Weight	Location	Days in Care
195141	Dog	3 Years	Female	52 lbs	Manhattan	185

All pets are vaccinated, micro-chipped, and spayed/neutered when appropriate. Please [check here](#) for updated adoption hours.

#### Summary

Cookies N' Cream has her adoption fee sponsored by a generous donor! All pets are vaccinated, microchipped, and spayed/neutered when appropriate. Please [check here](#) for updated adoption hours.

**A bit about me:**  
Cookies N' Cream was found abandoned on the corner of a street before she was brought to Manhattan ACC by NYPD. Cookies is initially shy, but she opens up once she knows that you're a trusted friend. She has been a very good girl, quickly learning skills like "sit" and "shake hands/high five" while doing her best to adjust to the busy environment at the shelter.

**My ideal home:**  
Cookies N' Cream would do best in a patient adult home. She would benefit from slow introductions to new people and places to help her feel safe.

**Good with other pets?**  
Cookies N' Cream friendly and playful around other dogs during doggy social groups, so she might get along well with new doggy friends with proper introductions and socialization. We always suggest slow introductions with resident pets, and we offer a 2-week trial adoption to help you see if Cookies N' Cream is a good fit with your family. Since ACC doesn't test with cats, we're not sure how she'd do with feline friends, but we can help you with tips and advice!

**Good with kids?**  
Cookies N' Cream would do best in a home without young children under 13, as she's still learning her basic manners. She also showed possible potential to guard items she considers valuable. Her response was appropriate and we cannot be certain if this behavior will be seen in a future home environment. With a bit of patience and training, she'll be a wonderful addition to a loving family!

**How is my health?**  
Cookies N' Cream has some health concerns that our staff will discuss with you.

**How are my leash manners?**  
Cookies N' Cream pulls moderately on the leash and is nonreactive to humans and dogs on walks.

**What is my behavior assessment?**  
Cookies N' Cream has been assessed as a Level 3 dog. She would need an experienced owner that can help her with her basic manners. She is a sweet dog that is a staff and volunteer favorite. With patience and understanding, she'll make a wonderful companion.

**An improvement solution is simple.**

- There must be procedures in place to ensure each animal is given an opportunity to be re-homed. ***These notes should be in the shelter buddy documentation that is attached when put on the PPL as well as the ARL.***
- Each animal deserves to have a schedule of meals, exercise and enrichment. **Documented in notes.**
- Their kennels clean. If a Level 1 or Level 2 they should be taken to adoption events. **Documented in notes.**
- Information regarding medical, behaviors and photos on NYCACC app to make it easier for adopters to get information, make an appointment to adopt and have a good experience.

**This is the NYCACC statement on their FAQ page under the topic “Is ACC a No-Kill Shelter?”**

“We are a resource driven organization aiding all animals and owners in need to end pet homelessness in NYC. ACC also believes we have a responsibility to ensure that we do not place dangerous animals back into the community and that no animal suffers from a medical condition that goes beyond our ability to provide treatment.

As a community, we all share responsibility for New York City's euthanasia rates. The stray cat we feed but do not get altered. Supporting a pet shop by buying a puppy or kitten over adopting at the shelter. The accidental litter at home. Many of the choices we make and that our friends and family make affect the community's euthanasia rate. As the only open-door shelter in NYC, we believe there must be a place that will not turn animals away. ACC is proud to be that place, but we need the communities support to continue achieving these goals.”

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I am a 65 yr old retiree from the state of Minnesota. I decided a couple years ago to spend my “online time” doing something worthwhile to me and to others. Networking animals for a city that I have enjoyed visiting many times became my mission. As a former employee of the Federal Government, in the judicial branch which is funded by taxpayer dollars, I believe in accountability and transparency in public institutions. For twenty years that is what I thought of while performing each aspect of my job assignments.

***Our rescue group is working for the community of NYC to help this organization follow their own mission and the protocol they have outlined in their programs to re-home animals. We will continue to provide some oversight to holding them accountable for the guidelines they have publicly stated to follow.***

Thank you for your consideration of our views and taking the time for this meeting today.

Kristi Nelson

  
Rockford, MN 55373  
nelsonville2@msn.com

Kristin A. Crage  
Tel: [REDACTED]  
Email: [nicomontilli@yahoo.com](mailto:nicomontilli@yahoo.com)

September 13, 2024

VIA EMAIL

NYC Council Committee on Health  
City Hall  
New York, NY

Re: The State of Animal Rescue in NYC

Dear Committee,

My name is Kristin A. Crage. I've been an animal activist/rescuer for as long as I can remember. In lieu of my attendance, please accept my comments for Friday's hearing:

1. We need to bring compassion and kindness to a species that cannot defend itself against the all too often cruelty of humans.

2. Animal cruelty and indifference has become something that is normalized behavior and we need to stand against this by showing that simple acts of kindness costs nothing and is as simple as spay/neuter. Compassion to our animal life only makes our communities better and stronger especially if we work together to care about a species different from our own.

3. For those that say, "Why should I care about animals when I'm in need of x, y & z? Or, there is suffering in this place or that place." My response is the following: We don't have to choose what to care about. We have the ability to care about any and all of the issues that are important to us and where there is a need for compassion. The most important way we can make our voices heard is by voting those into office who will work on behalf of ending violence, and when we talk about ending violence, we must include ending violence to animals.

4. As a rescuer, one of the top concerns I hear from adopters as well as people that have admitted to abandoning animals is that they wanted/tried to do the right thing but when they rescue an un-spayed/un-neutered animal and that animal starts spraying, becomes aggressive, and/or uncontrollable as male cats do and the females get pregnant. They can no longer keep the animal and when they cannot rehome, they sadly, put the animal back on the street. It's cruel but they see that as they're only option. We need to provide another viable option - low cost spay/neuter.

5. The following are benefits of Low Cost Spay/Neuter:

- a. Females won't reproduce. Less cats roaming the streets means less suffering and more attractive neighborhoods to live in.

- b. Animals will live longer, healthier lives.
- c. Males won't spray.
- d. Less fighting between males.
- e. Less noise; and
- f. Less smell.

In summary, abandoning cats/kittens is a human-animal problem. We affect each other and can co-exist peacefully by implementing the above. Low Cost Spay/Neuter strengthens the relationship between humans and animals and drastically reduces, if not eliminates, the number of abandoned cats/kittens as well as the accompanying suffering it causes. Animal lives matter as much as human lives. No one wants to live in a city where animal suffering is as prevalent as it is here when a solution is possible. A complete Proposal and Budget have been created and are available upon request.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Kristin A. Crago  
Writer/Activist

  
Astoria, NY 11102  
District 22

We desperately need high volume, low cost spay and neuter services for all rescuers and pet parents funded by the city. We also need low cost vet care for all so more people can keep and care for their pets. We need to do better for our people and the pets they love. The rescuers are doing all they can but they are out of space. They are out of funds. They are losing faith that anything they do can make a difference. And the truth is, the problem is on a larger scale than the united efforts of areas rescues is capable of dealing with. It's time for the government to step in. There are no other options left to us.

The prices of vet care has sky rocketed. Rescues and individuals are bearing the burden but the cats and dogs are the ones that are really suffering. I've been volunteering for For Animals Inc for over 3 years now. In that time, the cost and difficulty of rescue work has increased substantially. Just a few years ago we could get 10 cats spayed/neutered for what it now costs us to spay/neuter one cat. And that's at rescue a discount. It's much worse for individual pet owners. Fewer people can afford to provide the necessary regular vet care for their cats and they know it. Adoptions are down. I foster cats and kittens and it is also taking much longer for my fosters to find a home. One of my current fosters has been with me for over a years with zero applications for her. But it's not just me. If you just look at social media and talk to other rescuers, you realize it's everyone. When adoptions slow, rescues have less space for helping other cats that need it.

People are also returning their pets at a high rate because the cost of providing care is too much. Every returned animals means at least one cat (likely more like 4) that we won't be able to help in future. While some have a rescue to return their pets to, others do not or are turned away because rescues are over capacity. When people can't afford to keep their pets, some chose to dump them outside. Who cares for them then? If they are lucky, a local feeder or rescuer will find them. But if they aren't, no one will. These cats don't live long and they suffer immensely. Even when rescuers do find a friendly cat, even we can't help them. None of us has the space or funds to help even a fraction of the friendlies we encounter. The pets of the city deserve better. NYC is a lot of things but it should not be a place where so many companion animals are suffering.

This is matters to me as a constituent, pet parent, and volunteer. But it also matters to everyone who has ever found joy in a cute cat or dog video.

Thank you for your time.

## City council testimony

- My name is Dr. LaCheryl Ball, I'm the Director of Surgery at Flatbush Veterinary Clinic, a new nonprofit facility run by Flatbush Cats in Brooklyn.
- I have more than 7 years of experience as a high quality high volume spay/neuter surgeon, and have performed more than 40,000 thousand spays and neuters for New York City pet owners and rescuers.
- I greatly appreciate the Chair, and the members of the committee for convening this hearing.
- I have worked with several spay/neuter organizations throughout New York City and the common thread I have observed is the passion, enthusiasm, and urgency that teams across this city have doing this work. Although my colleagues and I are deeply committed to addressing the pet overpopulation and animal welfare crisis in NYC, we cannot do this alone.
- This work takes a heavy physical and emotional toll on us which has created the perception that this is not a long term career field for veterinarians and veterinary staff.
  - Those that have pursued spay/neuter as a career shoulder the push to do as many surgeries as we can daily and accept those patients that need our care most, but the need is too great.
  - Many of my peers have considered permanently leaving the field after being overworked and underpaid, while witnessing suffering and neglect on a daily basis, and feeling that there is not enough support for there to be an end in sight.
  - I have personally experienced severe back pain after many years of standing day in and day out doing as many surgeries as I can. However, this ultimately led me to my greatest passion - teaching. In realizing that I may not always be able to perform 40 surgeries a day, I decided that one of my contributions to the access to care issues we face would be to arm as many veterinarians as I can with the skills to do this important work.
  - I am a veterinary training specialist and I have trained more than 60 veterinarians so far to have the skills and confidence to perform high volume surgery.
- We cannot tackle this crisis without a long term financial investment from the city.
- With your leadership and support, we can ensure our colleagues receive fair compensation for providing these lifesaving services and fund even more efforts to provide adequate training to those veterinarians who want to get involved.
- We can train more veterinarians to increase spay/neuter capacity in New York City.
- We can open more community-based, affordable veterinary clinics like Flatbush Vet in every borough.
- And by making basic veterinary services affordable and accessible - we can dramatically reduce shelter intake.
- But we must act.
- I know that you count on us, as veterinarians, to always be there for the animals and people who need our care.
- Well, we need your support and we are counting on you too.
- Thank you.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Laibah Azam <laibahazam101@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 10:43 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Allocate Funding for Veterinary Care

[REDACTED]

Good morning members of the Council,

My name is Laibah Azam and I am a resident of Astoria, NY. I am here as an advocate for animal rescue, representing the collective voices of countless rescuers, shelters, and compassionate New Yorkers who dedicate their time, resources, and hearts to saving and caring for animals in need. The state of animal rescue in New York City is both inspiring and deeply challenging. Every day, rescuers across the city work tirelessly to save animals from abandonment, abuse, neglect, and overpopulation. These animals cannot speak for themselves, which is why it is our duty, as a society, to be their voice and stand up for their well-being. They rely on us for protection, care, and advocacy, and it is our responsibility to ensure they are not forgotten or left to suffer. Rescuing animals is not just an act of compassion; it is a moral imperative. These vulnerable creatures deserve a second chance at life, and through rescue efforts, they are given the opportunity to experience love, care, and safety. However, the reality is that many rescuers are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of animals in need, often without the necessary resources to provide adequate care. One of the most pressing issues we face is the lack of accessible and affordable veterinary care, including spay and neuter services. The cost of veterinary care has risen dramatically, placing an enormous financial burden on pet parents and rescuers alike. This has had a ripple effect on animal overpopulation and the well-being of both rescued animals and those already in homes. We urge the City government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. These programs are essential not only to reducing the strain on animal shelters and preventing the cycle of overpopulation but also to fulfilling our duty to care for those who cannot care for themselves. By rescuing these animals, we are not only saving individual lives but also addressing a larger societal issue. The humane treatment of animals reflects the values of our city, and we must lead by example in providing the resources necessary to protect and care for them. Expanding affordable veterinary care and spay/neuter services is a critical step toward ensuring that no animal is left behind, and that every person who wants to help can do so without facing insurmountable financial barriers. In closing, we believe that every animal deserves a loving home, and every rescuer and pet parent deserves the support necessary to provide that care. We are calling on you, our elected officials, to stand with us and ensure that NYC becomes a leader in humane, compassionate, and accessible animal care. The animals cannot speak for themselves, but together, we can be their voice and ensure they are heard.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,  
Laibah

My name is Laila Sultana, I am an independent rescuer in District 36. My council member is Chi Ossé. Here are some of the concerns about NYC's cat population crisis that I would like to bring to the attention of our Councilmembers.

I started doing rescue work in 2022 because there was a stray cat suffering outside my house. She had open sores on half of her body surface. There were no city services to help outdoor cats, I contacted every shelter and every rescuer I could find online and they were all full, so I had to take on the responsibility of helping this cat on my own. But gathering resources took too long, by the time I was able to get her to the vet she had passed horribly. I was surprised that a city the size of New York doesn't have any animal services - no spay/neuter program, no access to affordable veterinary care for abandoned cats. If, like me, you don't have the money to care for a stray animal, your choices are to watch them die slowly on the street or go into debt to pay for the animal's care.

After this incident in 2022 I became aware of a larger issue that plagued our city--the cat overpopulation crisis. I can't leave my house without seeing stray cats - starving, injured, maimed, unhealthy cats. I hear them yowling and fighting in my backyard. The problem is getting worse even though there are concerned neighbors who are trying to do something about it. We want to get them spayed and neutered but we can't access adequate affordable services. **This is a municipal problem and we need the city to step in and address it.** Offloading the problem onto privately funded organizations and private residents like ME isn't working. We don't have nearly as many low-cost spay/neuter options needed to solve this problem. Let's make it possible for pet owners to keep their pets instead of abandoning them. Without spay/neuter a cat is not a practical indoor pet - the males spray and the females go into heat. These nuisance behaviors put them at high risk for neglect and abandonment. All the abandoned pets I find are unfixed. As they are domesticated animals they lack street survival skills and we're finding them in bad condition, and usually frozen in fear.

As a rescuer, my focus has always been on reducing the outdoor cat population. Most outdoor cats don't have caretakers and their lives can be brutal and short. Cats outside have a life expectancy of 2 years as opposed to the indoor cat who has a life expectancy of 20 years or more. Stopping that cycle of misery is my mission. Now that vet costs have skyrocketed and pet friendly, affordable housing is difficult to find, people are abandoning their pets in massive numbers. Every single day I get news of dumped pets. These animals are unfixed and often found in bad shape - sick, injured or dying. Every other cat I find is an abandoned pet that needs medical treatment on top of spay/neuter. And low-cost spay/neuter resources are at an all time low. I can't afford to help every cat in need that I see. If like me you don't have disposable income where is the money to care for these animals coming from? I have to tell heart-warming stories on instagram and beg people to give me money, or donate to my gofundme--this is my second job. We're getting into credit card debt, can't save for the future and can't improve our circumstances. The burden of rescue work is physically exhausting and emotionally draining, it is a public service that is not funded by the city, coming entirely out of my own pocket and donations. If the city could fund high-volume, low-cost spay-neuter, and affordable vet care then that would help relieve the crushing financial burden we're under.

Aside from a chronically underfunded shelter system, NYC offers no animal welfare services, relying instead on an army of volunteers to solve the public problem of outdoor cats with our own private funds and free time. Hundreds of tiny one-person animal rescue organizations and independent trappers are stepping into this vacuum in city services, to reduce the number of outdoor cats and end the cycle of misery of life on the streets. We do this while our neighbors breed cats to sell kittens, while cat hoarders get evicted and the cats either get trapped inside and starve or released to the street where they can add to the problem, while sadistic people find abandoned pets and abuse them for entertainment. There's so much that needs to be done to create a city that is better for both animals and humans. We have no legal frameworks to address hoarding cases. No collaboration between city agencies if a box of kittens is found next to a trash can on garbage collection day. No city leadership period. Even the NYPD turns to rescuers like me when they encounter sick/injured cats and kittens. This is the state of animal welfare in our city.

It's never too late to move from a city that's backwards to become an innovative leader. We can start addressing the root causes of the outdoor cat overpopulation by funding and launching a city-funded spay/neuter program that will provide free or discounted spay/neuter appointments to all New Yorkers, so that residents don't have to abandon their pets, and rescuers won't have to be responsible for spaying and neutering every animal in New York City. An effective spay/neuter program will prevent thousands of cats from being born on the streets

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Laraine Rungo <lrungo@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:44 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue/ NY

[REDACTED]

To City Council,

I am contacting you as a pet owner and person who supports animal rescue efforts in my neighborhood, Astoria, NY. Affordable veterinary care is essential for keeping stray cats and dogs off the streets, and decreasing the likelihood of pet owners abandoning pets in public spaces or at overcrowded shelters.

I am writing to urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet owners.

Thank you for considering this important issue in our communities across New York City.

Laraine Rungo  
Astoria, NY

[REDACTED]

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**From:** laura budean <bytxlaura@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 10:52 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony for support fighting the cat overpopulation crisis

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

My name is Laura Budean Johnson and I am one of the many individual rescuers trying to make a dent in the soul crushing cat overpopulation crisis.

I could make a summary of cases from long ago but truth of the matter is, there have been so so many that I can't even put a \$ amount on the money I spent. What is fresh in my memory is that last year alone, I wiped out my life savings (\$10000) in between 4 major medicat emergencies for stray cats. I didn't want to do it, I most certainly am terrified that I will not be able to provide for my family without that safety net and I am exhausted from having had to work 2 jobs, 7 days a week just to make ends meet and be able to help feral/stray cats.

The figure above does not include my personal pets care. I do not include the dozens of cats I had spayed/neutered/vaccinated out of my pocket just so I won't scrape dead kittens bodies from the sidewalk. It is depressing to wake up every single day and get requests to help hurt cats, kittens whose moms got run over/injured and know that I do not have an social media following because I am too tired to keep up with frequent posting and that means the rare donations I get come from my friends. This beautiful city has the means to care and support for the animals in need. It has voices that are pleading for help.

Please help us help them.

Thank you for your time,

Laura @boomers\_feline\_friends

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Laura Guthrie <laura\_guthrie@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:39 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To Whom it may concern:

I am long-term New York City resident and I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,

Laura Guthrie

My name is Laura Leopardo and I'm in District 35 in Brooklyn. Thank you Council Member Lynn Schulman for the opportunity to give the city's animal advocates a voice today. I am in support of CM Brannan's bill regarding unlicensed, backyard/home breeders, and its impact on the city's animal shelters as well as the relationship to affordable vet care.

Backyard Breeding dogs and cats is cruel and irresponsible. Breeders treat living, sentient, emotional individuals as commodities, as cash machines. They often have substandard breeding practices and very often animals are raised in poor, filthy conditions because there is no oversight. Many dogs and cats are kept in crates and cages, where they're in constant isolation, never experiencing the affection of a loving family—something highly social animals desperately need. Backyard breeding can result in animals with unpredictable behavior and aggression as well as health defects.

Backyard breeders are constantly breeding, always have dogs available, even in abundance and to ensure the ease of a sale, no vetting process is necessary. On numerous occasions, I have seen people selling pets on the streets, like at Union Square, on my neighborhood blog and Craigslist/social media. This can lead to animals ending up in the hands of unscrupulous characters or bred to become fight or bait dogs in the dog-fighting industry.

Just because a dog can be bred, doesn't mean it should be. Overbreeding and inbreeding a dog more than its body can safely handle can lead to life-threatening health issues for the mother and puppies. Some of these issues include eye problems, respiratory issues, joint issues, labor issues and heart problems. In addition, there is no consumer protection, which provides recourse for the sale of puppies with illnesses or defects. In the long run, a sick animal can potentially end up costing a consumer thousands of dollars in vet bills. If vet costs are prohibited, animals are often abandoned or turned over to a shelter, exacerbating the shelter overpopulation crisis.

Not only is using an animal's reproductive ability to make a quick buck lazy and wrong, it also adds to the overpopulation and homelessness crisis. There's just no reason for bringing more puppies and kittens into the world. Shelters are overburdened due to various reasons; some being, 1) BYB puppies growing up into large adult dogs, which aren't as desirable as puppies and are thus abandoned at shelters and are harder to adopt out; 2) the high cost of vet care, and 3) people not being able to find housing that allows dogs. We know what happens when shelters are overpopulated—healthy adoptable animals get euthanized. Every time a dog is bred, homeless dogs lose the opportunity to have a good life.

There have been several recent articles noting the crisis at shelters and the lack of lower cost city-funded vet clinics. In a **Gothamist** article dated this past July 7th, the title was "*NYC Animal Shelters Are Overcrowded With Dogs, and Few People are Adopting Them.*" It notes that rescuers are working overtime and a break seems unlikely unless there is more funding. There was another article in the **Brooklyn Paper** from this past August 29th, titled, "*A Solvable Problem: Brooklyn's Animal Rescuers Say City-Funded Veterinary Clinics Could Help End Shelter Crisis.*" Knowing this, isn't it cruel to allow BYB to bring even more puppies and kittens

into this world. The article goes on to state, “overcrowding at shelters has dire consequences, such as the spread of disease, overworked staff members, and stress induced animal behavioral issues—dogs can get a little stir-crazy which can ultimately take the form of aggression, which makes the animals even harder to place in a situation where it’s already hard to place even the easiest of animals.”

The New York Times recently reported that the price of veterinary care has soared more than 60 percent over the past decade. Knowing that some of these byb sick dogs end up in shelters due to unforeseen medical vet bills that people are unable to pay, wouldn’t it be wonderful if there were more affordable access to vet clinics, which in turn would allow the city to spend less on shelters. To quote CM Brannan, “affordable vet clinics in every borough is key to keeping pets with their families and preventing animals from flooding the city’s shelters every year.”

Let’s help empty the shelters by banning backyard breeders from breeding an excessive amount of dogs, and fund lower-cost, or free, vet clinics with medical and spay/neutering services. It is believed that more access to spay/neuter services alone would have a huge impact on lowering shelter populations.

I’d like to close by respectfully pleading with Lynn Schulman and Speaker Adams that we move ahead and rescue the poor horses in the horse carriage industry. More than 70% of New Yorkers want them banned! This very morning there is the criminal trial for Ryder’s owner, Ian McKeever, just another case of continued abuse in this industry. Many cities worldwide have banned them, it’s time for NYC to do the same!

As a long-time New Yorker and cat owner, I have seen the costs affiliated with being a responsible pet parent grow astronomically. I have had to skip the annual visit for one pet when another pet ran into trouble and blew the budget, because your average emergency visit in NYC is always well over \$1000. There's the initial emergency and always a follow-up. You have to be wealthy to provide consistent vet care for your companion animals in NYC. There was a time when that wasn't the case. Twenty years ago I'd have my cat seen for something- a removal or small procedure, and been able to put in on a credit card. I remember a receptionist once said "ouch" when I was expecting a \$350 bill that turned into \$600, but I could put it on a card. Now- you have to make the decision to:

1. Give up your pet to the kill shelter (who's going to adopt a middle aged cat who needs a thousand dollars worth of dental work? This is a death sentence).
2. Beg friends for loans, and/or start a Gofundme campaign, which you share with friends, relatives and co-workers, make about a third of the goal so still go into debt but some of it was paid for.
3. Put it on a credit card which will affect your credit rating because you can't pay off the balance in 30 days and now you're paying interest- and you have at least one follow up visit which will add to your balance even more.
4. Get that pet insurance, now that there's a pre-existing condition which they won't cover, but at least you have a policy w a premium to pay for every month and hope they won't double the premium the following year for your pet becoming a year older (has happened) or just outright denying your claim because you should have known when your cat went in for a routine dental that they'd find a growth that turned into cancer. (has happened).
5. Make the decision to put your otherwise perfectly healthy pet to sleep. This also being an option for those who have no access to credit or support from friends and family.

This is about money. This is about the evil of corporate America. Bond vet moved in a few years ago, they were reasonable for straightforward care. They were fine for the average ear infection, swollen paw, uti, wellness visit. Fast forward to a couple years after the pandemic, my cat had a wellness exam, bloodwork and complimentary nail trim there for a little over \$300 and my other cat had the exact same thing four months later and they bagged me for almost \$700. When the manager learned that I had a receipt for the same thing from earlier in the year she explained to

me that “Oh, you were billed as a new customer, as we’ve not seen this cat before”. To which I replied- and you hadn’t seen the other cat before either, so I was billed as a new NYC sucker is what you’re saying. Well she refunded me the difference. Bond Vet has infiltrated NYC like a parasite, taking business away from local vets, who have reduced their fees to compete but it’s still over \$100 everywhere for a pet to even be seen. I’m on staff with a cat rescue- we jump through hoops to get the cats spayed and neutered, getting in line to drop-offs at 6 in the morning because we got a spot someone reserved but didn’t need because the cat already gave birth, or escaped the trap but these appointments are like gold and when you get one offered, you take it. It’s absurd. We are trying to do the right thing as an operational rescue and we do not break even after paying for the routine spay /neuter/ vaccinations, kitten emergencies, cat injuries and illnesses. We have a few generous philanthropists who bail us out a lot- but that is no formula for staying in the green. Our rescue will not make it. I know that just from the numbers. We’re getting returns now, ten years after they’ve been adopted, not been to the vet since adoption- or some owners who were better may have taken them during the pandemic when there was nothing else to do. And what about the street pets. That were dumped when people couldn’t afford them or moved, and never fixed them- having kittens in the gutter, like some THIRD WORLD COUNTRY- it’s shameful. Turkey takes care of their strays, and there is actually a government run FEEDING PROGRAM. Italy it’s the same. There was program to the effect in Israel before all hell broke loose over there. Ghandi said you can tell what level a civilization has reached by how they care for their animals. Well. NYC, as the most famous, supposedly most progressive city in the world- what level do you want to reach?

Laura MacLean

[REDACTED]

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**From:** laura paterson <laura926@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 9:22 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue -Urgent Need for Funding Towards Accessible Spay/Neuter and Veterinary Care

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing to strongly urge the city government to allocate substantial funding towards high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter services and affordable veterinary care for all New Yorkers, including rescuers and pet owners. This support is critical to address the growing issue of animal overpopulation and to ensure the well-being of pets in our community, particularly for those who may not have the financial means to access essential care.

I've personally experienced the impact of this issue, having rescued two unneutered male cats found wandering the streets—one in the West Village and one in Soho. These are not neighborhoods where you would typically expect to see feral cats, but it highlights the severity of the situation. The city is overwhelmed with stray and feral animals, and the burden is falling heavily on rescuers and pet owners alike.

Without adequate funding, the problem will only worsen. Providing accessible, affordable spay/neuter services and veterinary care is not just about helping animals; it's about ensuring the health and safety of our neighborhoods and reducing the strain on city resources in the long run.

I respectfully ask you to prioritize this pressing need in your upcoming budget discussions and consider the positive impact this funding would have on both animals and the community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,  
Laura Paterson

[REDACTED], NYC, NY 10010

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council members,

My name is Lauren Molina and I live in Harlem. Yusef Salaam is my City Council Member.

I have been an avid cat rescuer and fosterer over the last 9 years with the NYC ACC and Puppy Kitty NYC organizations.

I have two cats of my own, Fordham and Hoodie, and have personally fostered and found forever homes for 87 kittens and cats.

The time, energy, and passion of my fellow rescuers comes with enormous cost. I'm not just talking about the physical compassion fatigue, but the exorbitant price tag of vet bills when injured animals are rescued from the streets and require care.

In addition, the immense importance of spaying and neutering animals to not only prevent more unwanted puppies and kittens, but for the animal's health and welfare cannot be overstated.

Our shelters are overrun and bursting at the seams with new intakes due to everything from stray unfixed animals making several litters a years to people dumping their pets because they can't afford veterinary care. We are New York City and should have the resources to prevent this.

There are constant gofundme fundraisers to help find the funds to help pay for such high vet bills, but it shouldn't have to be this way.

I'm grateful to the ASPCA, NYC ACC, and Puppy Kitty NYC for providing low cost spay/neuter options for the cats I've adopted and fostered. It would be impossible to afford it otherwise.

Please consider the importance of making veterinary care, and spaying and neutering affordable for all New Yorkers.

Thank you,

Lauren Molina

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED] <mrdunkenlane93@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 2:05 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony

[REDACTED]

What I like to see is more support for TNR certified individuals who feed 360 days a year with no help from rescues at all and for those individuals who want to become nonprofit. I would also love to see the city make nycha take accountability for the back yard breeding they allow of breeds such as huskies pitbulls German Shepard and Rottweilers. I would also love to see more vet support for individuals who are certified like myself want to become nonprofit and have been outlasted by rescues for speaking out about things they have witness in rescue. I would also like to see rescues investigate to because many have no proof of where their money is going to and some are even ran by people who gave went to jail for fraud. This is what I would love to see. - No Name

[REDACTED]

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**From:** LeeAnn Pemberton <leeannpemberton@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 7:56 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Sept 13 health hearing

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. I volunteer with a local cat rescue in Astoria. Lots of people ask me how it is that I don't bring home all the cats. My answer: I can't afford veterinary care. I have one cat that I adopted from the ACC seven years ago. This year, a REGULAR ANNUAL checkup cost me over \$500. This is absolutely ridiculous, and I can understand why people end up dumping their cats or not getting them adequate health care. I volunteer also with a second cat rescue group with affiliations with the Petco stores, adopting out their rescued cats. While I was there just yesterday attending to my feline charges, a woman asked for my opinion about a cat she takes care of in her backyard, who had disappeared for 9 months and came back sickly, skinny, and coughing. She asked if an over-the-counter cough treatment would work. I told her she really needs to get it to a vet, and she scrunched her nose and asked if it would be expensive. I told her, unfortunately yes. The city lacks affordable care for low-income pet owners and rescuers. I genuinely hope the city steps up to help. Both cat rescues I work with are overburdened with cats: intakes are high and adoptions are super low. Rescuers are exhausted and broke; many are volunteers and rescue from their own pockets. Please help ease the burden for all of us New Yorkers who have opened our homes to pets, for rescuers, and the overcrowded shelters. I urge you to help save the lives of these furry New Yorkers who are unable to speak for themselves.

Thank you.

LeeAnn Pemberton  
Jackson Heights, Queens

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**From:** Leesa Kleger <lbk330@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 4:14 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] animal welfare

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i urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay and neuter and affordable veterinary care for any new yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parent's.

it is critical right now as we are in crisis with over a million pets euthanized every year.

thank you

leesa kleger

please excuse any typos!!

Sent from my iPhone

Leesa Kleger

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Lena Moriarty <lblena28@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:38 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Rights spay neuter

[REDACTED]

Hello as a citizen of NY I urge city government to allocate substantial FUNDING!!! For spay neuter and affordable vet care in NY.

## Testimony for Committee on Health Meeting 9/13/24

Hello Committee Members,

My name is Leo Andujar and I have been a resident of District 14 in The Bronx for over 48 years. I am a teacher and aside from the two cats I have at home, I also care for over 30+ community cats in my neighborhood. I have often sought/gotten help to spay/neuter these cats from smaller rescues like Bronx Community Cats, Bronx Tails and Bronx Gatos. However, with the cost of vet care rising and funding for animal welfare decreasing, I have more unfixed cats than I have had in the past 3 years. All the smaller groups are overrun with requests from feeders and pet owners alike. I have maxed out all my credit cards and have almost faced eviction paying for vet costs. When I was younger, Animal Control would patrol the streets picking up stray dogs and cats. What happened to that? What happened to the Animal Welfare Department in this city? How have we, the citizens of this city been left to carry the burden of the stray cat population? How have we as pet owners not have any programs to help keep vet costs low? It is not my job, the city doesn't pay me to do this is what I tell my neighbors when they yell at me about hurt and hungry cats in the street. Still I do what I can. But I need help. The cats in this city need help. The poor members in this community need your help. Please allocate funds for low cost spay neuter programs.

Thank you,  
Leo Andujar

[REDACTED]

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**From:** lily nima mohammady <lilymohammady@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:46 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To Whom It May Concern,

I, Lily Nima Mohammady of [REDACTED] in Manhattan, urge the city's government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet guardians.

With thanks,  
Lily

Linda Daniel



Brooklyn, NY 11208

My name is Linda Daniel. I have lived in Cypress Hills for over 50 years. In 2012 I started seeing stray cats in my yard. I wanted to help them so I got them to the vet, and had them spayed/neutered. Back then I could afford a few cats here and there.

Since 2014 I have been helping cats at the Pink Houses in East New York (NYCHA). I see friendly and feral cats there and try to get them to be spayed/neutered and vaccinated. I try to get homes for the friendly cats. I get calls and texts all the time day and night from people I know and from people I don't know about cats, kittens, pregnant cats, injured cats, sick cats. It doesn't stop. It's too overwhelming. I work full time at the post office and helping these cats has put me into financial crisis.

People can't afford to spay/neuter their animals anymore. Vet prices are too high and the city needs high volume low cost spay/neuter services funded by NYC. I try to help as an individual who cares about the cats, but I don't get paid for this. I don't want to see these animals suffer and I try to help as many cats as I can but I can't anymore.

Please we need the city to help these animals and the people who are going broke trying to help them.

Thank you.

Linda Doria  
Resident of Hudson Square since 1994.

Animal caregiver, advocate, activist and have an 11 year old, 70 pound Lab mix, adopted 10 years ago.

Over a stretch of 50 years I had 9 cats, usually two at a time ,once three. Always going to vet, using alot of my income on animal care

I am also animal advovate on Facebook , helping with cat and dog adoptions. It is an elaborate network of people helping. These rescue organizations in NYC are in desperate need of funds to continue the work that's needed for all the animals on the streets and with people who are in fire need

Alot of people are struggling with vet bills. The costs prevent people from not bringing their pet for the care needed ,due to other bills,like rent, food...

It is emotionally wrenching to leave their pet at a shelter or face eviction. Lower cost, accessible daily,vets and animal hospital,vall hours would be a help. The wonderful Animal Medical center won't turn away an emergency . Yet, before that point would help the dog/cat not suffer and be less costly. It doesn't work like that. Only when it's an emergency. Seems very cruel . A friend was told to return when her dog was yelping, that is an emergency and then they could give her low cost help. That seems cruel to both the people and their pets. Clearly there is a need , working NYers,or retired NYers struggle to care for their animals.

Pet insurance, especially if you live in Manhattan is costly. Usually you need to pay up front. That's impossible for many. Without a big credit line ..I know a NYC Vet, who refused to return the dog to the owner ,until the bill was paid. Honestly.

Perhaps a subsidized vet program connected with a vet school could help with more routine care

Long while ago there were spay/ neuter vans in various neighborhoods, are they still in the budget. Funding available? Volunteers helping the vets with administration?

Also,the capture, alter program for feral cats could be a program with more funding.

Backyard breeders are all over the place. In Manhattan ,in a nearby building there was a dog breeder. They were arrested. I see lactating dogs walking around at times. Some dogs are bred for fights , other for bait. I support Council Member, Justin Brannan and appreciate his work to help animals. It was shocking to learn of this apartment breeders years ago and it still exists.Horrible conditions .

This profiling of large dogs as aggressive , consequentially, not allowed in certain buildings, is wrong and especially unfair. It's not the size that makes a dog not safe it's how they are trained and treated. A small dog can bite and cause a lot of damage. Someone looking for an apartment with their companion or emotional support dog or service dog that happens to be 70 pounds or more has a problem with the restrictions imposed.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of our concerns regarding animals.

Linda Doria

My name is Linda Feldman. I am a colony caretaker in Carroll Gardens, on the border of Red Hook. My district is 39, my city councilperson is Shahana Hanif. I have been looking after 3 cat colonies since 2018, and practicing TNRM as needed. The “M” is not often included but it stands for Monitoring, which means monitoring the health of already fixed feral cats as well as monitoring any newcomers that have been sadly dumped where people assume someone will care for them. In the event that an existing colony cat is sick, or a new cat needs to be spayed or neutered, the process to help them is needlessly complicated, expensive, and hard to come by. Private vet costs are through the roof, and as an independent caretaker, rather than a nonprofit, I cannot benefit from “rescue rates” at a vet. There are only a handful of appointments at the ASPCA – released at 6am on a random day and gone by 6:01am. The Brooklyn Cat Café is a valuable resource but cannot make a dent in the ever-growing issue that is the overpopulation of cats in NYC. Everyone is trying, burning themselves out to do what they can to stem this issue but we are all swimming upstream. The city needs to provide high-volume, low- or no-cost spay/neuter to make an impact. The burden cannot be left to volunteer citizens alone. Flatbush Cats has laid the groundwork with Flatbush Vet, they have proven what is possible when goodhearted people come together and be the change they want to see in the world, in their community. The blueprints are there, we just need to see them all scale up. Please follow their lead and cease the unnecessary suffering and stress of cats and the New Yorkers who care for them. As one gentleman said at the hearing on September 13, it should not be so difficult to do the right thing.

Thank you,  
Linda Feldman

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Linda Nelli <lnelli.lmft@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:21 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Spaying/neutering low cost NYC options

[REDACTED]

Please please please consider allocating more funds to low-cost spay and neuter centers. This spring and summer alone I have seen more feral kitties running around my neighborhood than ever before. They deserve better population control so that they can have healthier lives in homes. Please make spaying and neutering more cost-effective so that New York City citizens can be helpful in controlling the street cat population Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Linda <telesco@optonline.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 11:07 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Welfare

[REDACTED]

Hello,

Thank you for the council meeting 9/13 on Animal Welfare which unfortunately I was unable to attend. I would like to add my voice here.

I would say since the pandemic the number of friendly cats being found abandoned on the streets has skyrocketed. As an independent rescuer with very limited/placement or adoption resources most remain caged in my home for many months before moving out.

Not only is it a financial burden on rescuers more importantly it literally robs us of time to spend with family and friends. There are no vacations, no weekend getaways, no overnight stays. We must always take care of the cats in our care and it's time consuming, but it is a burden we put on ourselves as caring compassionate people. The hearing went on for many hours and council members and attendees were growing weary. Many rescuers had hours of cat care to tend to afterward.

As an example today I took 8 cats to ASPCA Brooklyn clinic, one owned, the rest friendly rescues. I left home in the Bronx at 5:45 am to pickup cats from different locations, arriving back at 9:30. I will head back to Brooklyn at 2:30 and return home 4 hours later hopefully.

I cannot express enough the desperate need for city funded spay/neuter vaccination clinic's and low cost veterinary services. The need for owned pets is staggering. Many owners just cannot afford spay/neuter and routine veterinary care. They love and adore their pets, but all too often those two kittens they took in or adopted "free to a good home" either start making babies (which are given away free and unvetted) or nuisance issues become intolerable as females experiencing heat cycles and males starting to spray throughout the home and sadly at times are put outside to struggle to survive, add to the population, and if lucky enough get rescued. One in twelve make it off the streets I just read that statistic. I fixed 28 cats for one woman whose apartment was very clean but stink of male urine. I pulled out her last two kittens one sadly passing a week later. She couldn't find help when she only had two. It's amazing how many people are clearly unaware of spay neuter resources, where to go to get help.

We need the city's help with funding high volume, free or low cost spay/neuter clinics. The volunteers are already doing the leg work we just desperately need more resources. I implore you to take the guidance offered and implement clinics such as BBAWC and Flatbush Cats have done.

I help spay/neuter at minimum 100 cats a year and it's a no win situation. I've been in the rescue game for 19 years, I am 63 and I am tired. Presently I am taking care of 22 cats every day and I know many many others are struggling to support more numbers than that.

California banned the sale of animals in pet stores, instead only shelter animals can be showcased for adoption thereby helping to clear the shelters. Let NYC follow their lead.

My opinion on carriage horses, total exploitation. I'll never forget one winter morning on my way to work and I see a carriage horse behind a car that was stopped for a red light on the west side. The horse had its head low, it was early in the morning, going out for his day of work in the bitter cold, and it was breathing in the exhaust fumes from the car in front and it broke my heart. Put a stop to it, or at the very least regulate Central Park as the only place where the carriage horses can operate and have the horse owners fund a top notch stable in the park for the carriage horses to be housed. Many of them are housed under the highways or just places scattered about the city, the places smell when you pass them by in the summer it is horrible. End that cruelty.

Thank you for your time.

Linda Telesco

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Lindsay Brents <lindsay.brents@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 11:57 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue Testimony

[REDACTED]

Greetings, NYC Council Members!

My name is Lindsay Brents, and I am a resident of Crown Heights and proud owner of a cat rescued with Animal Care Center of NYC. At the time, they were holding a "clear the shelter" event, and I adopted Connie free-of-charge after seeing her held in the boiler room with a respiratory infection! The shelter was much, much too crowded to prevent the spread of disease.

I was able to cover all of her necessary veterinary care (including spaying) myself, but I know many, many other loving humans are not in my financial position. Therefore, I strongly encourage the city government to provide substantial funding for *high volume* and low-cost spay/neuter services and affordable general veterinary care for all New Yorkers, including rescuers and pet owners. Overpopulation in shelters is a huge problem, and making spay/neuter services more accessible to everyone would show lasting and immediate benefits to human and non-human animal health in this city.

Thank you for your consideration,

--

**Lindsay Brents**

[REDACTED]  
Brooklyn, NY 11216

[REDACTED]  
[lindsay.brents@gmail.com](mailto:lindsay.brents@gmail.com)

she/her

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Lindsey Lanpher <llanpher1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 11:20 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Spay and Neuter

[REDACTED]

Hi there.

I'm a resident of Brooklyn Heights/Dumbo and I vote!

Please make NYC continue to set an example for the rest of the world by allocating funds for high-volume, low cost spay/neuter programs and affordable vet care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

I have two rescues who bring so much joy and reduce so much stress. All families should be able to enjoy that experience, whether or not they're rich. Think about the joy pet ownership brings to children. The emotional support they deliver just by existing. It shouldn't have to be a financial privilege to bring home a pet of your own. If vet care is more accessible, we'll reduce the amount of pets in shelters and improve the lives of families and pets across the boroughs.

It's not just the kind thing to do, it will save sheltering resources by reducing the number of surprise litters that drain shelter funds. Let's make the investment that saves money and future lives. And maintains NYC's reputation as a city to emulate.

Thanks for reading and all you do.

Lindsey Lanpher

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;ll!

After 25 years in the veterinary field, I never dreamt the animals in a sophisticated city would be in this position.

This is a state of emergency.

Animals are being surrendered to city shelters at astounding rates.

We are more humane than this. NYC is more progressive.. and certainly more innovative.

Our present looks like this...

Pet owners breaking down at vet hospitals. Children losing their pets. Experienced veterinary staff members leaving the field due to stress and burnout. Soon there will be no one to care for animals.

**We need hope ---- a NYC INITIATIVE for Animals.**

In particular, the overpopulation of cats can be controlled – we can do this. Through targeted spay and neuter and affordable vet care, we can change the future for NYC families and pets.

I cannot think of a more important HEALTH initiative. This will affect people's emotional and physical health for years to come.

Our future is at stake here---- we urge you to consider the child who has to give up their pet, the older person who has to euthanize their beloved companion- or the simple humanity of helping a cat on the street survive and not suffer.

We have the proven way to resolve this problem- we need your support- and a better future for NY'ers.

lisa alexander

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Lisa Vallez <lisavallez@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:34 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue Testimony - 9/13/2024

[REDACTED]

NY City Council Committee on Health  
State of Animal Rescue  
Testimony - 9/13/2024

To the Committee and City Council:

I have been involved in the New York City cat rescue community for over 30 years. I have seen many changes, setbacks, and advances in how the city and its citizens deal with stray cats. I have worked for vets, and at the spay/neuter mobile and stationary clinics, and volunteered for shelters and rescue groups. My focus the last 15 years has been caring for orphan kittens from just minutes old up to adoptable age at 8 weeks. It's exhausting, round-the-clock work with feedings starting at every hour. As a self-employed freelancer my schedule allows me to take on as many as a dozen kittens at a time in the busy "kitten season." I take in kittens from the ACC, from fellow rescuers, and from the community if they reach out and I have room.

The kittens have been orphaned for different reasons, the mother may have been killed or scared away from her nest by construction or other disruptions, or even taken by well-intentioned or not so well-intentioned humans. We find them tied up in trash bags, inside of car engines, inside the walls of buildings, and sadly we find them dead or close to it with little chance of surviving. The mother cats are sometimes friendly and abandoned, sometimes they're feral. They are on the streets having their kittens for the reasons being brought up by the testimony of so many New Yorkers at this meeting.

Bottle baby kittens, as they're called, are incredibly cute and caring for them is very rewarding but we shouldn't have to do this often heartbreaking work. I dream of a city where easily available, low-cost spaying and neutering ends the cycle and litters of kittens born are their cat parents' last.

Thank you for holding this historic meeting!

Lisa Vallez  
[REDACTED]  
Middle Village, NY  
11379

Email: [lisavallez@gmail.com](mailto:lisavallez@gmail.com)  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Lisa <jing619@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 12:05 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

New York City Council Members.

We urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low cost spay/neuter, and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers & pet parents. Getting cat/dog/pet over-population under control is extremely important to reduce the amount of cats/dogs/pets that end up in overcrowded shelters or on the streets to fend for themselves. Please hear our voice and take action to implement this above requested change.

Thank you in advance !

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Lorraine Lavenita <lorraine.lavenita@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 9:25 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern:

As a lifelong NYC resident, I can tell you from personal experience that adopting and maintaining the welfare of a dog or cat has gotten extremely expensive over the last 10 years.

The takeover of veterinary clinics by private equity has not only priced out the middle class from being able to afford animal care, we have also lost an important relationship with our veterinary doctors. Same as us humans with our own family medical doctors.

Where I once had a great relationship with my vet, I now have to jump from clinic to clinic to try to afford general care for my dog.

I cannot even imagine what this has done to lower income residents of NYC that have had to give up their furry family member and sometimes only companion just because of cost.

It is also very expensive to adopt these days. So many animals are being brought here from China and Texas. The rescues do the best they can but a \$700 adoption fee isn't always feasible for every New Yorker.

One small step NYC can take is to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost, spay/neuter AND affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. Rescue organizations really should not be paying for spay/neuter and a work around could be a loan forgiveness for any participating veterinarian.

I'd also add that a tax credit for New Yorkers who specifically *adopt* their animals would be immensely helpful in reducing the amount of adoptable dogs and cats in shelters.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

--

Lorraine Lavenita

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Luane Mazzella <luanemazzella@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 8:17 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Affordable Spay/Neuter for a Great NYC

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

Imagine, as a child, taking a kitten with an eye infection in from the street. Your mother learns what you did and forces you to leave the kitten in a box in front of a veterinarian's office for a fate unknown.

In this case, I was the child. This situation, while not nearly as traumatic as what some of the world's children are experiencing these days, prompted me to help neighborhood strays the past twenty years and work as a rescue volunteer these last ten years. For me, I couldn't breathe at the thought of helping this most vulnerable creature. But my mother simply couldn't afford the care; we did what we thought was the next best thing.

As a public school teacher, many of my students know I do volunteer work at an animal shelter. They ask for advice about kittens they've saved from the garbage, found in their yards, and have been gifted by friends or relatives. While they're super excited and their parents are willing, their pets never get spayed or neutered, or there is a very long wait until they can prioritize that sort of bill. One of my students, after adopted brother and sister kittens was overrun with 3 litters because her parents just couldn't bear the brunt of spay/neuter with the rest of their expenses as the average private vet bill for a spay is 550\$; for a neutering it's 400\$.

How can singles and families who have extraordinary New York rents, expenses, and other fees to pay afford spay or neutering? How can the Great City of New York deny them the right to add a furry family member simply because the city has decided not to allocate funds for affordable vet care? Post-pandemic, shelters were at 300% capacity because folks could not afford the pets they adopted during the pandemic simply because of the expense of vet care.

It's a proven fact that cats (and dogs) support healthier physical and mental health for their families. How can we deny these animals medical treatment that will balance the stray population and provide them a healthier living? It would only mean a happier & healthier New York — something we'd all benefit from.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Luane Mazzella  
Kittykind Volunteer

My name is Luciano. I live in Fresh Meadows and I've been feeding my local cat colony for the past year, and these past few months I have also been getting into rescue. In the relatively small area I feed, there are a couple dozen cats, and during this kitten season there were at least 15 more born in my colony. Most were placed in the already incredibly strained rescue/shelter system, and 2 sadly passed away. 4 more were very sick when I found them and likely also would have died had I not intervened (one of them had an eye removed, the others were left with their eyes scarred).

My neighborhood is not unique; everywhere in the city you go, you will find stray cats, most not spayed/neutered. These cats will continue to grow in number as they reproduce on the street and as more people dump their pets because they cannot afford to care for them.

The current situation is completely inhumane for everyone involved. The only way out is access to high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary services, for both rescuers and pet owners.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** lguzman@cprov.org  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 11:39 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Cc:** lguzman@cprov.org  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] My Testimony - State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

This is a true quality of life issue. I am a pet parent, pet sitter and advocate for homeless pets.

I do what I can with any resources that I have available to me. I network and use my own funds to save animals. Yet many are still dumped, killed on the street, & treated like rodents.

Please help make this world a better place with much needed funding to make a significant impact on our communities among those who save as well as those who complain about strays!

Peace always,

Lucy Guzman

[REDACTED]  
Queens Village, NY 11429  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Luis Schay <luis.schay@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:47 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Written testimony for Animal Care

[REDACTED]

Dear city council,

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care services for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you!  
Luis Schay  
[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Lura Salm <lss67@cornell.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 12:55 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council,

I have close contacts doing the difficult work of rescuing and caring for the many homeless animals on the streets of New York City. As time goes on, it seems less and less likely that they are able to quickly find foster or permanent homes for the animals despite their incredibly diligent work to nurse them back to health and wellbeing. These volunteers need more support from city resources to care for and sterilize animals so that their populations will decrease and there will be less suffering. I believe that the greatness of our city can be measured by how we treat our most vulnerable, including our animal brethren. I urge the City Council to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Sincerely,

Lura Salm

[REDACTED]

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**From:** luz Gomez <luzgomez255@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:34 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Hello my name is Luz

[REDACTED]

Hello my name is Luz and 3 weeks ago I took my 2 kittens to be sterilized with this foundation and I would like to ask for help for the animals that are in this shelter my phone number is [REDACTED] thank you very much. We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high volumen, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents"

My name is Lynda and I live in the Pelham Gardens area of the Bronx, NY. In 2019 I rescued a calico tabby from the street who, within three weeks of moving in, gave birth to one beautiful gray kitten I immediately fell in love with. Growing up, all my pets were already spayed/neutered at the time of adoption from shelters, so I was shocked when I was told it would cost \$495 to neuter the boy and \$675 for the mom cat's spay surgery. I had to max out my CareCredit card to "fix" my cats so I could keep them.

In summer of 2020, with the entire world in chaos, I was once again chosen by a tuxedo cat who carried her kittens into my backyard. After a lot of tears and phone calls I learned that in my area, I would be best to contact the Humane Society of Westchester. They in turn told me that for a small donation, I could get a voucher to have all three cats spayed and neutered for free at the Feline Veterinary Medical Center of Ardsley, and I would only need to pay for anesthesia. It was far more affordable, but I still needed to raise the funds through the help of friends, all of which have had their own difficulties paying for veterinary care over the years.

Last year, in between jobs and barely scraping by, I was once again blessed with an adorable, purring, friendly tortoiseshell kitten sitting on my porch. Of course she let me bring her in. I would not have been able to keep her without Bronx Community Cats setting up a low-cost spay appointment. All of

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**From:** Lynnm1268 <lynnm1268@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:26 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] low cost spay/neuter testimony

[REDACTED]

Good afternoon,

As a lifetime NY resident , rescuer who has had cats here entire life, I am begging of you to help us.. NY and the 5 boro's are in desperate need of low cost spay/neuter and affordable vet care for all income families. I work 2 jobs and do Tnr and am a cat parent and I still sometimes go without healthy food for myself to help keep the overpopulation of cats on the street controlled, my area alone 11236 Canarsie Bklyn is overwhelmed with little to no help just a few of us private tnr people that do it on our own out of our own pockets.. So many people are dumping unfixed friendly pets on the streets to fend for themselves due to high cost vet care and spay/neuter the kittens are non stop ..we need clinics in every zip code affordable to people and rescues of all incomes . please we urge the city government to allocate funds for more high volume low cost help where are pets, the strays and feral will be treated safely. we all also need recovery centers for tnr cats as part of the big picture . Thank you for hearing us out and I pray you can help us all  
Lynn Marando  
[REDACTED]  
Brooklyn Ny 11236

Lack of support from the Department of Health (DOH) maintains the underfunding, understaffing and overcrowding that New York's Animal Care is known for. Healthy pets are killed. Dogs like sweet Goliath, a good dog with a great behavior rating. I speak today in his memory. Due to a lack of proper care, dogs suffer in small pop-up crates 23 1/2 hours a day and young, bright, frightened and grieving dogs get kennel stress, then are killed. This is NY's failure.

Institute programs to stop pets from entering the shelter system. For instance, the puppy industry leads thousands of abandoned pets to shelter kill rooms. Stopping this influx would include maintaining and enforcing the ban on sales of puppies at pet shops and implementing heavy taxes in the puppy and kitten industries. Animal loving New Yorker's taxes pay for the capture, incarceration and execution of innocent animals, many of whom are lost family pets and full breed dogs, while breeders rake in profits.

As 75% of pets given up are unaltered, spay/neuter programs would pay for themselves quickly by reducing intake.

\*Send veterinarian clinic buses offering free spay and neuter into neighborhoods.

\*Institute feline trap, spay and release (TSR) programs.

\*Hand out "In Case of Emergency Forms" with info about who is to care for pet/s in case of owner incapacitation.

\*Hand out wallet cards stating that a person has pets at home and a phone number of someone who will take charge of their pet should the owner become incapacitated.

\*Institute "ask the trainer" programs to help keep pets from being given up.

\*Promote obedience training, making it "cool" to have a well behaved dog.

\*Offer free obedience training classes around the city to promote knowledgeable dog ownership, well behaved dogs and to help keep dogs from being given up.

\*Institute obedience skills certificates to allow owners to keep a dog in NYCHA housing.

Animal lovers are upset about the suffering and death our poorly run shelter system causes. NYC's animal care does not speak well for New York. We need an overhaul or a new Animal Care Agency to stop this slaughter now.

Lynn Pacifico, Dog Owners Action @m  
lynnpax@juno.com



[REDACTED]

**From:** Info <Info@Macanta.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:12 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony

[REDACTED]

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents

Sincerely,  
Kathryn Keane, Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn

Sincerely,

Macanta

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Maddy S Johnson <maddy.s.johnson@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 6:01 PM  
**To:** Testimony; Park Slope Cats  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee hearing

[REDACTED]

To the Committee and Councilpersons,

Thank you councilpersons Lynn Shchulman, Robert Holden, Justin Brannan, Joann Ariola, Carmen N. De La Rosa, Oswald Feliz, Kristy Marmorato, Julie Menin, and Susan Zhuang for attending the hearing on September 13 on The State of Animal Rescue in New York City

I'm [Maddy SJ](#) (my complete name is in the link to an interview) - a tri-racial multilingual woman who lives in district 39 on President Street, Brooklyn, NY, 11215. I have been rescuing, animals - cats, dogs, birds, squirrels from the time I was a little girl and continue to do so even today, though it has focussed more on cats and dogs in the past 2 decades - whether in NYC or in the several other countries I've lived and worked at - including helping save animals in India, Canada, the UK, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Sudan, Madagascar and several others. I've done so on my own and also with rescue groups and organizations.

I run the newly formed group [Park Slope Cats](#) which was the [cover story](#) of the local community magazine. Prior to that I have volunteered with nonprofits in NYC involved with animal rescue, trn and adoptions and helped one of them expand to a sizable scale. On my own in Brooklyn I've also nursed and raised bottle baby kittens, taken in strays, ferals and abandoned cats and also run the website of a dog rescue nonprofit.

This summer, as an individual rescuer, I also successfully resolved a 40-cat hoarding situation within 2 weeks in Brooklyn, after their 85 y/o human passed away in late June. This was quite a big task under a tight deadline. Rescue groups were maxed out and none had space so I had to do it mostly all by myself, recruiting my partner and a friend, including taking the more urgent cases to the vet on my own. I am grateful to the ACC who helped me on this, and I worked with both their administrative staff and alongside their field operatives to make sure the cats were secured. Of the total, I took in half, the ACC the other half and when the ones at the ACC got into its "At Risk" list, I got a friend who is a New Hope partner to pull the At Risk ones out and I helped those cats find foster homes where they are thriving.

Getting the cats out from the home in itself was a bipartisan effort - the deceased was a Democrat of the LGBTQ community, and the one who after his passing was proactive in getting the cats out and had contacted me to help was his brother - a retired USMC colonel who was Conservative in his political views. He had reached out to several rescues to no avail till I responded back to his call. For the last 3 months I am still caring for and paying for the several I had to take in and find temporary holding spaces for.

But the fact was that a simple spay/neuter of the original two several years back would have prevented this situation.

Just as spay/neuters can prevent New York's current Cat Crisis among the outdoor cat population.

**Those in the rescue world - especially the individual ones like myself, without a big volunteer network have zero funding and have been working without a break, depleting our finances, mental & physical health and running on dry completely exhausted but never giving up.**

Despite insurmountable odds and low sleep, we have kept going: through super storms, the pandemic, tough financial and political times, and personal losses, often at risk to our own safety and well-being. We've to work several hours day and night along with our day jobs - not just hands-on help with the animals which takes up substantial time, but also to post on social media to find fosters or adopters, do adoption checks and vetting, answering emails, but even more than that - get financially depleted to obtain vet care, vaccinations, emergency care and spay/neuter surgery for the animals.

Our work, relationships, mental and physical health have suffered due to a lack of sustainable support from the city.

**No - we're not "crazy" cat ladies. We're ladies who rescue animals due to the compassion in our hearts and are getting driven crazy due to a lack of support.**

Every day I receive innumerable calls and texts to help out dumped, stray, feral, injured animals and step in as an individual rescuer even as over-capacity larger rescue groups and nonprofits don't reply to texts or calls. But the fact is we are all overwhelmed and depleted!

When I worked as a volunteer for other organizations, I met many dedicated selfless fellow rescuers and volunteers. I've also had the experience of directors or founders who were transparent and also those who were not ethical with the use of donations and placed personal ego and gain over the goal to help animals - regardless of their crafted public persona. This is the reason I do it on my own now. However the disingenuous are a minority. The vast majority are honest, caring and completely excavated due to the lack of city-funded support.

And all the more reason for the City to step up to help in an honest transparent way.

We've to work several hours day and night along with our day jobs - I work in architecture and urban planning and I think you should get designers who have hands-on experience with animals when you design the facilities.

**We all know we cannot, *cannot*, adopt/foster our way out of homeless-cat suffering. The ONLY way is dedicated, extensive, compulsory Spay/Neuter and building a support network which can help in funding, educating, solving.**

**The best way to prevent suffering is to stop it at the source.**

Why do we do this? Are we masochists?

No - the real reason is that *throughout the world, the ultimate suffering imparted through human cruelty, apathy and destructive activity is always borne by innocent animals. When you think about it, if there is anything that binds the human species and anything that is omnipresent and timeless, wherever be the race, geography, region of the globe - it is our human species' capacity for cruelty to*

*other humans but even more so, towards animals. At the same time there are those who show remarkable acts of kindness and compassion to help the other non-human inhabitants on the planet.*

*And, I suppose as much of a cynic or realist as I am, to keep going, one has to focus on finding the kind ones, the compassionate ones.*

*In our own way, in the time we have on this planet, we choose compassion and action to help better the lives of as many voiceless innocents as we can.*

*And I'm asking you to take the side of compassion, awareness and action.*

**New York City we can do this!**

**Please institute city funded high volume low cost city wide spay/neuter.**

I'll conclude by saying that even if the human rescuers, pet owners & others may growl, scratch, hiss, piss, get territorial with each other we are all united in one front.

**We want the City to help us all with high volume, high quality low cost to no cost spay/neuter In a functional, honest, efficient way AND equitable way to all, the ones who need it, not just the lobbyists .**

Thank you,

Maddy SJ  
Brooklyn, NYC

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Madelene Gallon <madelenegallon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:05 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animals Rights Requests

[REDACTED]

Dear Councilmen and women,

I am writing to strongly urge the council to allocate funding towards high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care. As a pet owner who had to make the heartbreaking decision to give away my pet because I couldn't afford a routine neutering procedure, I know firsthand the challenges many face in caring for their animals. Accessible, affordable care would help reduce overpopulation, support responsible pet ownership, and prevent unnecessary relinquishment of pets by families who simply can't afford basic medical services. This funding would greatly benefit our community, and I hope you will prioritize this critical need.

Sincerely,  
Madelene Gallon

Testimony of Maggie Shnayerson  
NYC Council Committee on Health  
Friday, September 13, 2024

Good morning or afternoon,

I have been rescuing, vetting and finding adopters for homeless animals in Brooklyn since coming across a friendly injured cat in traffic on my way home from a late shift as an EMT in 2019.

In my Brooklyn neighborhood of Bay Ridge, I assist community members by bringing their owned pets as well as animals they find in their backyards and on local streets, to low-cost spay/neuter clinics throughout the city for affordable and accessible veterinary care.

I help shop owners, folks with limited income or mobility, as well as those who discover cats and kittens living under their porches or windows, and are flummoxed to realize almost no city support exists to help them navigate such a situation. In fact, on more than one occasion, my state senator and city council persons found themselves in precisely that scenario, at their homes and their district offices. Their solution—the only one available even to them—was to request help from me, an unpaid volunteer who does this in her free time in between a job and family obligations.

I do not own a vehicle. I use ride share services like Uber to transport community animals to vet care. I cover those expenses myself, along with the costs of medical bills, equipment, food, medication and more. I also ask friends and neighbors to contribute when they can.

We need high-volume, low-cost or free spay-neuter services and affordable vet care for any rescuer or pet owner who needs it. As a native New Yorker who knows full well what my city is capable of when we set our minds to something, I know this is something we can get done.

Thank you for your time.

New York City Council Committee,

I am a Brooklyn resident writing to voice my support for low-cost spay and neuter services in the city as well as for increased access to affordable veterinary care. I have spent thousands of dollars on veterinary services for my own pets within the last year. Additionally, in the last month, I have worked to rescue 5 cats within Brooklyn and have paid for their veterinary care, food, and transportation. While I am happy to do my part to help animals, it should not fall on ordinary people to solve the animal crisis in New York City. Additionally, it is unrealistic to expect that private individuals are able to solve the animal crisis here in the city when individuals have far less resources than the city.

I hope the City Council will take steps to make affordable pet care available and accessible in order to promote the health and wellbeing of animals.

Sincerely,

Marco Mazzurco

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Margaret Lee <mlee282828@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 1:27 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Margaret Lee - Support of Intro 1018 animal rescue

[REDACTED]

I'm Margaret Lee, a Manhattan animal advocate here to thank the council for Intro 1018 for the rescue of cats and dogs and at the same time, urgently ask you to expand your circle of compassion to other animals under our stewardship.

Many New Yorkers - the latest poll shows 71% - want carriage horses to be rescued from their enslavement and retired to the sanctuaries waiting for them.

Those of us who care deeply about animals have been pleading for a hearing to pass Ryder's Law Intro 967. So as an animal defender, I must put in another plea for them. Their misery MUST end. Passing a Horse Carriage ban will help New Yorkers as well because so many of us find it extremely tormenting to witness the horses' constant, daily suffering. The plight of these long-suffering horses also has global attention. The world has been watching and waiting for us to do the right thing as more vigorously compassionate cities have already done.

Also on the subject of animal rescue, I'm calling for the council to end wet markets in New York. A bill had been introduced in 2020 but got nowhere. In October wet market pop-up tents will once again appear on city streets as part of a ritual torture of chickens related to Kaporos. This should have been stopped long ago!!! Historically it was called to be performed with coins, not chickens, until a certain sect evolved this barbaric variant on the custom, which strangely managed to continue under the guise of 'religion,' which it is not.

At this very moment, millions of chickens are being raised for this torturous ritual with children participating in these cruel & dangerous wet markets, with the cruelty starting even months ahead of the ritual itself. The council can preemptively rescue these chickens & protect the public by banning wet markets. This is an EMERGENCY. It must be done.

Please do the right thing to end this cruelty and as a matter of public health crisis.

As a childless cat lady I have much more to add about cats, pigeons, mourning doves, sparrows & squirrels. I will sum this up quickly by saying NYC needs to step up and provide for our animal residents instead of leaving this massive responsibility to caring individuals such as myself who can't/won't turn a blind eye to their lack of food, water and overall suffering.

At the very least, I would ask for a ban on detergents used on the cleaning of sidewalks. The runoff attracts birds looking for a sip of water...only to be poisoned by the chemicals. This is appalling and entirely unnecessary. Clean water is all that is required to wash down a sidewalk.

Also, investigation needs to be conducted on Humane Society of NY (HSNY) which masquerades as an animal shelter but is actually warehousing animals without releasing them for adoption. As other real adoption centers are struggling, it's a disgrace to see HSNY get away with its fundraising shenanigans...

Thank you, again, for the hearing on the crucial issue of NYC's animal rescue/welfare crisis!!!

Margaret Lee  
NYC

**Margaret McIntyre**  
**596 Henry Street**  
**Brooklyn, New York 11231**  
**(917) 533-5528**  
**mem596@icloud.com**

New York City Council  
Committee on Health

Re: State of Animal Rescue in NYC  
New York City Must Support Stray Animals

Dear Members of the New York City Council:

I submit this letter to you as part of the public hearing on the State of Animal Rescue in NYC, which will take place on Friday, September 13, 2024.

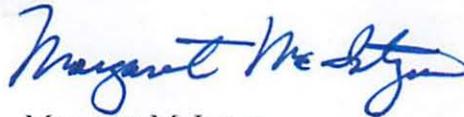
Before a mother cat and her two kittens showed up in my yard several years ago, I believed that the City as well as various rescue groups could help me find homes for any stray animals that might come my way. I was wrong. Once I started to give the cats food, I knew I had to do something, but after calling several shelters and revealing the age of the kittens (about 12 weeks) I learned that there was no alternative for me but to learn how to trap animals myself and find a way to get them to the ASPCA in Glendale, Queens, for spaying, neutering and vaccinations.

It was a challenge, but I got my task done. The cats are still here, they have not reproduced, they do not fight with other cats and they do not bother my neighbors. The trap neuter and return model for caring for stray cats works, but it can only work city-wide if there is enough support for it. In my journey, I have learned of many animal rescuers who volunteer their time and money to rescue stray animals, not just the ones in their yard. They are heroes. But I have also learned from their stories that the need for more help is profound. There are still so many cats (and once again, some dogs) that suffer tremendously because there is not enough support for them. That they go without health care means they reproduce, leading to more animals suffering.

Fortunately, I had the funds to get the cats reduced-rate healthcare, and I can continue to care for them. Many, many people in New York City cannot afford to help stray animals. The proliferation of stray animals troubles many people, as it should. It is absolutely a public health concern that the City must address. With adequate support from the City, volunteers will be able to bring in more people who do not have the money to feed or care for animals themselves, and all of us will be able to reduce the population of stray animals to a manageable level. Our shelters will not be overrun with more animals than they can place for adoption. *Our city will be stronger.*

I urge each and every member of the New York City Council to significantly increase funding for animal rescue work.

Sincerely,



Margaret McIntyre

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Margaret Southwell <margaret@jmreidgroup.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:58 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony - the State of Animal Rescue in NYC

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern

I urge city government officials to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low cost Spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including (especially) rescuers.

Thank you,  
Margaret Southwell  
Brooklyn

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Maria Klimenko <mkklimenko@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:27 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal welfare in New York City

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I am writing on behalf of many pet parents and animal rescue organizations. I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter services and affordable vet care. This is absolutely crucial for the benefits of all New Yorkers, especially the ones in need who cannot afford care for their animals. This should be considered a state of emergency. Seeing animals suffer and die on the streets is appalling and only contributes to the population control crisis. Please help!!!

Thank you,  
Maria Klimenko

Upper East Side, Manhattan

To: New York City Council, State of Animal Rescue Hearing

My name is Mariah Wilson, I am a TNR certified rescuer in Brooklyn, NY who has done stray cat trap-neuter-return and adoption for many years. I have worked with great rescue organizations like the Brooklyn Cat Café / BBAWC and Little Wanderers to help facilitate some of my rescues, and others I have done on my own with spay/neuter spots from ASPCA. I have helped with the spay/neuter of over 15 cats and kittens in a managed colony in Sunset Park, I rescued and rehomed several dumped pets in Cadman Park during the early days of Covid lockdown, and I have arranged for critical medical care for several seriously injured cats who have found their way into my traps.

But I must admit that in recent years, I have taken a big step away from helping the city's stray cats. This is because of the lofty toll it began to enact on me: financially, time-wise, and especially emotionally. It's damn hard work, and there's not enough support for those who do it.

New York City's rescue community is truly filled with everyday heroes. Even in my most active years, I didn't come close to what many rescuers do, and I am always in awe of how much the TNR community accomplishes for the many, many, MANY needy stray cats in our city's outer boroughs. But with limited resources available from the city, the competition for free spay-neuter spots is unnecessarily fierce. And already overburdened rescue groups – as wonderful as they are - can't always help when they are at capacity. Many times, rescuers have to pay for spay/neuter and vet services out of pocket – all while volunteering their time and efforts. It's a very backwards system, and NYC should absolutely be doing more to support these rescuers who are – simply put – doing the city a service for free out of the kindness of their hearts and a dedication to animal welfare.

I'm very happy this hearing is being held, and really hope that it can help galvanize much-needed change in this area.

Sincerely,

Mariah Wilson

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11201

[REDACTED]

I'm a volunteer with KittyKind, an all-volunteer cat adoption group that works with cat rescuers, colony caretakers, and the general public to help get friendly cats adopted. We are one of the only privately run groups that takes cats and kittens directly from the public, as opposed to sending cats through the Animal Care Center.

Prior to the pandemic, KittyKind had a standing appointment with the ASPCA for multiple spay/neuters per month at a discounted rate. This took pressure off rescuers to provide pediatric spay/neuter for adoptable kittens, and freed up money for feral cat populations.

During the pandemic we were informed that we would no longer have our monthly appointment. Now there are hundreds of TNR certified people and rescue groups competing for a small number of spots each month. The appointments are released at 6 am on a specific day, and are taken very quickly.

We are now using private vets for spay/neuter, raising our monthly costs from \$5,000 to \$8,400. Funds that we previously used to get teeth cleanings or advanced medical diagnostics for cats that came to us with medical issues are now being used for spay and neuter. We can't pay for vet visits for as many cats, and we cut back on the number of unneutered kittens we take from rescuers.

Additionally, we are seeing more owner surrender cats as the price of vet care increases, and access to low-cost vet care decreases. Our ability to help people rehome their pets has greatly decreased.

We hope that New York City can find money to fund low-cost spay/neuter and vet care for rescuers, and for lower income New Yorkers.

Marie Mundaca

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Mariel Grosshtern <mgrosshtern@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 11:43 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue in NYC

[REDACTED]

In Regards to the State of Animal Rescue testimony,

My greatest concerns regarding the city's treatment of animals are:

1. The punting of the city's fiscal responsibility for street animal crisis onto nonprofit organizations such as Washington Heights Cat Colony, PuppyKittyNYC, etc.
2. The high cost of veterinary care for these nonprofit animal shelters, which already do so much heavy lifting for the city aside from the veterinary costs.
3. The lack of public animal shelters, which leads to overcrowding and unwarranted euthanasia. For example, 114 animals were euthanized in just May of 2023 at ACC shelters alone.

These are my takeaways after volunteering at three different animal shelters over the past four years. I would happily see my tax money go toward saving animals' lives. It is not only a positive cause, but truly the city's responsibility to care for innocent animals that New York City residents throw out onto the street.

Mariel Grosshtern  
Associate, BDP Impact Real Estate  
M.S. in Real Estate Development, New York University  
Portfolio: [www.marielgrosshtern.com](http://www.marielgrosshtern.com)

Marietta Davis  
[REDACTED]  
New York, NY 10009  
[REDACTED]

I live in the East Village in NYC. During the pandemic I started noticing a lot of outdoor cats in my neighborhood, more than I had ever seen. I saw the lack of low-cost/affordable/free vet care for rescuers and pet owners when I rescued a cat in a church parking lot on Avenue D in the summer of 2020. I took the young male cat to my regular vet and it was \$400 plus for a visit, snap test and vaccines. I was quoted another \$400-500 for neuter. My vet had been bought by a corporation around that time and wouldn't give me a rescue discount at all. I looked for another place to get the cat neutered and started to investigate low-cost vet care. It was hard to find.

The following winter through trapping two cats in my friend's backyard, I met some volunteers at City Critters, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit cat rescue that helps the East Village and Lower East Side. They were also trapping the same group of cats I was. I then became a regular volunteer of City Critters.

In March 2023, it was discovered that there were cats in Jacob Riis Houses, a NYCHA housing complex in the East Village needing rescue. The cats were in crawl spaces and the spaces were about to be sealed up. A local independent rescuer spearheaded the project with City Critters. I helped trap. After finishing up at Riis it became known there were even more cats needing help a few blocks away at Lillian Wald Houses. While at Wald we learned there were even more cats across the street at Baruch Houses. The number of cats/kittens at Baruch was off the charts as the trapping got under way. All feral cats got TNR'd and the friendly cats went to foster homes, cat cafes, adoption cages and eventually got placed for adoption. It seemed so overwhelming then I can't imagine now how it would be now. It would be an absolute nightmare with the cat population multiplied as all the cats weren't spayed or neutered.

After the Wald Houses feral cats were TNR'd, I and a few others started feeding the colony of 13 there on a daily basis. We got permission from the property manager and installed shelters. Since this past February, we have found ten plus dumped cats on or near the Wald grounds while feeding our colony. These cats are all friendly and most likely former pets that were not spayed or neutered. It's been really challenging even though we get support through City Critters. There is a lack of fosters.

It's important to think about these dumped friendly cats and why they were dumped. Not one has been spayed or neutered. For these NYCHA residents there isn't a ASPCA truck anymore like in the past. People can't afford the high prices to spay and neuter and vet their pets.

It's truly heart breaking to see how this city has failed to help our cat population. I really hope that through this hearing the city understands more how devastating this is. It's really boggles my mind how rescuers and rescues are the ones doing most of the work to help the NYC cats. Please, council members consider plan to help find funds to include low-cost vet care services for rescuers and pet owners.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Marietta Davis

My name is Marilyn Galfin, founder of Voices for Shelter Animals. The shelter & homeless animal crisis is out of control. Everyone involved in trying to save these animals is physically and emotionally burnt out and pleading for help from the government. It has even created a mental health crisis. The city needs to declare a state of emergency and implement immediate protocols.

We need an emergency fund to help New Yorkers keep their pets out of the shelter with large scale subsidized s/n , microchipping ,vet care, dog training. education on proper pet guardianship, increase in pet food pantries. Microchipping should be mandatory as long as subsidized. There is need for extensive awareness campaigns such as Educating the public on benefits to spay and neuter pets, encourage adoption and foster over buying and to dispel any myths on shelter animals and bully breeds and a campaign to educate public on their rights as pet owners in housing. Paid to foster programs can be created.

Humane education in public schools mandated by state law needs to be promoted and enforced

There can massive organized spay and neuter sweeps in one neighborhood at a time. TNR lessons should be free to all and held in different languages. Feral colony caretaking should be subsidized. Veterinarians could be given incentives to help be part of this, There needs to be a centralized data base for all people who do TNR

The city needs to crack down on animal abandonment and neglect. There needs to be a media campaign similar to the see something say something campaign and offer rewards for reporting abandonment witnessed. There needs to be a special animal welfare unit created separate from police to investigate, heavily fine and prosecute perpetrators to fullest extent of law and send a message that abandonment and neglect will not be tolerated in this city and legislation is needed to strengthen penalties. At the same time there can be a media awareness campaign alerting public to any resources that may be available at this time to help them keep their pets.

Dogs that are found tied to poles should not be brought to ACC. There needs to be more emergency spaces created so people who become homeless, are victims of domestic violence, people who get arrested or get hospitalized and have no family to care for their pets do not have their pets taken to a kill shelter.

The city needs to enforce a moratorium on back yard breeders. A law needs to be created to ban free pets being given away online and banning pet sales online such as on Craigslist.

The animals in this city have no standing. We need an animal welfare committee on the City Council, something we've been fighting for years, to address animal concerns, focus on shelter reform and animal welfare legislation informed by shelter reform advocates.

The Bureau of Veterinary and pest control services whose name sums up their view on animals, oversee ACC. They continue to fail the shelter animals as well as all the animals of the city. They need to be replaced. We need a Dept of animal welfare. We need an independent entity with creative vision to address animal homelessness and get rid of an outdated status quo shelter system based on killing for population control. This city needs a model that will energize the community, boost positive outcomes, and attract greater support, funding, and active participation. Under DOH watch lack of humane treatment continues today in the brand new ACC Queens shelter recently cited for neglect. This city cannot continue to allow neglect to be tolerated as business as usual. We can't have 30 more years of this as the unheard of 34 year 1.4 billion dollar DOH/ACC contract is in effect. DOH didn't allow for public input or open bidding. And I believe the contract is

being violated by not providing humane care.

This broken system starts with poor leadership. How can it be that in the last few audits by former Scott Stringer where ACC was cited for lack of humane treatment again, that the same executive director is still there.

We need a Department of Animal Welfare with a division dedicated to shelter animals and a division for community cats. It can be a centralized portal for information on animal concerns which the public can call.

The DOH is not even effective in their enforcement of the dog licensing mandate costing millions of dollars in potential revenue that can go into subsidizing spay neuter and life saving services.

Right now dogs are sitting in their cages hardly getting walked or much enrichment. When they start to deteriorate, they are put on risk lists/kill lists, many given terrible bios making them appear dangerous and unadoptable, many labeled rescue only. Most dogs are nothing like the bios once out of the shelter. ACC has to stop the assessments against these dogs. Assessments proven invalid by experts in veterinary behavior. It is not the animals that are the problem, it's the shelter & animals are being senselessly destroyed including 1 year old adoptable puppies

Healthy dogs enter the Manhattan shelter, then get deathly ill from the shelter and then the financial burden is put on rescues to save them or they can be killed. How is this acceptable by this city. We need emergency overflow spaces and to make more use of unused space in the Queens shelter. Why is the Manhattan adoption center not open to the public yet. The DOH needs to get money to ACC- offer decent salaries, come up with creative incentives & get people in the shelter to give the animals the care they deserve. They can't wait for volunteers so they can save money. Someone needs to intervene now and take over if DOH/ACC are not capable of getting these animals help. This is inhumane, not acceptable and should not be tolerated.

ACC needs to immediately implement life saving policies like getting a dedicated phone line for at risk animals. There are no excuses why they still have not done this as we have requested this for years. Dogs that people wanted have lost their lives simply because this was not in place. There is confusion by public what to do to apply for these animals listed on 3rd party sites doing the work that ACC should be doing. And the animals should be listed on ACC's Facebook page.

Unknowingly volunteers have promoted dogs already dead devastating members of public who wanted these dogs and the volunteers (who work tirelessly) simply because ACC does not consistently update the emergency placement outcomes list. This is unacceptable and inexcusable. Members of public have been outraged and want nothing to do with this shelter after this experience.

The website is still confusing which can affect live outcomes for these animals.

There needs to be an oversight committee created and on the floor of the shelters now to oversee operations and care of the animals including monitoring the use of drugs. And this committee can oversee accuracy of data. Workers need to be overseen as some are giving wrong info to members of the public.

The toxic environment and dysfunctional culture of ACC has to end. They need to rethink these non disclosure and silencing rules. There needs to be a 3rd party entity like a resolution committee. Rescues, volunteers, shelter workers need to be able to speak freely to resolve internal conflicts with management without being petrified of retribution.

This animal crisis is complex, and there's much more to discuss. Will the council commit to ongoing dialogue? This cannot end here. We would like to be part of this process. For nearly 30 years, people have fought for change, yet the same inherent problems persist within the shelter system. Many council offices and city agencies have been unresponsive.

Elected officials have a moral obligation to help those who cannot help themselves. This is a matter of humane treatment of animals. The city can—and must—do more for these sentient beings. It is not a question of capability but of will. These sentient beings deserve better. Their lives matter.

Sept 15, 2024

Dear City Council Members,

I had to work Friday otherwise I would have attended the meeting as a part of Voters for Animal Rights to show my support for the rights of animals. I have lived here in Manhattan for over thirty years and have had many pets - dogs, cats, a chinchilla, a horse and a turtle. I bought my horse but all the rest were rescued animals. I now only have one cat and a turtle. The turtle was found on the street in Washington Heights, abandoned, in a cat litter pan. I have had him about 6 years and the vet told me he's about thirty years old.

He was abandoned, and as difficult as it is for me to understand someone doing that, when faced with paying human bills I guess people now have to choose between themselves and their pets as the cost of veterinary care has sky-rocketed beyond the pocketbooks of many New Yorkers.

My cat recently went to the vet to the tune of \$1500.

The first visit she had:

An ultrasound -echocardiogram = \$675.00

Blood Pressure - \$39.10

Amlodipine - \$60.45

Thyroid panel - \$272.00

Urinalysis - \$125.00

Cystocentesis - \$15.75

And that was just the first visit!

I cannot comprehend how - but more importantly *why* - the costs are so high. Is there no way to regulate or monitor this? It seems like vets charge more than human doctors do in many cases, and when you go in, you're given a bill that you don't really have time to understand or absorb but have to pay. My vet demands partial payment even before anything is done. The only reason I am not able to adopt another animal is because of the high cost of vet care - and I know all my friends feel the same. People who otherwise would adopt are not, simply because of the soaring veterinary costs.

And to help mitigate overpopulation in rescue shelters why not make spaying and neutering free? The vet could be reimbursed by the city. It would save New Yorkers and city government money having less animals in shelters.

There are many animals issues that need your attention, and I am thankful you have taken the time to read this. I hope all New Yorkers can count on you creating a better city for all of us - both two legged and four.

Respectfully,  
Marina Barry



NYC 10033

9/13/24

NYC Cat Rescuers Alliance testimony  
NYC City Council Committee on Health

Hello.

My name is Marisa Bowe. I live in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, in Council Member Lincoln Restler's district.

I volunteer as a rescue cat fosterer, currently for Whiskers-A-GoGo Inc., but also for other rescue groups, such as North Brooklyn Cats, in the past.

I've helped save dozens of cats rescued from the street, vacant lots, the waterfront, construction sites, hoarding situations, and the ACC. They've all ended up in wonderful homes with people who adore them.

Feral and stray cats are living on the streets of NYC because of human actions, not their own. Humans who don't spay and neuter their pets, let them go outside, and worst of all, cruelly and callously abandon them, are the cause of the population explosion of outdoor cats trying to fend for themselves. It's not good for the city (or the birds) and it's certainly not good for the cats.

Cat rescue is never-ending, exhausting work, and it's always done by unpaid volunteers - mostly women. Perhaps the latter is the reason why the NYC government doesn't seem to take the outdoor cat issue as seriously as it should: good, old-fashioned sexism.

Does the NYC government really want to align itself with politicians who scorn cat ladies, childless or not?

All of the people I know who do this work spend much if not most of their time on it, as well as a lot of their own money - whatever they're able to earn in the time that's left after the grueling work of feeding, trapping, getting treatment for, fostering, and placing the cats they rescue. (And each and every one of those tasks is infinitely more complicated and challenging than a casual reader would guess.)

The cats always need vet care - testing, immunizations, ID microchips, spay-neuter, and often care for infections and injuries they've picked up on the streets. Vets are not only as expensive as human doctors - there is no affordable insurance to be had for it, so it's far less accessible and affordable than even our broken human health care system.

Needless to say, these overburdened, often overwhelmed volunteers don't have money for vet care. They rely on scattered donations (usually through social media), small adoption fees, and the kind hearts of vets who give discounts to rescue organizations (though the costs are still intimidatingly high, even with discounts).

They have to jump through hoops to get appointments with the ASPCA for affordable spay-neuter, as there are many fewer time slots available than needed. (Here is a good place to mention the ridiculously high salaries of ASPCA executives and the relentless fundraising they do on the sidewalks of NYC. Virtually none of that money trickles down to cat rescuers.)

More support, especially in the form of affordable spay-neuter, is needed. A lot more.

Nobody, least of all cat rescuers, wants to see cats living on the streets, vulnerable to infection, injury, poison, violence, and death via cars, dogs, and sadistic, cat-hating humans. New Yorkers wouldn't stand for mass killing of these cats, nor would that be effective anyway, due to humans continually allowing un-neutered cats outdoors and abandoning their pets.

The only solution is TNR, which already has a force of incredibly hard-working, caring volunteers doing an incredible job addressing this crisis. They need the city to support their work, especially in the form of funding for affordable spay-neuter.

Please help.

Thank you.

Marisa Bowe

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Marissa Halatyn <marissagiglio@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:09 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony: low-cost resources for NYC cats

[REDACTED]

I am a volunteer with KittyKind, a non profit cat rescue organization that relies on volunteers to rescue, foster, and get cats vetted and adopted. Vet care throughout the city is expensive, and the facilities that offer low-cost spay/neuter services are far too few! There are a couple of great places trying to remedy this (Flatbush Cats, BBAWC, Astoria Animal Society) but it's hard to get timely appointments because of the lack of enough places like them. And, none of those resources are in Manhattan.

For our group in particular, the closing of ASPCA Glendale was very hard. We had a set number of spots each month for over a dozen kittens for spay/neuter, so we were able to plan accordingly. Now, for each kitten that needs to be spayed/neutered, it requires several people to make calls, book, and get that one cat transported - and even then, appointments are hard to come by.

There are so many reasons that great cats end up on the street, and if we had more resources, they would be able to be fixed to prevent MORE homeless cats.

Thank you for your time and consideration. There are a lot of good people trying to help as many animals as we can, and there simply aren't even close to enough resources to assist in this.

-Marissa Halatyn

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Marissa Hosein <marissahosein@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 6:31 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Good evening,

We urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. After rescuing cats the biggest hurdle for a regular pet parent like myself was getting my pet spayed/neutered to avoid accidental reproduction and getting the cat to the vet, due to the substantial cost. I thought the ASPCA could help but they are unable due to the amount of animals being brought to them and lack of funding to support the volume. Please make decisions to support organizations such as the ASPCA and countless rescue organizations fighting to help NYC's animals and pet owners.

Thank you,  
Marissa Hosein.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Mariya Dubrovina <mariya.dubrovina@nyu.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:15 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funding for spay/neuter & vet care

[REDACTED]

Dear NYC Council Members,

With deep passion and care for animals, I ask that you please allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable vet care for any NY-ers in need, including pet parents and rescuers.

Thank you for helping us make NYC a safe space for animals.

Mariya

**MARLAINE GLICKSMAN**

New York, NY 10036 | [REDACTED] | marlaine.glicksman@gmail.com

16 September 2024

Re: City Council Hearing on the State of Animal Rescue

Dear New York City Council,

I'm a New York City rescue cat owner and Hell's Kitchen (District 3, Eric Bottcher) resident who works with cat rescuers (Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Cat Rescuers, Rachel Selekmán, and NARN-CB, among others). I was born in New York City and have lived here for decades. Growing up, all my family pets were rescues; all my own cats have been rescues, too.

That said, the current price of veterinary care in New York City extends well beyond most budgets—and certainly my own. As a middle-class parent and Hell's Kitchen resident, owning a pet has devolved from an absolute pleasure to a calculated risk that can sometimes bring as much stress to my life as it does pleasure—simply because the city's pet care is on a par with its rents.

My current cat, a two-year-old rescue from Best Friends, arrived to me with a lingering ear infection and an eye concern. Though she has lived with me since 28 July, she has already had \$1,000 in vet bills. This does not include standard, beneficial supplements like Viralys (\$35) recommended by vets to treat viral infections (eye, respiratory, ear...). I am between jobs, and this bill is a big burden for me. It also means that the cat's now pre-existing eye and ear conditions preclude insurance coverage. I work closely with my vet, Heart of Chelsea (of 18 years—they oversaw the health care of my last two rescue cats) to determine what is absolutely necessary treatment and what is not. It pains me greatly to have to weigh whether I can afford to look after my cat's eyes—or to look after the cat at all!

Prior to Best Friends, I made the ACC Manhattan my first stop. I found a lovely 2-year-old cat that had developed a respiratory infection, as many cats do in shelters, and I had to make the difficult decision to leave her there (after paying for her) to determine whether her health would improve so she could be spayed. (Her health took a turn for the worst.) In addition, the ACC then informed me their spay and neuter service was so backed up that I'd be unable to have the cat spayed for months—and to do so I'd need to take her to the Bronx, leave her, and return to pick her up.

This was too much for me and exceeded both my calculated risk and the time I could take from work to drop off and pick up the cat. And it was so hot, I didn't think taking an ill-feeling cat back and forth on the train—either for respiratory followup or spaying—was beneficial to her health or well-being. I had to make the agonizing decision to cancel the adoption.

Were vet care more affordable in this city, I'd have easily adopted two cats. I'm sure I'm not alone. But my \$1,000 vet bill for my rescue's care isn't atypical and has afforded me some insight into people who are forced to dump their pets.

My own rescue was found in the garbage. She was, again, 2 years old, and not spayed. She has food insecurity (I need to stand next to her while she eats so she feels safe), and appears to have been abused. She didn't know how to play, and seems to have never been picked up. (She doesn't know how to put her feet on the floor when put down.)

I am not alone in my struggle to hold on to my pet. I urge New York City Council to allocate substantial funding for low-cost spay/neuter facilities and vet care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. I would also urge the city to allocate tax-deductible space very nearby ACC facilities so that animals can recuperate quietly and have the chance for life. There are numerous new luxury buildings surrounding the ACC in East Harlem in which ground floor rooms could be converted for recuperating animals.

Many thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marlaine Glicksman

Martha Montgomery



Queens Village, NY 11428

District 23- Linda Lee

I started in 2010 with one stray cat and I see how the problem get increase over the years. The more I do the more cats I help the more I go into debt. I have no life. My health went down the hill and I can't even take care of my own health. I want to be done but I still have problems. All my credit cards are maxed out. I have cats I helped over the years from the street still in my house and is not possible to put them back outside some have no teeth, some with health problems, kidney disease, one is blind, one missing a paw. I kept all the cats with medical cases. I'm overwhelmed physically, mentally, emotionally, everything. I work full time in a school and a part time job too and all my money goes to the cats. And I also get abuse on the street from the people. When I feed the colonies I'm not even safe people come try to attack me for feeding the cats. I need help we need the city to fund spay and neuter and help animal rescue. We need the city to help these cats these are the city cats they're not my cats I just can't see them suffer. But the city needs free and low cost vet care for the people for the animals.

Thank you.

Martha Montgomery

Hello!

I have adopted many dogs and cats since I moved to NYC in 1977. Many times having two or three at the same time. The cost of taking your dog or cat to the vet for a wellness check-up has gone from \$300-\$400 to over \$1000. I have tried to give all of my little ones the best care I could. Some of them developed cancer, diabetes, Cushings disease, thyroid problems, dementia, etc. All needing expensive drug prescriptions....hundreds of dollars a month. My last experience this summer was so upsetting. My cat went in for dental surgery and then died the following day. I spent several thousand dollars with the check-up and test in order to prepare for the surgery. When my cat started bleeding after the surgery I was told to go to an emergency hospital. The next day I went to the Animal Medical Center and the estimate was \$8000. My beautiful cat died that evening. I was devastated. Not only did my cat die, but I had these huge bills to pay. I was not charged \$8000 but I was charged \$5300. I am not in a position to pay any of these exorbitant bills, but I had to. I had to cash in an IRA and empty a savings account. This is not right.

I truly believe that so many people surrender their animals because they cannot afford the vet bills or the cost of food for them especially if they need prescription foods, I hope you have some solutions to these problems. Thank you for listening.

Mary Rodgers

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Matty Motylenski <matthew.motylenski@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 6:00 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue -- Queens, NYC

[REDACTED]

Good evening,

I am writing this message in haste because I recently learned about the testimony regarding the state of animal rescue in the city and the 6 pm deadline. As a Queens resident with three cats, I struggle to afford pet care. Therefore, along with many other pet owners, we worry that every vet bill will put us into debt. We should not have to worry about whether to be in insurmountable debt and the welfare of our feline companions. My friend's mother is a veterinarian on the reservation in Montana, and she meets people where they are at. She is a community provider. In addition, around the holidays, I discovered five stray kittens in my backyard. Queens shelters were overcrowded and every local organization I contacted could not guarantee that they would euthanize the animals. Local pet owners and civilians helped connect me with dog crates because no one would come to my house to trap the kittens. My mother, a senior citizen, managed to corner the kittens. Yet, several places would not take them. Even Long Island places said they had to be local animals. Other volunteers I connected with offered to shelter them. Puppy Kitty NYC graciously offered to take them in, cover neuter costs, and find homes for them. Through donations from my officemates, I could afford their \$100 per kitten charge to take them from hands. As it was Christmas Eve, I appreciated finding something for these kittens before the snowstorm came in. We need support and pet care for our cats and for the strays!

All the best,  
Matty + Whiskey, Riley, and Chloe  
--  
Matty Motylenski  
Bay of Quinte Band of Mohawks  
[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Megan Peabody and I have lived in New York for almost 17 years. I started to get involved in cat rescue about seven years ago while living in Red Hook Brooklyn. Since then I have spent thousands of dollars on food to feed the two cat colonies I care for, as well as veterinary care to spay, neuter and vaccinate any and all cats that have come through my colonies. With the friendly intact cats that have appeared, I have ultimately been able to find foster homes and eventually adopters through a network of other New Yorkers who volunteer their time to rescue and care for the countless cats living on the streets of New York. I have a full-time job, a four year-old child, a dog and a cat and very little time to do much of anything else, but I can't turn a blind eye to this crisis that is going on in our streets every day. I have used my personal funds for everything from dental care, to the building of winter shelters, as well as food and spay neuter appointments for both friendly and feral cats that I have come across. I'm not active on social media and have no way of fundraising to cover these costs. I also support other independent rescuers and have helped with TNR (trap neuter return) projects in Gowanus, Carroll Gardens, Red Hook, and Prospect Heights. I have definitely spent more money on caring, rescuing and trapping cats than I have saved for my child's future education, which I recognize is my choice, but still a sad choice that I feel like I've had to make. I can't unsee the suffering, death, disease of countless cats and kittens being born on the streets and sadly often times dumped on the streets. This is a citywide crisis that is only being combatted by the citizens of New York. This is not right and not fair. I pay my taxes every year to both city and state to help support the city's infrastructure and handle community issues, yet it feels like none of these funds are being allocated to affordable spay/neuter and animal rescue. There is truly a crisis occurring in the streets and many of us independent rescuers are losing hope, going into debt and combatting anxiety and stress trying to tackle this problem. I hope the voices of all the non profit organizations and independent rescuers are being heard and action will be taken by our city to help and support the work we do.

**Testimony, Megan Salerno, NYC Council Committee on Health, Sept 13, 2024**

Good Afternoon. I want to start by thanking the council for the opportunity to testify here today. My name is Megan Salerno, and I am an operations volunteer for Waggytail Rescue, as well as an independent cat rescuer in my neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY.

I'm here today to urge the council to invest in low-cost veterinary services so that we can end the cycle of cats and kittens living and dying on our streets and empower our communities to provide all animals with the care and dignity they deserve without fear of a financial burden.

My time in rescue, like so many other rescuers, has been plagued by the question: "How much?" When a neighbor found a sick and starving kitten behind their apartment, I was forced to work through *how much* of my savings I could part with in order to take the kitten to an emergency vet. When multiple unfixed cats made themselves at home in a local backyard, the homeowner and I nervously calculated *how much* it would cost us to get them spayed and neutered. And when a box of kittens was found dumped in the park with a note that made it clear that their former owners had also been haunted by the question of "*how much*," my rescue and I had to shoulder the time and financial commitment required to give these kittens a chance.

These stories are not unique to my experience. Rescuers and rescue organizations across the city are regularly having to make tough decisions about whether they can afford even the most basic vetting for the animals in their care. With low-cost vet options not being able to meet the needs of those in our city, I fear that the answer to the question "how much" will soon be too much for rescuers like me who just want to make a difference. By investing in high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care, the city council will tackle the animal crisis in our city on multiple fronts; Low- and no-cost vetting will reduce the amount of animals in our city that need homes and care, will make pet ownership possible and sustainable for the people the council represents, and will support rescuers like me in helping as many animals as we can. Thank you.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Meghan McEvoy <meghan.k.mcevoy@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 8:11 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of animal rescue testimony

[REDACTED]

In order to alleviate the shelter crisis, I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume spay/neuter services, as well as routine veterinary care for residents in need including pet parents and rescuers.

Further, priority should be given to rescue organizations that prioritize NYC pets, rather than those that import animals from elsewhere (typically the southern US) or who participate in dog auctions and thereby support irresponsible breeders, ensuring the continued supply by propping up demand (typically breed-specific rescues, and commonly for small-breed or hybrid varieties).

Finally, NYC should curb the deliveries of puppy mill puppies purchased over the internet. A shocking number of ignorant New Yorkers purchase puppies through puppy mill clearinghouse website, which are typically flown here by cargo.

In the wake of the new state legislation banning puppy mill dogs, clearinghouses and other such third parties are proliferating (ex: “Central Park Puppies,” <https://centralparkpuppies.com/>). Such companies are ensuring that puppy mill puppies continue to arrive in NYC every day, and need to be stopped.

Regards,  
Meghan McEvoy, CPDT-KA

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Melchior Maetzener <maetzener@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 10:08 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony Low Cost Spay Neuter & Veterinary Care

[REDACTED]

I implore the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Signed, Melchior Maetzener - [REDACTED] Brooklyn NY 11215

Hello, my name is Melinda, I am a mother of 2 humans 2 dogs and 2 cats, a teachers wife, a colony caretaker/feeder, rescuer, foster, and trapper. Thank you for taking the time to read my testimonial. In 2009 started fostering euthanasia list cats at ACC for Anjellicle Cats until 2017 which is when I moved from Manhattan to the Bronx, since that time have been rescuing, fostering and TNR'ing street cats no-stop. For 3 years I have been feeding and managing a cat colony dubbed the BB Gun Colony because the very first cat I helped there had been shot with pellets shattering his pelvic bone which lead to his humane euthanasia in order to spare him from a life of pain. He was the first of many who suffered cruelty from an evil person who never paid for their crimes. One cat I rescued from there had was missing most of the teeth in the left side of her mouth and damage to her jaw, when she went in for surgery the vet said it was from blunt force trauma that was so precise it had to be deliberate. Meaning someone beat her in the face with something. We really need "Animal Cops" like we had many years ago or some kind of City Agency to look out for our animals.

Also, when I am lucky enough to get an appointment at the ASPCA trucks for rescuers, I often get asked by people passing by the truck how they can get on the truck for spay/neuter services. The same happens when people see us trapping for TNR. I try to keep a list for pet owners so that when there's an extra or last minute spot we squeeze them in since getting the feral cats done takes priority to keep their population under control but some pet owners have been on the list for months on end. The majority of the cats we rescued are unaltered and likely dumped due to bad behaviors that come with being unaltered. The Bronx is in dire need of more spay/neuter services and a low cost vet clinic. There are more animals in need of homes than owners who can afford vet care. Thank you for your time.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Melinda L <bersamadogs@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 10:48 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue in New York City Testimony

[REDACTED]

Chairperson and members of the Health Committee,

Thank you for your attention on September 13th at the Council meeting and for accepting written testimony afterward.

I am a lifelong New Yorker, born in Elmhurst and raised in Astoria, Queens. Professionally, I serve as a business analyst and project manager with an agency of the City of New York. In my personal time, I volunteer with Positive Tails, Mr. Bones & Co., and the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants (IAABC), where I focus on promoting ethical and humane care for animals. My combined experience in process improvement and animal care drives my commitment to helping address the root causes of animal homelessness in our city.

Like many municipalities across the U.S., New York City is grappling with a severe animal homelessness crisis. Our shelters are overcrowded, and while significant investments have been made in physical infrastructure, management and staffing issues are affecting the shelter's overall performance. Shelter overcrowding is often a signal that staff may be undertrained, poorly managed, and struggling to meet national standards of care, compromising both the welfare of animals and operational efficiency.

I propose that the City reallocate a portion of funding currently directed toward ACC (Animal Care Centers) to solutions that address the root causes of animal homelessness. We must invest in ensuring that the leadership of ACC, the Department of Health (DOH), and the Mayor's Animal Welfare Office collaborate with their teams, partner organizations, and city agencies to adhere to national best practices. Frameworks like Socially Conscious Sheltering (<https://scsheltering.org>) and guidance from The Association for Animal Welfare Advancement (<https://theaawa.org>) emphasize responsible intake, capacity management, and collaboration with human services to create a holistic solution to homelessness. We should also look to successful models like the ASPCA's Community Engagement program and the Humane Society's Pets for Life initiative, which tackle overpopulation, economic hardship, and the lack of pet-friendly housing by offering low-cost veterinary care, behavioral support, and public education.

In addition, it is critical that any funding directed toward behavioral support, training, or rescue services be allocated with care. These fields remain unregulated, and the low barrier to entry can lead to organizations or individuals providing subpar care. We must ensure that behavior and training services are delivered by credentialed professionals, such as those certified by organizations like International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants (IAABC - [iaabc.org](http://iaabc.org)) and other reputable trade associations, to protect the well-being of the animals in our care.

Furthermore, establishing a centralized reporting system for veterinarians to track ownership and breeding could help monitor overpopulation more effectively. By focusing on preventative measures, we not only reduce the burden on shelters but also address animal homelessness at its root.

In closing, reallocating funds toward prevention and adopting a long-term strategy will not only improve shelter operations but also ensure that we prevent animals from becoming homeless in the first place. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**Melinda Lee**

Humane Policy Leader Volunteer  
New York Congressional District 2  
bersamadogs@gmail.com  
t 347.455.8514

[humanesociety.org](http://humanesociety.org)



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Melissa Cancel <melcancel@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 8:20 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Pets are members of our families and as we learned during COVID a source of love & companionship for many members of our community. Whether they are designated support animals or not they help members of our community through mental health crises. The allocation of funding to protect them in New York is vital.

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Meredith Powers <mpowers@york.cuny.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 1:23 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] testimony on the state of animal rescue

[REDACTED]

Good afternoon,

I am a longtime Brooklyn resident and taxpayer, and a public employee of the City University of New York. I volunteer at the New York City municipal shelter, Animal Care Center, as well as several mutual aid community groups in my neighborhood. It is safe to say I care deeply about the city, my fellow New Yorkers, and animal welfare, so I tuned into the City Council hearing on Friday, September 13 with great interest.

I am proud of the work that volunteers and staff do to care for animals, but the leadership of the Department of Health, who oversees the ACC, is sadly out of touch with what needs to be done to help alleviate the shelter overpopulation crisis. The DoH specifically said they are not requesting additional animal welfare resources, which is a slap in the face to the underpaid staff and dedicated volunteers who are not able to keep up with the demands of the overburdened shelter -- including the brand new Queens facility, which is already overcrowded and understaffed.

Currently, New York City spends less than 5% of its animal welfare budget on high impact, upstream measures like spay neuter – which has been proven to reduce overpopulation and shelter intake. The City has typically looked the other way and relied on citizens and non-profit organizations to volunteer to solve the public problem of stray and abandoned cats and dogs. This is ridiculous in a city with as much wealth as NYC.

The Department of Health may not understand the problem or the potential solutions, but I am urging city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay and neuter services, as well as affordable veterinary care for any New York in need. Pet owners and rescues should not have to turn away animals because of financial uncertainty.

Thank you.

best,  
Meredith Powers

[REDACTED]

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**From:** lancastermia@verizon.net  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:49 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Cc:** Place For Cats; Voters For Animal Rights; Amanda Beadle  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] September 13th Committee on Health and Stray Animals in NYC

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council September 13th Committee on Health & Animal Care:

I founded **Place For Cats** in 1990 after running the cat department of Animal Adoption League ("AAL") for several years. When the AAL disbanded in December 1989, I did not want the knowledge and experience I'd acquired to go to waste and started my own organization. Fortunately, I was given a 2000 square foot space - a railroad flat at 936 First Avenue, NY, NY 10022 - to utilize as our shelter. It was just one block from my apartment in Midtown East. There were very few private rescues in those years and my group made a difference. We were rescuing and finding homes for about 100 cats a year in that decade.

Place For Cats incorporated in 1992 and we were awarded 501(c)(3) status in 1994. I have remained president and director of Place For Cats since its inception. We have found homes for about 1500 felines in the past 34 years.

We lost the First Avenue location when that building was totally emptied and then warehoused by the owner in the late 90s. Subsequently, we were given a location in Ozone Park, Queens that we used for a number of years but partly due to the distance from my home and the 3-hour round trip daily transportation it was not feasible to maintain. We reverted to a network of foster homes and then were given an extravagant location to use at 35 East 30th Street from 2010 to 2016. Since 2016, Place For Cats once more has functioned via a network of ever-changing foster homes.

It is difficult managing a roster of fosters - the roster constantly changes because of what we called "foster fails" - the "fail" actually a positive outcome which means the foster ends up adopting his/her wards - however it's extremely difficult for the rescue as we then are one man (or woman) down. It's a constant effort to identify prospective new fosters, interview them, train them, supervise them and be forever mindful when interacting with them - frequently on a daily basis - that they have their own lives, schedules and expectations as to lengths of time the feline(s) will be with them, how quickly (or not) the rescue accomplishes an adoption, what to do if a planned vacation or business trip overlaps the continuing stay of the kitty(ies), etc., etc. It's also greatly time-consuming to determine the various food requirements for cats of different needs, place orders, arrange distribution of food and supplies to the various fosters as the orders come to Place For Cats from the vendors. At any given time Place For Cats has about 25 - 35 felines in our care and another 100 - 150 in two colonies in Flushing, Queens that we feed and provide veterinary care to as much as possible.

There's so much work involved in the day to day maintenance and care of the cats that also worrying about whether there will be spay and neuter services often puts us over the top vis-a-vis level of frustration and ability to perform well.

We are a partner with NYC ACC and **all** cats we have pulled from ACC have been spayed or neutered by ACC - either prior to coming to us, if adults, or, if kittens, by taking them back to ACC for the surgery when age-appropriate.

I heard some testify at the September 13th hearing that ACC never provided spay/neuter services of those pulled from there but I absolutely, positively question this!! The reason I question it is because of all the services provided the cats pulled from ACC, the ACC is **most** insistent in their follow-up emails and phone calls to make sure our pulls get spayed & neutered. Either the ACC vet does the surgery before the cat leaves the facility or the ACC sends the animal to ASPCA for the surgery later on (after kitty has completed a course of antibiotics, for example.) **On no occasion did ACC ever deny any of our pulls the option of coming back for spaying or neutering.** We have pulled about 300 animals since we became a partner in 2013. All got spayed or neutered either prior to leaving ACC, or upon our bringing them back for the one day of surgery.

However, Place For Cats is not able to avail ourselves of low-cost spaying & neutering - or at least low-cost **enough** - for the hundreds of animals we help in the Queens cat colonies and those otherwise coming from other rescues. We definitely need a low-cost or free spay-neuter service for those cats as well. For this reason, I appeal to the members of this Committee to please do whatever you can to help us and other rescue groups to have access to free or very low-cost spaying & neutering.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Mia Lancaster

Mia Lancaster  
Director  
Place For Cats, Inc.  
P.O. Box 7384  
FDR Station  
New York, NY 10150  
212 751 2093 voice only (NO text)

[Home - Place for Cats](#)

<https://www.petfinder.com/member/us/ny/new-york/place-for-cats-ny374/>

<https://www.facebook.com/PlaceForCats>

Place For Cats, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit rescue and adoption organization founded in 1990 and incorporated in the State of New York.

Place For Cats is a partner with New Hope, an adjunct organization to NYC's ACC.

Place For Cats also is a partner with Mayor's Alliance for New York City Animals.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Michael Ciarlo <theciarlos@verizon.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 10:07 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funding for Pets

[REDACTED]

I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for a New Yorker in need including rescuers and pet parents. No one should have to give up their pet because they can't afford it. It says a lot about a society with how they treat their animals. Let's make New York a zero kill city!!

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** michele <italianinteriors@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 1:02 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Cc:** MICHELE CHAMOT  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Spay & Neuter Assistance for New Yorkers

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I currently have 2 cats & 1 dog I adopted from small rescue groups of NY. Plus, I short-term foster when our local rescuers become over-crowded, as they currently are. I've also spent many evenings this past summer in Central Park next to where I live, with several individuals who trap all the cats that are getting dumped there, which they then have to pass on to the small local rescue groups. I've lived at 15 West 72nd Street for 2 decades and never ever before experienced this growing problem of cats especially dumped constantly. You can see the postings asking for help daily on the NEXTDOOR app.

It's simply overwhelming and unfair to the residents that in addition to the taxes we pay to enjoy living in the city, there is no financial help and so we must support the private rescue groups, who are overworked and nowhere to turn to.

The health of our community is directly connected to the health of the animals within it. Thank you for considering aiding in this urgent struggle.

Sincerely,  
Michele D. Korolow  
[REDACTED]  
NYC NY 10023  
[REDACTED]

To the September 13<sup>th</sup> Committee on Health:

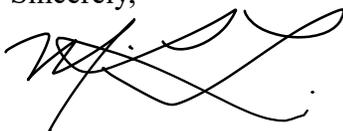
I am writing to you regarding the dire need for significant funding for high volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for New Yorkers. As a veterinarian working in our shelter system here in the city, I can wholeheartedly say we are in a crisis. In my 16 years as a veterinarian, the overpopulation, stagnant adoption rates, unaffordable veterinary care, animal surrenders and stray animal populations have never been worse. Animals are crowding our shelters because of owners unable to provide care for their pets, as well as animal overpopulation. Rescues are inundated because there are too many animals to try to care for, and there isn't enough available low cost spay/neuter or veterinary care for them to be able to help these animals. It's a sad and unacceptable situation in which everyone- both animals and people suffer.

The solution is providing rescues and pet owners the appropriate support to be able to access veterinary medical care. Rescues who are desperately trying to save animals and drive down overpopulation by seeking out affordable spay/neuter facilities cannot find them. The cost of veterinary care is rising, and low-income pet owners, or those who have met unexpected financial difficulty are unable to afford care for their pets, resulting in them relinquishing them to a shelter. The shelters are over capacity themselves, so they are then faced with difficult decisions and challenges including stopping the intake of animals and the potential spread of disease within the shelter due to overcrowding. It's unacceptable that there are groups that are trying desperately to address the animal crisis we face here in New York City, but they cannot get support or the tools they need. Shelters need the appropriate funding to be able to continue to care for the influx of animals they receive. Laws must be enforced to prevent illegal backyard breeders from further adding to this crisis, while thousands of animals sit in shelters every day waiting for a home or potentially face euthanasia.

By providing access to veterinary care through funding high volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for New Yorkers who need it, including rescues, we address both human and animal suffering, improve public health and awareness, and educate the public on the importance of responsible pet ownership, controlling animal population, and the importance of animal welfare, as it affects us all, whether we have pets or not. By shutting down backyard breeders we can further drive down animal overpopulation. Animal welfare is a community issue that we should all be involved in, as animals are an important part of our community here in New York City.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am grateful for this opportunity to voice my opinion through my professional experiences.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle Lugones', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michelle Lugones, DVM

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Michelle Lun <mlunlpz@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:42 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Rescue in NYC

[REDACTED]

To who may it might concern

I am Michelle Lun a current volunteer form Puppy Kitty New York animal rescue. This past Wednesday I had to return my first foster Olympia. A girl kitten who was only 4 weeks. She was going to be dumped on the streets to fend for herself. If I did not take care of her, she would have not lived. This is not the first time animals get abandoned due to families not being able to take care of them. To not go too far my upstairs neighbor is currently looking to rehome her cat because she does not had the means to spay her cat. If we had more affordable spaying service the over population of homeless pets will reduce by 35% in a year. I am calling out to our official leaders to action to provide affordable housing and provide education to our communities regarding spay and neuter.

Thank you,  
**Michelle Lun**  
She/her

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Michelle Zigas <mhzigas@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 11:25 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue Testimony

[REDACTED]

Hello,

Please do the sensible thing and allot significant funding to make affordable veterinary care and high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter surgery for ANY New Yorker in need — rescuers and pet parents alike. Ignoring the problem will not make it go away.

Michelle Zigas  
Brooklyn

[REDACTED]

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**From:** fioreli4 <laherendida2@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 2:37 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue - my testimony

[REDACTED]

Good afternoon,

My name is Milka Fiorella Garrido Lecca. I moved to the US and NYC in 2014. And since 2016 I have been exposed to the animal crisis low income communities, particularly of color, face in terms of keeping their pets safe , providing care and keeping animal (specially cats) populations under control.

I am the granddaughter of a veterinarian; I grew up surrounded by pets that we would take good care of until they died. We mourned them like family. For me, the scene of finding dead cats in NYC was pretty brutal. Pretty soon after I moved I started realizing that being low income it's not just only about limited resources, it's a very real and unequal setup within the city that reminded me more of the place where I come from - poor and corrupted, than what I was looking forward to experience: a bright and exciting NYC.

In 2016 I started working as a Parent Coordinator in a public school in the South Bronx. After walking every day from the subway station on Jennings St to the school building, I started noticing a considerably high number of cats on the streets. Some seemed to belong to bodegas, but other cats, most of them, were just roaming the neighborhood. After some time they would disappear, making me think they were either killed (or adopted- which I doubt it). However, it has happened that some times I have crossed path or be near a dead cat. I got distressed and changed ways to try my best to avoid finding more dead animals. However, no matter how many times I would change ways, I always found cats in bad conditions. Either sick, very skinny, or kittens that wouldn't probably survive the winter. Once I had to pick up a recently killed cat because it was in the middle of the sidewalk and I didn't want other kids to see that awful scene.

My job become impacted by this problem; I started feeling alienated, and disengaged with the neighborhood. I have reached my limits and the problem was becoming a burden for my mental health.

I found it unjust that not only myself but the entire community has to confront this on daily basis in the Bronx. It's not surprising that some kids have become numb about seeing dead cats in NYC. I just don't think it's fair that children are forced to normalize this. Even if you don't like animals, nobody, specially children, are enthusiastic about seeing dead cats.

There is research available for all of you, in case you really want to understand the linkage between animal violence and mental health. The fact that we are not able to provide enough funding to local organizations who work tirelessly to make this city better is a form of violence.

I have adopted a kitten that I found one day on my way to work. I have worked with several rescuers for the 5 years I stayed as a PC in the Bronx to save as many cats we could. I have helped a student who try to save a kitten she found at her doors, but couldn't keep because she couldn't afford taking the cat to the vet, and I couldn't help more because I didn't have enough for me and my cat.

This has to stop for the benefit of all of us. Being the wealthiest city in the world means nothing if we cannot provide for our community. Resources should be allocated in ways that would support all efforts made by rescuers. Spay/neuter funding, affordable veterinary care, support to local rescuers are urgent measures that the state government must address. The well being of animals, their pet owners, the community and children are being impacted; actions must be taken.

Kindly

Fiorella

Fiorella Garrido Lecca  
Belightblu.com



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Minerva Martinez <minervaswords@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:58 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Rescue Testimony

[REDACTED]

Hello-

I'm a Brooklyn resident who volunteers at the Brooklyn Cat Cafe and who also helps support various cat rescuers in the Brooklyn area. What does that support entail? Helping cover for people who are fostering many cats at once so they can go away for a night and not worry about the animals in their care being fed and cared for, donating my time and money to help buy cat food and feed colonies in need, showing love to abandoned cats at the cat cafe and in the streets of our city. The need is endless.

The local rescuers spend a lot of money (out of their own pockets) and time helping abandoned animals by helping them get spayed and neutered, feeding them, taking them to the vet. All these things are costly and they do it out of the kindness in their hearts. They deserve our support, and the animals, many who were once loved and cared for by humans, deserve our compassion and attention when they find themselves abandoned in the streets.

Our animal shelters are full. Our rescuers are exhausted and spread thin. There are constant calls for help fostering and for financial assistance to keep these rescues going. These heroes deserve the resources they need to continue their work. New York City can do better. Please give them the money and resources they are seeking.

The way a culture treats its animals speaks volumes, let's make New York City the next gold standard.

Thank you,  
Minerva Martinez  
[REDACTED]  
Brooklyn, NY 11231  
[REDACTED]



**Letter to NYC City Council**  
**Meeting of NYC Council on Health – Item: Community cats and TNR**

**We must include Home Cats because this is where our Community cats come from!!!**

**Community Cats: a large group of cats that includes, dumped or abandoned adult cats, abandoned kittens (who were cute and funny for a while), injured cats, abused cats, lost cats.**

**Much has been written about the TNR solution. See NYC Health Department information. Over the years, under different Mayors, various efforts were made to implement such program. I believe the Feral Cats Initiative under Mayor Bloomberg was the best. It was eventually split between organizations and disappeared.**

**Below are some suggestions from a TNR and rescuer and caretaker veteran of 20 years:**

- 1. Bring all TNR programs under one organization like the Mayor's Feral Cats Initiative which would provide information and help for TNR in NYC boroughs, which group could provide help in trapping, holding space, etc. We used to have that.**
- 2. Help Pet owners to get their pets neutered, spayed, and vaccinated. This is where our community cats come from. From pet owners!!!!**
- 3. Organize and subsidize with Veterinarians and Animal clinics a week free for pet owners to neuter, spay and vaccinate their animals. Or increase the number of Vets caring for community cats and TNR at reduced prices. I have a great rescue Vet.**
- 4. Most of the existing TNR services (ASPCA, and more) require complicated registration, bookings etc. let's reinstate the Mobile Clinics, first come, first serve, with low cost for the people that cannot afford the unacceptable cost of our Veterinarians.**

5. Over the years, we rescued cats abandoned in apartments in the City. There is a need to make building owners responsible for any abandoned pet on their premises. I really believe the Supers of our buildings should be provided with contact numbers to relocate abandoned pets. I know NYPD is a contact but it is not enough.
6. Public Information campaign about caring for our pets, how, and where to go.....IS A NECESSITY.

**And, please remember that it does not stop after TNR (trap-neuter/spay-release)!**

**RELEASE:** It is not always possible to release the cat where it was found because of dangerous places, constructions, basements, driveway, etc. So, some of us fail the TNR and keep unadoptable cats.

I currently have 10 cats in my large apartment. After years of socializing, four only are adoptable.

**CARING:** Many times the cats will belong to a colony and we provide food, water and shelter. It is expensive. Since 2006, I have spent over \$250,000 doing TNR, Colony care with medical care.

**LOVING:** Our colonies, big and small, are family. We help them survive rough, lonely and dangerous lives. Many of our Community cats live long lives now and many of us are there with them to the end, when they Cross the Bridge. And it is one of the most painful time ever. Worst than picking up their bodies from the streets when they are killed by a car.

**PLEASE, HELP OUR CATS and US...the many individual rescuers!**

Thank you, so much.

Mireille Strunck

Brooklyn, NY

Vstrunck@aol.com

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Miriam Barab <miriambarab@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:23 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue in NYC Hearing - Testimony

[REDACTED]

Hello and thank you for having the State of Animal Rescue hearing.

Over the years I've rescued over 30 animals here in NYC and I support multiple rescue groups. I'm heartbroken over all of the innocent animals who are killed in the pounds just because they were abandoned on the street or surrendered to the ACC by owners who no longer found them convenient; did not want an aging dog; encountered housing restrictions. or could not afford them because of expensive vet costs.

The last time I went to the ACC it was to help a rescue group get a cat out of there. I saw a long line of people with their pets, who were there to surrender them, One pet was a large, older dog who I knew would probably not get adopted. Animals only have a few days before they are euthanized. I was told that every day there were lines to surrender pets.

The shelters are overwhelmed and animals are killed at the ACC after only a short amount of time to get adopted because, they say, there is not enough money. Funding, education and outreach are needed. Free spay-neuter programs need to be available so that people who have limited resources will not have that obstacle to mitigating the problem. We need low cost veterinary care as well. People need to be educated about this problem. Also, I'm seeing signs in my building for puppies for sale by one of the residents who proudly has a name for her business: "Jessicas Poodles". If it's for money, there is no screening process to get the dog a responsible person. It needs to be illegal to breed dogs for money when so many animals need homes.

Thank you,

Miriam Barab

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Molly Caldwell <mollymccaldwell@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 12:47 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting additional testimony for 9/13/2024 Health Committee hearing

[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Molly Caldwell and I testified on Friday. I live in Chris Banks' District 42, East NY. I wanted to add a few points that I wasn't able to make in the allotted time. I work in real estate and am seeing more and more issues with housing and pets.

- There should be a requirement that all landlords or property managers check apartments within 24 hours of a tenant vacating or abandoning an apartment. We are seeing more and more animals left behind in apartments only to be found weeks later when they require medical attention.
- If pets are abandoned, the landlord should have a list of city-contracted rescuers to come manage the animals, not the ASPCA. We end up having landlords dumping animals on the streets or tossing them out windows - ask Becky from Greenpoint cats about this!
- In hoarding cases, landlords, the courts, and the Sheriff's office know well in advance of an eviction. Again, a city-contracted local rescue should be notified and coordinate pick up (not the ASPCA who been ineffective in most cases of this and they don't seem to want to do the work). For example, the case in Queens where an evicted hoarder threw her 60 cats in cages (multiple cats per cage) and drove off in a u-haul. Surely hoarding qualifies under animal cruelty and while I realize we have a delicate issue with mental health here as well and usually other issues under DOH like child welfare it would make sense to have an Animal welfare task force that works in cooperation with the DOH and social services to find solutions for evictions, the elderly, hoarding etc.
- There should be reasonable accommodations for pets in rental buildings and in city shelters.
- Other folks mentioned NYCHA and pitbull breeding (and training them for dog fighting) which also needs addressing.

I have a few comments on the ASPCA . I live two blocks from their East NY outpost. I have numerous neighbors who have zero ability to get appointments there. Their earnings thresholds for care are too low for NYC and a lot of my neighbors are working class/middle class but regular vet care is out of reach and there is no vet in our area. They used to have mobile spay-neuter units in the area and they were effective. Now they are sitting in the parking lot unused. They have had record donations since the pandemic and we'd love for them to have a true community clinic that includes community cats. They have feral cats sitting in their parking lot at times. It is kind of ironic. If they are going to come into low-income communities, they need to serve them and the community cat populations...you don't see cats on every block in Park Slope.. plus that facility is huge - I'm not sure what they do with all their space, but they could help rescuers and community members more. You can't even get them on the phone. Meanwhile their CEO makes over 1M a year...but that's another issue. Thank you again for your attention to this matter and we in the rescue community look forward to working with you to care for NYC's animals.

Sincerely,  
Molly Caldwell  
[REDACTED]  
Brooklyn, NY 11207

Dear Esteemed Council Members,

My name is Sangeda Alin, and I am a team member of LIC Feral Feeders (LICFF), a 501(c)3 nonprofit cat rescue based in Long Island City, Queens. LICFF is located in District 26 and I am a constituent of District 14. I currently serve as a transport volunteer and have been involved in the cat rescue field for 4 months. Our cat-loving group of volunteers at LICFF works on a wide range of initiatives to tackle the NYC cat overpopulation crisis and help the cat guardians of our community. However, we continue to be overwhelmed by rescue requests due to the severe lack of affordable services.

Council Members, I urge you to support city-funded high volume spay and neuter that would come at no to low cost for rescuers and pet owners alike. Cats in our neighborhoods are part of the NYC environment and population, and therefore, our city needs to provide adequate funding to resolve the population crisis and lessen the suffering our feline friends experience living outdoors. Due to the rising cost of pet care and a lack of low cost spay and neuter services, owned pets end up being abandoned or surrendered when their owners can no longer support them.

Since I began volunteering in June, I've witnessed firsthand the overwhelming number of cats in need across the city. This experience has shown me that the current availability of medical care is inadequate to address the growing population of cats. Spaying and neutering are essential procedures that can help these animals lead longer, healthier lives, but the resources for these services are insufficient.

We need your help making spay and neuter appointments more accessible both in quantity and cost. This will allow rescuers and cat owners to provide cats with the medical treatment and procedures they need in a timely manner. I hope you will support your constituents in advocating for the cats and people of our community.

Many thanks,

Sangeda Alin

[REDACTED]

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**From:** natalia popushoi <popushoi@msn.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 14, 2024 4:56 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Cat rescue

[REDACTED]

Hello.

I'm not an official rescue.

I'm just one person who spent last 10 years to TNR cats.

Before pandemic I had access to private vets low cost spay and neuter but after I couldn't find any. One local vet wanted \$700 and the other one \$460, no vaccine.

Thanks to Flatbush vets I was able again TNR cats in my neighborhood, Marin park.

10 cats on my block and several Bodega cats were done, I paid for all of them

Flatbush vets spay, vaccinated and fleas treat cats for \$100 dollars.

Please open more clinics like Flatbush vets so it can help cats.

Natalia popushoi.

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Natalie Madison Dronne, PhD <nataliemadisondronne@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:34 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Allocate funding for community volunteers to support spay and neuter

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I am a community member in Brooklyn with two rescued black cats, Ruby and Scooby, who would not be alive if it were not for the generosity of volunteers in Brooklyn. Ruby is from NYCACC and was found as a kitten with her mom in East New York. Scooby was rescued in Bushwick by Bushwick cats. All cats, dogs, and pets deserve loving homes like they have.

I strongly support and urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. This is because of the overwhelming cat population crisis in our streets, and the overcrowded status of dogs, rabbits, guinea pigs, and other homeless animals in our shelters.

Allocating city funding for spay neuter will help keep pets in homes and lower the shelter population numbers. It is the right thing to do!

So many of the kittens born on the street suffer and die a young death, just ask any cat rescue volunteer, while other homeless cats also barely survive without a home, and many acquire painful injuries due to life on the street. Please help stop their suffering.

Thank you for your time,

--  
Natalie Madison Dronne, PhD  
Brooklyn, NY  
*she/her/hers*

My name is Natasha Lamoreux. I volunteer with Itty Bitty Kitty Bay Ridge, in District 47.

My council member is Justin Brannan.

I want to thank Council Member Brannan for his leadership and dedication to this issue, including providing funding and sponsorship to veterinary and rescue care and outreach.

I started volunteering with Itty Bitty Kitty Bay Ridge, a small, local cat rescue, in November 2020. Since then, my partner and I have fostered over 40 cats and kittens. I am contacted by desperate individuals on a daily basis looking for help for their own pets, for the pets of their loved ones who have died, fallen ill, are facing eviction, or other reasons for which they can no longer care for their beloved pets, as well as from countless people trying to help injured or abandoned cats on the streets of Bay Ridge.

Every time I leave my house or look out my windows, I see community cats. Thanks to the incredible efforts of a very small number of dedicated volunteers working in the area, some of those cats are fixed (ear-tipped), fed, and provided shelter. Many others are not. I personally see many kittens, and am contacted by people about countless others. I hear terrible stories of people who are poisoning cats, or rescuers who are being harassed by homeowners.

There is virtually no support from the city, municipal shelters and nonprofit rescues alike are overwhelmed. The burden is on individual volunteers, small rescues, private vets, and the overstretched, under-resourced municipal services.

Costs for vet care and pet food are skyrocketing and seemingly fewer and fewer landlords are willing to allow people to bring their companion pets into their apartments. The love of a companion pet should not be the reserve of just the wealthy. New York is a world class city, and we can do better.

All of us doing this work desperately want to get these community cats spayed and neutered, but there are simply not enough affordable services. This is a municipal problem, a systemic problem, and a catastrophic problem and we need the city to step in and address it.

Offloading burden of care for private pets and community animals onto privately funded organizations and private residents like us isn't working. There is a fundamental lack of affordable veterinary infrastructure to truly address this problem.

We must make it possible for pet owners to keep and care for their pets instead of abandoning them. Without spay/neuter a cat is not a practical indoor pet - the males spray and the females go into heat. These nuisance behaviors put them at high risk for abandonment and contribute to the diminishing willingness of landlords to allow them into their properties. The number of new, dumped pets in communities is breathtaking—these cats have no skills to survive on the streets, and are scared, suffering, and many will meet a terrible end. New York City must, and can, do more.

As a volunteer with a small community-based rescue, our focus is both on reducing the outdoor cat population, providing care, food, and shelter to community cats, supporting community members with their own cats and finding loving, forever homes for as many cats as we can. Our efforts are a drop in the ocean.

Too many outdoor cats don't have caretakers and their lives can be brutal and short. And too many pet owners are facing heartbreaking decisions—ultimately opting to leave their cats abandoned in buildings, parks, in carriers on the streets, because they have no other options.

Stopping that cycle of misery is my mission.

Even for our rescue, working with a small number of private vets who offer generous discounts, vet costs have skyrocketed and pet friendly, affordable housing is difficult to find, people are abandoning their pets in massive numbers.

These animals are unfixed and often found in bad shape - sick or injured. Every other cat we are alerted to is an abandoned pet that needs urgent medical treatment on top of spay/neuter. And low-cost spay/neuter resources are at an all time low. As a foster, I take on a huge number of expenses to care for cats and kittens until I can find them adoptive homes—and that is taking longer and longer. I spend hundreds of dollars per month on my fosters.

Like all of us, I've had to try to pull on the heartstrings of others to get donations for our rescue on social media. We have all been reduced to begging for scraps. Every rescuer I know has debt because of this work—the generous donations of private citizens can't even begin to cover the expenses we incur. We are digging ourselves into financial holes, and on top of that, too many of us are exhausted and facing mental and physical burnout. I know very few rescuers who do this full time—most are doing this in addition to demanding, full time jobs.

Just imagine the difference more municipal investment would make in our lives, and the lives of these animals.

The health and welfare of community animals is fundamentally the responsibility of the city, not of a small number of independent rescues.

NYC offers no animal welfare services, relying instead on an army of volunteers to solve the public problem of outdoor cats with our own private funds and free time. Hundreds of tiny one-person animal rescue organizations and independent trappers are stepping into this vacuum in city services, to reduce the number of outdoor cats and end the cycle of misery of life on the streets.

This is a systemic problem, and requires a systemic response that is profoundly lacking—there is currently no collaboration between city agencies if a box of kittens is found next to a trash can on garbage collection day. No city leadership period.

We can look to other cities for good practice, for innovation, and to learn from their approaches to create systems that dismantle the crisis and support the community. New York City has everything it needs to become an innovative leader, but we lack the political will to make this happen.

We can start addressing the root causes of the outdoor cat overpopulation by funding and launching a city-funded spay/neuter program that will provide free or discounted spay/neuter appointments to all New Yorkers, so that residents don't have to abandon their pets, and rescuers won't have to be responsible for spaying and neutering every animal in New York City.

As a rescuer and foster, who has personally cared for over 40 cats and kittens in less than 4 years, and who is supporting a rescue that has helped hundreds more, I am begging City Council to demonstrate compassionate leadership to address this crisis.

All of us stand as partners, ready, willing and able to help and support, but it's past time for New York City to pay attention to this problem and meet it head on through inclusive, compassionate legislation, coordination, financing, and infrastructure solutions commensurate to the challenge we are facing.

# **Testimony to Friday, Sep 13 10:00am Committee on Health**

## **Subject: NYC Animal Rescue**

Dear New York City Council,

I write to express my concern surrounding the state of Animal Rescue. Animal welfare in NYC is suffering due to the stray and owned cat crisis, large dog surrenders, stagnant adoption rates, overburdened shelters, unaffordable vet care, and the need for pet-friendly affordable housing.

In NYC, we are in the midst of an overpopulation crisis of cats. Shelters are full and rescuers are saying no to cats in need because of lack of available resources, and this problem is getting worse every year. If you're a pet owner, getting your pet fixed can be an enormous financial burden, or outright unaccessible if you can't afford the thousands of dollars it can cost at private vets to get a pet fixed.

The reality is that NYC is in dire need of city-funded, high-volume, affordable spay/neuter. We need access for regular New Yorkers to help their own pets or the cats on their block.

As a cat owner myself, I can attest firsthand to the struggle that local, community rescue groups are facing. I have adopted two cats rescued from the street by these community groups, and I'm currently fostering a third. These groups are stretched thin, relying entirely independent donors, volunteers, and fosters to continue their operation and save the lives of thousands of stray and/or abandoned animals.

I urge NYC Government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter.

Sincerely,  
Nick Wagner

September 16, 2024

Dear New York City Council,

My name is Nicole, and I have been an independent cat rescue volunteer in Bed Stuy (District 36) for 4 years. I am a part of NARN-CB (Neighborhood Animal Rescue Network – Central Brooklyn) a network for local cat rescuers, but I am not affiliated with any larger organizations.

I first got involved with cat rescue when I discovered a small colony of feral cats living in the adjoining yards behind my apartment. They were hungry and they needed to be spayed and neutered. I never planned to continue rescue efforts beyond helping the little crew in my backyard, but one thing led to another as I started noticing other cats and kittens in my neighborhood that needed human intervention.

For the first few years, I *loved* cat rescue.

I loved improving the quality of life in houseless cats by having them spayed, neutered, and vaccinated.

I loved meeting and collaborating with fellow rescuers in Brooklyn.

I loved working with neighbors and feeling like I was making a difference in my neighborhood and community.

But over time, things started to feel different. More and more, neighbors and community members would ask for help, and the rescue projects I took on got increasingly complex, expensive, and emotionally draining. I spent a large part of my honeymoon putting together a fundraiser for 3 very sick kittens. I've sat for hours making spreadsheets to help track the status of a 20+ cat spay/neuter project a few blocks away. I've spent tens of thousands of dollars on veterinary services, medical supplies, rideshares, food, and equipment. I've gone into work with crippling anxiety because I couldn't stop thinking about certain cats or kittens that I was unable to help. And I've cried my eyes out from feeling like as much as I do, it's not enough.

Sometimes, I do wonder why I've spent so much of my time, money, and energy on cat rescue projects when everything I've accomplished doesn't make the tiniest dent in this massive city-wide problem. While I've spent the last couple of years feeling a deep sense of obligation to say Yes to rescue projects, I've also wondered, "why am I doing this?"

There are simply too many cats in this city that need to be spayed or neutered. There are feral colonies multiplying at rapid rates and producing WAY too many sick kittens for rescuers to intake. There are too many [un-fixed] pets that are surrendered or dumped outside because they've reached sexual maturity and have either started spraying or going into heat. These things are wreaking havoc on the city's shelter system and making it impossible for rescuers to make a real difference.

**Together with the rescue community, I am urging the city to allocate substantial funding for low-cost, high-volume, high-quality spay and neuter services and affordable veterinary care for rescuers and New Yorkers in need.**

This is a solvable problem, and I fully believe that New York can and will do what's right for the city's animals.

Thank you very much for taking the time to listen to the city's rescuers and animal lovers.

Respectfully,

Nicole (Woszczyzna) Fairstone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** nicole.alex64@gmail.com  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:22 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Crisis in NYC

[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Nicole Alex, and I'm a resident of Astoria, Queens (11102). I work with a volunteer cat rescue group, and I have seen firsthand how absolutely devastating the on-going cat crisis is in New York City. Of course many friendly cats are forced to suffer on the street, but more importantly, cats (and other domesticated animals) are dying terrible, painful deaths due to the negligence of the government. We are begging the government to provide adequate funding for low-cost, safe spay-and-neuter and vet care for rescue groups and pet parents.

Thank you so much for your time! I believe we can find a solution for this crisis together.

Best,  
Nicole

HI

My name is Nicole Fell and I take care of and feed daily a colony of cats. It wasn't what I was planning to do when I moved to Bushwick. But when I looked out my back window over the course of a week I saw more than 18 cats come and go, and that was just at my end of the block, I realized no one was taking charge and dealing with the situation. I raised enough money to hire a trapper for 9 cats about a \$1000. It was only a dent but it was the beginning. 4 ½ years later I am maintaining but also struggling to care for the continual uptick that is happening.

I got TnR certified, so I can trap on my own and be able to a low cost clinic. "Low cost" is \$100 a cat minimum. Problem is 3 young ones will all of a sudden appear after being let loose. And that is the real issue and where more attention needs to be paid. There would not be 3 dumped cats if the one that had them were fixed. But I'll come back to that in a minute

One at a time when I can I'll take a cat in but that is not very often these days cause not only the cost but getting a spot can be difficult. I am so thankful for rescue organizations like Bushwick Street Cat, Ocean Hill Cats, and NY Cat Warriors who, when they have an open slot at the ASPCA, have helped me to get cats fixed. But those wells are dry with the increased number of cats they have to contend with. I am not able to register with the ASPCA as it is closed to people like me and they are not taking any more TNR folks on their roster.

When I am able to save an extra \$100, I have to get online search for lowcost clinic that will give me discount rate because being TnR certified, register, fill out forms online, and then see when the appointments are. Its not like there are a ton of them out there and because they are so booked up Im looking at a 4-6 week wait and when you have a pregnant cat that needs immediate fixing that just does not work. Ok now that I've got the appointment, I wait to trap, and transport 5 miles to downtown Brooklyn to be their at 7am, wait inline and then pick up at 7pm. Recovery is 24-48 hrs. oh and by the way I am a small business owner trying to ekk out a living. If you think that the average person is going to go through all of that your crazy let along a low income family of 4.

I am privileged to be able to do all that as well as priveledge to take off work to be here. (I was there but had to leave for work so submitting online.)

After having listened to the testimony from DOH, ACC and The Mayor Animal Alliance testimonies I am flabergasted by the lack of leadership, ownership, oversight and control. We are at a state of crisis and you heard as well as I did right from only a smattering of folks. Think about all that could not be there. To that point just sitting at dinner with a friend the night before the hearing, a small cat just ran right by on the sidewalk and down the street.

A long term strategic plan with a consistent budget to create a solid foundation and pathway to expanding facilities and community access. Honestly a task force needs to be established. Connections not only with city agencies like DOE, DOS, etc but also connecting with grass root organization, pantries, community groups to be able to educate the public and provide information about the importance of fixing their animals and not letting live outside unfixed.

I really think that a shake up needs to occur to deal with this issue. This is a monumental task and requires a monumental effort enlisting not a hand full of people at the top levels but a well organized, engage little army that can direct resources in different directions not only in facilities and mobile units but through DOE, NYCHA, DOS, This is an all hands on deck problem. There is no silver bullet only silver buckshot. And really the City needs to step up and organize the hell out of this creating a

pathway out of this mess.

I'll end with some random thoughts that are outside of the much need increase of facilities and low cost spay and neuter clinics. My apologies I know that there are not enough people but we need help and need to have people in positions to listen and act./

Make a commission and get a board of advisers, Have a task force but not doing is not acceptable and a change needs to happen.

-connectivity and outreach: city agencies, civic groups, youth organizations, food pantries,

-a data base connecting rescues to share information and resources especially helpful for someone like me trying to find assistance to any open slots.

- Voucher system - vets within neighborhoods to accept a monthly amount for low cost spay and neuter. So that low income people don't go through ALL the steps and then have to take their pets 5 miles from where they live cause they WONT. And then when their male cat starts to spray and act crazy let them loose or their

- Mobile spay and neuter clinics,
- a mobile transport to ASPCA low cost clinic. Neighborhood by neighborhood. where people drop off and pick up their pet at a set location within a section. Their pets get taken in and returned for pick up.
- Pet pantries – pet food assistance, but also information on pet care and access to resource information. Maybe this can be at food pantries, community centers,
- Engage the public through outreach. Digital advertisements on the MTA transportation systems
- Elementary schools. Highschool engagement programs.
- Volunteer for credit city schools,
- Foster with elderly centers, prison programs
- Community boards meeting, Sunday services, pet stores, have a QR Code to info page.
- lack of vet techs – Scholarships to CUNY tech programs in exchange for time and service.
- Connect with CityHarvest – run a program along side their mobile unit with info.
- Use NYC Parks and set up information booths, these can be manned by highschool volunteers getting that credit.

Thank you for making it possible to have this conversation.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Nicole mitsch <mitschnicole@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 11:57 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] A solution to the crisis

[REDACTED]

New York City Council,

We urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. This is a crisis that impacts so many neighborhoods in the city and instead of the city helping it is left residents to choose between paying their bills and helping innocent animals. Offering local vets tax breaks or subsidizing services for local rescues or low-income residents in their surrounding communities could put a huge dent in the crisis. These animals deserve more, and this problem won't go away on the backs of caring citizens without the support of effective government.

-Nicole Mitsch  
Long Time Harlem Resident and Cat Rescuer

Nicole Mitsch  
Sent from [Outlook](#)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Nicole Rivard <[nrivard@friendsofanimals.org](mailto:nrivard@friendsofanimals.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:56 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] the State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Hello and thank you for this opportunity.

In 1994, Friends of Animals, which was founded in NY in 1957, introduced a bill to the NYC Council that mandated spay/neuter of cats and dogs. At that time, the cost of the procedures was affordable. But it was not the time for such revolutionary legislation and unfortunately, the bill failed.

Here it is 30 years later; the cost of spay/neuter surgery is astronomical and the overpopulation of cats and dogs has escalated to the extreme. The recent Health Committee hearing focused on asking the City of NY to invest in this issue; to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable vet care for New Yorkers in need. That includes rescuers and pet parents. Preventing births through spaying and neutering is THE proven way to control the serious and heartbreaking overpopulation of cats and dogs.

Once this happens, Friends of Animals would like the opportunity to assist in drafting legislation mandating spay/neuter with a sunset clause—until the situation is under control. But spay/neuter services with accompanying education about why it is necessary must come first.

Two members of the Friends of Animals board reside in NYC—Teresa D'Amico and Elizabeth Forel.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in.

Sincerely,  
Nicole Rivard

Nicole Rivard  
Editor-in-Chief  
Media/Government Relations Manager



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I am a rescuer and cat feeder in the north eastern part of Crown Heights. I am writing to advocate for low cost or free spay and neuter, as well as vet resources in NYC.

This is a very underserved part of Brooklyn to start with, and many families struggle to afford basic necessities, let alone vet care for pets. We see the sad consequences of this every day - dumped friendly pets, too many kittens to count, and cats hurt on the street with no way to help them. We know spaying or neutering your pet not only improves their health and prevents unwanted litters, but also helps to reduce the strain on shelters and rescue organizations. It's a simple yet impactful way to contribute to the well-being of both family pets and the wider community but it is too far out of reach for most families in my area.

We know addressing this issue requires more than individual responsibility—it demands greater access to community resources. Seeing cats on the streets, vulnerable and suffering, or hearing about the high euthanasia rates in shelters is heartbreaking. I am asking, on behalf of myself and my community of cat lovers, feeders, and rescuers, for help with this problem. We will do the work! We just need the funds.

Thank you so very much.

Nicole Tetreault

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY 11213

[REDACTED]

Dear New York City Council Member

I, Nina Bregenzer want to submit my testimony for September 13<sup>th</sup> committee on health regarding the urgent need for a city funded high volume, low cost spay and neuter clinic for cats.

I have lived in Brooklyn, NY for the past ten years. And I have been feeding a colony on Jefferson Avenue for over 6 years now. There is not one block in the whole of Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx where there isn't one or even several feral or dumped friendly unneutered cats trying to survive the dangerous streets and harsh weather conditions. These animals suffer. Every day. Many perish from fights and injuries or hunger. The shelter overpopulation crisis is real. We need a solution that fights this misery at its roots. Cats must be neutered and spayed. People cannot afford to spay their cats. I got quoted \$1200 to have a cat spayed at a Brooklyn veterinary clinic in Crown hights. People can't and don't want to afford that. And it's the animal who is gonna suffer. Please lets stop this crisis. Thank you so much.

Nina Bregenzer

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Nora Maetzener <noramaetzener@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 10:10 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony concerning animal rescue

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

My name is Nora Maetzener and I am a born-and-raised New Yorker. My family and I write concerning the state of animal rescue in the City. We plead and strongly urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. This is of critical importance and the system we have is simply not working, and innocent pets are the ones who pay the price. The situation is shameful - we have enough money to protect and care for our animals. We just need to re-prioritize and re-allocate funds.

Thank you,  
Nora Maetzener  
Matthew Kennelly  
Melchior Maetzener  
Samantha Doonan  
Ruth Maetzener  
Christian Maetzener

My name is Nora Tjossem, and I am a constituent in Crown Heights in councilmember Chi Ossé's district. In 2021 I, like so many others who testified at the hearing, started rescuing cats from behind my building. What started as one cat who we fed out our window ended up being a colony of over 12 cats and eight kittens, all of whom were so sickly that the woman taking care of them was worried they would die if someone didn't take them in. Rescuing cats has opened up a world of possibilities: networking with neighbors, intergenerationally and across cultural boundaries, creating a network of care, and grounding us in our neighborhoods.

I've met so many people on fixed incomes who dedicate themselves to feeding and caring medically for these outdoor cats, taking them in when they can, and trying to find them homes, despite medical bills of their own. This past year, my partner became unemployed and I've found myself saying no to helping these neighbors. We find cats dead in the street or living with wounds and litters of kittens who don't see a year old. Affordable spay, neuter, and vet care is so hard to come by, and we find ourselves competing for meager resources. Right now, I spend more on cats than I do on groceries each month. More than I do on rent some months. The city needs to fill this gap.

My name is Olga lovino I live at [REDACTED] Richmond hill Queens. I have been feeding the stray cats for many years and I took many of them into my home. I paid my own money to fix many cats but they keep coming. Mothers with kittens I find homes for them and take them to the vet and I can't afford to do it no more I am 84 years old. I hope I get some help.

September 15, 2024

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to address these pressing issues concerning the Animal Care Centers (ACC) and the broader system for homeless animals in New York City. I stand before you today to advocate for critical reforms that will improve the welfare of countless animals and ensure that our city's approach to animal care is both humane and effective.

The current system causes grave concern and must be reformed immediately. I propose a comprehensive plan that focuses on both immediate improvements and long-term solutions

First and foremost, I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay and neuter services, along with affordable veterinary care. This funding should be available to all New Yorkers, including rescuers and pet parents facing financial challenges, and must also extend to outreach programs for strays and other animals found on the streets. By making these services widely available, we can significantly reduce the number of animals entering the shelter system and help alleviate the overcrowding crisis.

In addition to improving veterinary care, we must also address the need for better funding and resource allocation within our animal care system. We must increase funding to upgrade facilities, improve cleanliness, and ensure that all animals are provided with adequate space and care. This includes hiring additional staff to provide consistent and high-quality care. Proper monetary allocation will ensure that these improvements are sustainable and effective. This includes increasing salaries for shelter staff and animal care workers to attract and retain dedicated professionals who are essential to the well-being of the animals, as well as ensuring every facility has the most up-to-date sanitation and care strategies. This will not only improve the daily care and management of the animals but will also enhance the capacity to respond to emergencies and manage intake effectively.

To further support our shelters, it is essential to invest in additional facilities or overflow spaces. Renting or acquiring additional space could help manage the population of animals in need and provide temporary housing during peak times, preventing overcrowding and improving overall conditions for the animals.

Another critical measure is to update the emergency outcomes lists in real time. This will improve transparency, enable better coordination among agencies and rescue organizations, and facilitate more effective management of animals in urgent need.

Additionally, I strongly recommend establishing a dedicated phone line for at-risk or priority animals. This would ensure streamlined communication between shelters, rescue groups, and the public, allowing for quicker response times and better handling of animals in critical situations.

We must also reevaluate our current practices surrounding behavior assessments. The practice of using these assessments to create negative bios for animals often results in their being perceived as unadoptable, which diminishes their chances of finding loving homes. Instead, we should focus on positive reinforcement and behavior modification strategies that enhance an animal's adoptability and well-being. There needs to be an influx of positive reinforcement trainers to create a long term plan for each individual animal and to work with them daily.

Finally, it is crucial that we explore alternatives to euthanasia. By investing in additional resources, improving our systems, and seeking innovative solutions, we can work towards a future where euthanasia is not a primary outcome for animals in our care. This includes strengthening partnerships with rescue organizations, increasing adoption efforts, and investing in programs designed to address the root causes of shelter overcrowding. By exploring all possible solutions and working to reduce the reliance on euthanasia, we demonstrate our commitment to humane and compassionate treatment for all animals.

In conclusion, the current conditions at the NYC ACC's, and the system by which animals are evaluated and taken care of, is in dire need of reform. By implementing the above measures—providing comprehensive spay and neuter services, improving funding and compensation, employing additional staff, acquiring overflow spaces, updating emergency outcomes lists, establishing a dedicated phone line, improving behavior assessments, and exploring alternatives to euthanasia—we can transform our animal care system into one that is truly compassionate, effective, and humane. These changes will not only enhance the quality of life for countless pets but will also reflect the values of our community.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Olivia Gjurich

**From:** Osi <b36@gardensnyc.net>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:21 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Cc:** Osi Kaminer; Katherine Diaz  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony at the Hearing to the Committee On Health Friday, September 13, 2024

**Importance:** High

**Cc: Katherine Diaz, CB12M Chair.**

**Dear Chair Schulman and Members of the Committee on Health**

**My name is Osi Kaminer, I'm speaking on behalf of Community Board 12 Manhattan (CB12M). I am a member of the Board, and the Assistant to the Chair of the Health & Environment Committee.**

**The median household income in Washington Heights-Inwood is \$59,898, and 45% of the residents earn less than \$50,000 annually.**

**The average cost of spay/neuter services in New York City is between \$500 - \$1,000 per pet. The three for-profit veterinary clinics in CB12M are financially out of reach for many of our district pet owners. Consequently, many pets in our district never visit a vet for basic wellness vaccination services, let alone a spay-neuter visit.**

**On June 2024, CB12M passed a resolution requesting that the large spay-neuter, wellness, and vaccination providers in the City bring back services that were shut down at the beginning of the Covid pandemic.**

**Community Board 12-Manhattan urges the ASPCA (or any other organization) to open a brick-and-mortar clinic in our district as it has done or is planning to do in all the other boroughs, and that it provides its mobile van services in our district.**

**CB12M also asks that ACC run its Surrender Prevention and Food Bank in our district.**

**Finally, CB12M requests that our State and City representatives allocate funds for wellness and vaccination clinics for pets in our district, including sponsoring the non-profit Toby Project spay and neuter vans.**

**Thank you,**

**Osi Kaminer  
CB12M**

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Pamela Ozga <pamela.ozga1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 11:14 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Rescue Testimony

[REDACTED]

Hi my name is Pamela Ozga and I am a resident of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.

I am writing as a pet parent and concerned animal advocate. There is an influx of stray animals on the street, including many stray cats. I see them all the time. High volume/low-cost neuter and spay services are necessary for overburdened shelters to keep these animals safe and other animals safe as well. It also helps to move many of these animals into foster homes and/or forever homes.

Veterinary costs are also extremely expensive. The city should allocate tax dollars for funding a subsidized program for low-income New Yorkers with pets. Many people end up having to return pets to shelters even though they do not want to because of the high costs of keeping animals fed and healthy.

Thank you.

All the best,  
Pamela

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Pamela Perkins <pamelaperkinsmed@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 4:40 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Dear Members of Council:

As a lifelong resident of New York City and committed pet-parent, I am asking you to provide funding for shelters, for low cost spay and neuter surgery and other essential veterinary care. I have been fortunate to turn to friends for paying for veterinary care, but unfortunately, this is no longer an option. Thank You in advance for supporting this crucial bill. Please call me if you have any questions.

Pamela Perkins, Ph.D.

[REDACTED]  
NY NY 10022

Mobile:  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Paola Ayala <paolalabs@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 12:10 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Please

[REDACTED]

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Paola A

## **Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Health on “The State of Animal Rescue”**

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to speak today on a matter that is deeply personal and of critical importance to many New Yorkers like myself. I urge you to consider allocating substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care for all, including rescuers and pet owners.

My name is Patricia Bautista, and I am a pet owner living paycheck to paycheck. The high cost of veterinary care often feels like an insurmountable barrier. My cat, Lucy, is not just a pet but my sole family. Coming home to her every day is my primary source of comfort and joy.

I have been diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder and major depressive disorder, and Lucy plays a vital role in managing my symptoms. Her companionship and the emotional support she provides are invaluable to my well-being. However, providing her with the necessary veterinary care can be challenging due to financial constraints.

I was fortunate to access the care Lucy needed through Flatbush Vets, who offer low-cost veterinary services. Despite the financial strain, I commuted an hour on the train to ensure Lucy received the care she deserved. This experience highlighted both the critical need for affordable care and the lengths to which pet owners will go to protect their beloved companions.

The financial burden of veterinary care should not be an obstacle to ensuring our pets receive the treatment they need. High-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and accessible veterinary care are essential for the well-being of both animals and their owners. These resources can prevent the suffering of countless animals and ease the financial strain on families who are struggling to provide the best care for their pets.

I strongly urge the Committee to prioritize funding for these critical services. By doing so, you will help countless families like mine, ensuring that our pets, who offer us so much love and support, receive the care they deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Patricia Bautista

[REDACTED]

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**From:** PATRICIA PETRI <petrinc@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 9:36 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Cats/Dogs in need

[REDACTED]

Hi City Council.

My name is Patricia Petri. I live in Astoria Queens, New York. . I am writing to you to please help us fund animals in need. There are many cats in our shelters and we need help with food, spay/neuter as well as all veterinary care. all the food and medical needs for these animals come out of our packets.

Again, please help us save the lives of these angelic animals and help us give them a better life.

thank you ,

Patricia Petri

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Patricia Zhang <patzhang93@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:51 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funds for Animal Care

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

I was thrilled to hear about the opening of NYC's first full-service animal shelter in Ridgewood. I hope this can lead programmatic expansion of animal care services in NYC.

NYC is home to millions, including many animals neighbors. I have been volunteering for an animal shelter for a year now and I just started fostering to help alleviate the need of homes for stray animals. I'm writing to urgent city government to allocate significant funds for high volume, low cost spay and neuter programs. This will help prevent overpopulation among stray animals. People love animals and love seeing them thrive. The presence of struggling strays can be distressing for a community.

Also, I'm advocating for aid in veterinary care for New Yorkers in need. We enrich the lives of our pets and they do the same for us. Animal companions can improve the mental health of a human guardian and pull us out of the darkest corners. Our pets are our family members and like with humans, healthcare costs can accumulate very quickly. I see Internet posts from people having to euthanize their pets due to not being able to afford life-saving veterinary procedures. Having government aid for saving these pets can help so many lives.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.

Best regards,  
Patricia

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Paul Coverdale <paul.coverdale@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:01 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fwd: The Bronx Needs Resources to TNR Cats!

[REDACTED]

As a lifelong resident of the Bronx (and Community Board Member) it's easy to see the level of disadvantage with which we're saddled, while still rising to exemplify the character and determination that is, "The Bronx".

But we can't do it alone (always), we need the resources to be successful. Finally the Bronx has programmed like, The BronxCommunityCats organization, which knows exactly what's needed, besides the money/resources and clinics/facilities to do the Spay and Neuter procedures. They must be timed and coordinated for optimal success.

The cats should not continue to suffer because affordable care and resources are out of reach, while NYC leadership thinks having a "portal to Ireland" or a "digital backboard" should be prioritized.

Kind regards,  
Paul E. Coverdale

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Paul Clarke <pmclarke@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 1:35 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Veterinary Care Funding

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

We urge you, our city government, to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

It makes a huge difference and should be prioritized. Many thanks.

--  
Paul Michael Clarke

Dear Sir/Madam,

The cats and dogs of New York City need our help. Let's get legislation passed to protect the creatures we love. Because here in this great city and everywhere across our great country animals are under our protection. And they are so vulnerable so let's step up the game and get this resolved.

Sincerely

Professor Peggy Cyphers

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Pippa Kok <pvk861@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:22 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue NYC Resident Testimony

[REDACTED]

I am fourth generation NYC native, current resident, graduate student in Animal Shelter Veterinary Medicine, long time shelter volunteer, and an independent animal rescuer. The state of animal rescue in NYC is abysmal, and it seems like all we do is play catch-up. What I've learned in my studies so far, is how much assistance from local government can help us in this fight. We simply can't accomplish it on our own, and NYC's animals, pet parents, and animal welfare workers are all suffering.

High-volume, low-cost spay/neuter is so key to reducing unwanted animal births and overpopulation. We can't generate the funding or infrastructure for this on our own as private citizens and rescue organizations, and are begging our representatives to step up.

Perhaps even more important in the long-run—legislative upstream solutions such as enforceable breeding regulation, animal sale restrictions, pet-friendly housing, and mandatory spay/neuter are also all key upstream solutions that would help to relieve the ceaseless influx of animals and resulting financial burden.

Affordable veterinary care is also key to reducing financial surrenders to our city's shelter systems. This is a financial burden, a capacity issue leading to increased euthanasia, and an emotional burden on your constituents and their beloved animals who they either have to part with, or make other harmful financial sacrifices to keep. Ironically, as someone in the animal welfare field, I know this all too well because I can't afford both my cat's veterinary care and rent on a nonprofit salary. Veterinary care is expensive for everyone, but it's especially expensive in New York.

Rescue has been the burden of private citizens and under-resourced organizations for far too long, but it's not too late to help turn things around.

Additionally, New York City proclaims it's commitment to public health and mental health, so show us this commitment through a commitment to accessible pet ownership, because we have endless research showing the physical and mental benefits of animal companionship.

Lastly, we're not only asking for help ensuring safe futures for these animals, but we're asking for our own futures back. I was lucky enough to attend a prestigious NYC high school, followed by an Ivy League University, and I had dreams of working in the field of technological innovations in pet care. Unfortunately, I don't feel I can spend my time on advancements when animal legislation and programming are still so far in the past, and so in need of help. We're not in these jobs because we love them. None of us loves seeing endless sick animals daily, euthanizing others, and even worse—turning away the ones we simply can't fit. People who love animals wish we could work in any other animal career, but we can't until the basics are covered and the suffering ends. The rate of depression and suicide are so high in animal and veterinary fields. Please know, you would be helping us too.

Some attribute this quote to Gandhi, and others to an unknown author, but its message rings true either way: "the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." I believe the United

States is a great nation, so let's treat our animals like so. NYC has long been a symbol of our country, so let's lead the way.

Thank you,

Philippa Kok  
NYC District 5

Good morning. My name is Porsche Jones. I wanted to take the opportunity to tell you my story as someone who comes from a community that is affected by the lack of affordable resources for pet care.

As a trans woman, having a dog, to me, means having a child. I put everything into caring for them as a mother would. And that means doing everything I can to prolong their lives and ensure they receive all the most important preventative care necessary.

I come from an underserved community that is deprived of the resources needed to take care of our babies like this, and what I've learned is that also means we get further from access to the education that comes from having those resources within reach.

It wasn't until I came across a wonderful organization called Positive Tails that I was able to learn more about what I needed to care for my first baby, Makaveli, and thank god for them, they were able to provide me with the financial support to do so. I was so moved by how much they did for my babies and how much they taught me about his needs, that I immediately wanted to spread the word among my friends about their services. I would share the details of their pop up vet clinics and my friends would arrive with their fur children, and wait sometimes up to five hours to receive the benefits their free clinics offered. Little by little I also see my community changing their attitudes towards animal care, as they begin to see how these services impact their animals and them. But the PROBLEM, is that there's only one Positive Tails, and their resources and time is so limited, and the PROBLEM is that we need hundreds and hundreds of them.

At a time when living and surviving is becoming almost impossible for so many, it is our children that get us through our hardships. Please help us prolong their lives. Please unburden the shelters by investing in more resources for families that want to keep their children. Please help.

My name is Pratikshya Patil. I live in Brooklyn, District 48, represented by Alexa Avilés.

I am a graduate of Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine, class of 2005 and have been working in New York City as a small animal veterinarian ever since. I am fortunate to have acquired many perspectives on veterinary medicine as I am also a Veterinary Medical Officer for the National Veterinary Response Team (part of the National Disaster Medical System), offer pro bono help for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, aided the Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition in Brooklyn start a rescue clinic, work in private practices, private equity practices as well as had shifts at Animal Care Centers.

My daily role is to work with patients (cats and dogs) and their pet parents (clients) with wellness, sick or emergency issues in all boroughs. My focus today will be owned pets.

I humbly ask the City Council to consider my view on the state of veterinary care in New York City and to invest significant and ongoing funds into affordable and accessible care including spaying, neutering and dentals.

The cost of veterinary care has always been a factor in how much I can help my patients. In veterinary school, we are taught to recommend the best medical advice, Option A. If it is not affordable or doesn't align with the pet parent's beliefs, then we offer Options B, C, D, etc. I have seen the cost of care rise especially with the buy outs of private practices coupled with the high debt from veterinary medical school. The American Veterinary Medical Association, in an article from November 2023, cites mean veterinary school debt at \$154,451 but also, 1 in 3 new graduates have debt greater than \$200,000<sup>1</sup>. How is this possible? This information is from the Cornell Veterinary website, pulled on September 12, 2024 shows the total cost of attendance for the 2024-2025 school year at \$71,278 for in-state students and \$93,272 for out-of-state students. The cost for Purdue, my alma mater, is \$45,637 for in-state students and \$70,510 for out-of-state.

Private equity offers a high enough salary to pay off veterinary school loans (they may have undergraduate loans also) and can offer add ons (ie. signing bonuses, moving allowances, student loan repayments and housing allowances) which private practices cannot.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.avma.org/news/veterinary-starting-salaries-rise-2023-educational-debt-holds-steady>

The pandemic changed scheduling of visits, surgeries and placed focus on work life balance. Access to timely care is currently difficult even for pet parents without financial concerns. Appointments which were 20 minutes are now scheduled for 30-45, practices close on time, lunch breaks are honored and late appointments are not tolerated. Walk ins are kept to a minimum so staff are not overwhelmed and doctors can complete their other tasks during the day (calling back pet parents, arranging surgery, advising on end of life care, etc) instead of at the end of their shift. This, unfortunately, equates to less patients seen in a day and more turned away who are in need of emergent care (whether true emergent care or pet parent perceived emergency).

The lack of access to care affects your veterinarians also. There are numerous times I can perform the surgery or procedure my patient needs but the practice will not allow it as it will be after hours, the staff are not allowed to stay, the staff is scheduled so tightly that there aren't enough hands to help or the practice does not offer overnight hospitalization. Then, I cannot find a surgeon, emergency practice or internal medicine to send my patient for care. It's frustrating when the pet parent has chosen Option A but the best I can do is cobble together Option D.

Thank you for listening.

My name is Pratikshya Patil. I live in Brooklyn, District 48, represented by Alexa Avilés.

I am a graduate of Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine, class of 2005 and have been working in New York City as a small animal veterinarian ever since. I am fortunate to have acquired many perspectives on veterinary medicine as I am also a Veterinary Medical Officer for the National Veterinary Response Team (part of the National Disaster Medical System), offer pro bono help for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, aided the Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare Coalition in Brooklyn start a rescue clinic, work in private practices, private equity practices as well as had shifts at Animal Care Centers.

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The cost of veterinary care has always been a factor in how much I can help my patients. In veterinary school, we are taught to recommend the best medical advice, Option A. If it is not affordable or doesn't align with the pet parent's beliefs, then we offer Options B, C, D, etc. I have seen the cost of care rise especially with the buy outs of private practices coupled with the high debt from veterinary medical school. The American Veterinary Medical Association, in an article from November 2023, cites mean veterinary school debt at \$154,451 but also, 1 in 3 new graduates have debt greater than \$200,000<sup>1</sup>. How is this possible? This information is from the Cornell Veterinary website, pulled on September 12, 2024 shows the total cost of attendance for the 2024-2025 school year at \$71,278 for in-state students and \$93,272 for out-of-state students. The cost for Purdue, my alma mater, is \$45,637 for in-state students and \$70,510 for out-of-state.

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Thank you for listening.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Priya Thakur <priyadthakur@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 11:28 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue Testimony

[REDACTED]

Dear NYC Council,

As [Kitten Season](#) shows no sign of slowing down, every year gets more difficult than the last. As a freelance journalist who wrote a couple stories featuring cat rescuers and caregivers, their stories are always the same.

I've spoken and interviewed (so far) at least 10 cat rescuers, fosters, and caregivers. It is physical labor and endless emotional labor without the bare minimum of financial help.

The never ending cycle of kittens being born yet no where to provide affordable care is simply not up to the New York City standards that I, a first-generation American and college graduate, would expect from one of the greatest cities in the country.

I hope the city government can lend their sympathy for humanity and allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for all New Yorkers including these hard working rescuers and pet parents.

From Queens Village-- I, Priya Thakur, hope NYC will do better and take urgent action to humanly solve [the cat crisis in NYC](#). Thank you.

Yours truly,  
Priya Thakur  
CUNY Baruch College '24  
Bachelors of Arts in Journalism

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Rachel Canas <canas.rachel@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:12 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue testimony

[REDACTED]

Hi,

My name is Rachel Cañas and I'm a lifelong resident of the LES/East Village and pet parent. I'm writing to you about our city's failure to address the many issues causing the current pet crisis, which is overwhelming local rescues and harming NYC pets and their owners. I lost my cat of 11 years, Leica, very suddenly last month. In all, the cost of Leica's care for one day of tests to confirm her cancer and put her to sleep were nearly \$6000, more than triple my rent. Being able to get healthcare for pets is a luxury that is unattainable for so many pet owners in nyc because of these astronomical costs that continue to rise as private equity takes over more and more veterinary practices. The ACC is wholly overwhelmed by the current volume of pets which also continues to rise as people are forced to give up their animals because of the cost or because their landlord doesn't allow pets (more and more landlords are refusing pets as rents rise), with some abandoning them outside. We have feral cats in my neighborhood and the wonderful TNR group who feeds and cares for them, City Critters, are seeing more and more friendly, clearly loved cats abandoned where they misguidedly believe the cat will have access to food and therefore survive living outside. Feral cats in nyc have a difficult life and while there are amazing networks of people caring for them (I feed a feral named Alba who moved into my community garden earlier this year), they simply do not have the resources to mitigate this problem on their own especially when it continues to grow exponentially due to the lack of affordable and accessible spay and neuter services. This situation is untenable and NYC needs to invest resources into providing affordable vet services for New Yorkers. I hope that City Council will move quickly to act on the following:

- 1) Allocate significant funding to provide free and low cost spay and neuter clinics for communities around the city, including dramatically expanding the spay and neuter bus program to provide this essential care directly within the communities that need it.
- 2) Surge funding to the ACC to allow them to care for and house more animals—currently NYC spends a less than 10% of what comparable cities like LA spends for animals in their care.
- 3) Partner with and provide funding for current working TNR/rescue orgs so they can continue to help thousands of feral cats across the city.
- 4) Invest in city run, high volume low cost vet clinics around the city to allow working class New Yorkers to get their pet's vet care without needing to choose between that care and housing or food.

This is an issue that New Yorkers of all political persuasions can agree on and it's the least the pets of NYC deserve. I hope City Council truly listened to the 9hours of testimony on Friday and makes these necessary changes as soon as possible so this crisis can be mitigated.

Thank you so much for holding this hearing, now it is time for City Council to act.

Sincerely,  
Rachel Cañas

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Rachel Frederick <rachelleahfrederick@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 4:08 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of animal rescue testimony

[REDACTED]

Hello, my name is Rachel Frederick and I live in Kings County, Park Slope Brooklyn.

As the proud pet parent of a loving 5 year old rescue dog named Otter, adopted from Muddy Paws Rescue, I'd like to strongly urge city council to allocate substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Dogs and cats enrich our lives, our health and our well being. Many people are forced to make the heartbreaking decision to give up their pet due to financial circumstances (or to not adopt one of the many amazing rescues available). Please help to change this and support our community and pet population by providing funding and access.

Many thanks,  
Rachel

Hello, my name is Rachel Selekman and I've lived in district 36, Chi Osse's district, since 2011, but I've lived in NYC since 1988, which I mention because I was never aware of a feral or stray cat problem in NYC until I moved to Bed-Stuy. I define feral cats as ones that were born outside and are not socialized to humans (they don't want to be pet because they are scared of us, having not been exposed to human touch when they were young). I define stray cats as cats that had been someone's pet but they were abandoned outside, most often because they are not spayed/neutered. Rescuers often refer to stray cats as "dumped friendlies."

**IMAGINE THIS: Every single cat that gets spayed/neutered will have a better life.** Can you imagine as city council people having the power to improve the lives of thousands and thousands of cats by funding free and affordable spay/neuter? This is what rescuers and pet parents are asking for and that is the power that your actions can manifest. And by helping cats, you will also be helping countless NYC residents who own them. Affordable veterinary care is also desperately needed. While spay/neuter may be one and done, like humans, cats also need care over the course of their lives.

Why is spay/neuter so life-changing for cats? The males will stop spraying, which will go incredibly far in keeping people from abandoning their cats outside, and it also cuts down on males getting certain cancers. For cats living outside, not only will the males stop spraying, but they will also stop getting into territorial fights and spreading viruses like FeLV and FIV to other males as well as females and their offspring. For female cats, spaying them will put an end to their heat cycles and the behaviors associated with them and obviously they will never have kittens. They will also never develop pyometra, a deadly uterine infection, and they won't spread viruses like FeLV and FIV to their offspring and their chance of getting mammary cancer and other cancers decreases significantly too.

More about me and my work with cats. I am an independent cat rescuer who is part of NARN-CB (Neighborhood Animal Rescue Network—Central Brooklyn). During the in-person testimony, you heard from some of my fellow NARN-CB members. We are a network of mostly independent cat rescuers, who work together—primarily in Bed-Stuy, Crown Heights, and Ocean Hill—to help more cats than we could individually.

Rescue is comprised of many different moving parts: trapping, transportation, getting equipment, holding/recovery, vet visits, fostering, cleaning, fundraising, admin work. If I had to do all these parts myself, the number of cats I could help would be far smaller than when I work with NARN members to share all these responsibilities. In 2023, NARN members got over 375 cats spayed and neutered, primarily at the rescuer ASPCA in Brooklyn. So far in 2024, we've gotten 264 cats spayed/neutered. Started by Ilene Richman in 2019, NARN is a model of collective action that could be replicated in other neighborhoods. We use Slack to communicate, and in addition to helping more cats, we support each other in many ways, including emotional support, because we see terrible things (sick, injured, abused, and dead cats) and this work is emotionally taxing and stressful and expensive, with the lives of kittens and cats, literally, in our hands.

My involvement in rescue includes trapping and getting feral cats spayed/neutered and vaccinated; rescuing kittens that were born outside; rescuing dumped pets—cats that were people’s pets until they were abandoned outside; getting bodega cats spayed/neutered; helping community members get their cats spayed/neutered; and managing the care of feral cat colonies, including one at Weeksville Heritage Center in Crown Heights. Over the years, I have worked with many community members who are *desperate* for help with the outdoor cats they feed, as well as with cats they own.

### **The increase in people dumping their pets is off the charts!**

Ask any rescuer about the dumped pets they are rescuing and they will tell you it consumes more of their rescue time than ever, particularly since Covid, and it takes them away from being able to get the outdoor cat population spayed/neutered. You should read how many Nextdoor.com posts I see written by people who either need to rehome their pet (at least they aren’t just dumping them outside) or have a friendly cat that’s shown up in their front or back yard.

I have rescued dumped pets off the roof of a NYCHA building in Bed-Stuy, from the grounds of Weeksville Heritage Center, and of course many, many backyards and sidewalks. Once I was notified of a pair of cats left in a box on the sidewalk on Bainbridge Street, not far from where I live—one was female and pregnant and the other a male, no doubt “dad.” They were probably brother and sister too, and it was clear why they were dumped. The owner didn’t want kittens. And then there was the litter of 6 kittens dumped in a schoolyard near me. The list goes on and on. Put yourself in the shoes of these poor cats. One day you are living inside, being provided with food and shelter, and the next day you are put outside to fend for yourself. Many of these cats are literally frozen in fear, unable to move. We have to trap them, because they are so scared we can’t get near them without them running away. What these poor cats go through is horrific—and unnecessary—if pet owners had access to free or affordable spay/neuter and veterinary care.

When we rescue dumped pets, we have absolutely no information on the cat—nothing on their personality, health, nada. Ninety-nine out of one hundred times, they are not spayed/neutered, so of course we have to get them spayed/neutered as soon as possible, but we also need to get them snap tested, which tests for 2 communicable viruses, FeLV and FIV, that cats can spread through fighting and sex. We also need to find the cat a foster immediately (no easy feat) and basically we need the foster to let us know what the cat’s personality is like so we can put together their adoption listing, assuming they are healthy enough for adoption.

### **Bodegas with cats are exacerbating the overpopulation crisis by having unspayed and unneutered cats.**

The vast majority of bodega cats that I come across are not spayed or neutered. Bodegas often give away or sell kittens that, of course, have never seen a vet to receive vaccines or get snap tested, and some breed kittens as a way of making money. Find me a rescuer who buys into the whole “cute bodega cat” narrative. New York City needs to regulate working cats. They all need to be spayed/neutered and registered with the city. There should be a mechanism for people to

report unspayed/unneutered working cats, and there needs to be an enforcement program that checks on the health of these working cats. Do they have a litter box? Is it clean? Are they provided with food? Are their vaccines up to date? Unfixed male and female bodega cats that are able to roam get into fights, get pregnant, get killed by cars, and get stolen.

We have no idea what happens to kittens that are sold by bodegas or given away, but given the cost of spay/neuter at private vets, it's highly unlikely that all of them end up getting spayed/neutered. Some kittens are taken away from their mothers when they are too young. The best environment for kittens to grow up well socialized and adjusted is with another feline. There's a reason that rescuers won't adopt out single kittens. One of the top reasons people surrender cats to the shelter is because they bite, a symptom of single-kitten syndrome. Selling or giving away single kittens, no matter who does it or why, is bad for the feline. New York City needs to develop a program to ensure that working cats are spayed/neutered and humanely cared for. Rescuers shouldn't have to spend their precious time dealing with bodega/working cats.

Trapping feral cats to get them spayed/neutered is probably the most straightforward part of rescue. In most cases, it's a collaboration with the people who feed the cats and have reached out for help. It is incredibly rewarding to help caretakers and feeders help their cats. They are often devoted to the them, but until the colony is stabilized (no more unfixed cats), they have to deal with all the spraying, fighting, yowling, kittens, and the increasing size of the colony, which means increased costs. Once feral cats are spayed/neutered their lives are transformed. They are no longer driven by the burdens of mating and reproducing. Once spayed/neutered, they can spend their days grooming, napping, playing, and eating. Some will even become friendly with time and have a future inside.

I want you to know that helping cats in New York City is not something I enjoy—it's a burden emotionally, physically, and financially, but I have not been able to stop seeing the cats and kittens suffering around me so I persist. Even though I don't enjoy doing this work, it is rewarding, because I know that every cat I get spayed/neutered will have a better life. It's that direct. It's that powerful. Now, it's time for the city council to make a serious investment in time and money to help rescuers and pet parents in New York City by funding free and affordable spay/neuter and veterinary care. The state of animal rescue in New York City is dire. Make it better.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Rebecca Besdin <rebecca.besdin@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:23 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

To whom it may concern,

I have benefited from low cost spay and neuter programs for many strays I have rescued or have fostered through rescue programs. I plan to continue spaying and neutering as many cats as I can in an effort to prevent the number of stray cats in NYC from increasing. "Spaying female dogs and cats can prevent uterine infection and reduce the risk of breast cancer. Neutering males can eliminate their risk of testicular cancer and reduce their risk of developing enlarged prostate gland (American Veterinary Medical Association). Additionally, spaying/neutering prevents more kittens being born on the streets where they struggle to survive. Approximately 25% of cats born outside survive to adulthood and adult stray cats have an average life expectancy of two to three years (Humane Society, Feral Cat Project). Even owned cats benefit from this program. Many New Yorkers cannot afford to spay/neuter their pets as the average cost for the procedure is \$300-\$600 whereas affordable programs are a fraction of that cost. Many New Yorkers are struggling to pay rent and buy groceries, and vet care for their beloved pets can be impossible to get. New York City boasts itself as a bastion of inclusivity, social services, and being ahead of the curve in supporting its population. However, without city funding for affordable vet care many New Yorkers feel the need to relinquish their pets to city shelters or even the streets hoping they will have a better shot at life. NYC's neglect of stray animal populations needs to end. City residents are tired of finding dead cats on the streets or having no options if they find an animal in need of rescue. The city shelters are consistently at capacity and animal rescues that run independently and without city funding are in massive debt and unable to handle the estimated 500,000 stray cats in NYC by themselves.

This is a desperate plea for the city to be more involved in the current animal crisis that has been unfolding for years. As someone who has a cat rescued from a life of pain and suffering on the streets of the Bronx I ask the city council to really consider what rescuers are asking for here. We cannot allow any resident to continue to suffer as they have for years.

Thank you for your time.

Rebecca Liptscher  
Little Wanderers NYC volunteer

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Reka Repka <reka.repka19@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:07 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing to express my strong belief that addressing the need for low-cost spay/neuter services and affordable veterinary care is an urgent priority for our city. My experience as a volunteer at AMA Animal Rescue and my work at Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare have provided me with a profound understanding of the challenges faced by both animals and their owners in our community.

At AMA Animal Rescue, I have witnessed firsthand the overwhelming number of animals in need due to the high costs associated with veterinary care. Many families are unable to afford these essential services, resulting in a surplus of animals that often struggle to find homes. This issue is compounded by the financial barriers to spaying and neutering, which can contribute to an overpopulation crisis.

Similarly, my work at Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare has shown me the direct impact of these financial constraints. We frequently encounter animals with preventable health issues that have become severe due to a lack of access to affordable care. Additionally, our adoption rates are negatively affected when potential pet owners are deterred by the high costs associated with bringing a new pet into their home.

The availability of low-cost spay/neuter services and affordable veterinary care is not just a matter of convenience but a critical need that affects the overall well-being of our community. By implementing programs that make these services more accessible, we can help reduce the number of animals in shelters, improve their quality of life, and increase the chances of successful adoptions.

I urge the City Council to consider the profound impact that affordable animal care can have on our community. Investing in these services is an investment in the health and happiness of both our residents and the animals they cherish.

Thank you for your attention to this vital issue.

Sincerely,

Reka Viktoria Repka-Casseus

## Affordable Veterinary Care City-Wide

This written statement is to champion and urge city leaders to get behind providing affordable veterinary care city-wide. Without this option I would not be able to do my individual part to contribute towards the greater efforts of TNR and rescuing friendly cats from the streets of Brooklyn with the support of Bushwick Street Cats and other local organizations. My name is Renee Ortiz and I am the owner of three rescue cats and actively participate in feeding and overseeing 5 - 6 neighborhood cats and trapping the occasional friendly cat for care and adoption. Just this past Friday I trapped and rescued another friendly cat with a collar that no one has come forward to claim. Perhaps it is yet another case of someone not being able to afford veterinary care for their beloved pet and they resorted to abandoning them outside hoping she would make it or someone with more resources would find her and get her proper care. Whatever the case may be, this is a huge, city-wide issue that with the proper funding and resources can be significantly reduced, and hopefully one day completely resolved, that would make an impact to alleviate difficult situations for some pet owners and the unnecessary suffering of innocent creatures who do not have a voice of their own in the matter. We implore you to take action to assist us in finding a solution to this spiraling problem.

Respectfully,

***Renee Ortiz***

Renee Ortiz

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Reyo Schwilk <reyoschwilk@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:28 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Allocating funds towards animal shelter/owner support

[REDACTED]

Shelters in the New York City are at an all-time high, as I'm sure you know. People are unable to afford veterinary care for procedures that are substantially important in limiting pet populations. Overcrowding in shelters is causing a hard fall in the ability for said shelters to care for these animals, who have no where else to go, and no one else to care for them. These people who give hundreds of hours to these animals in need deserve the funding to support these animals. They are sentient, and they can feel your lack of care. You must allocate funding to support a problem a lack of focus and attention has helped cause.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Ria Laccone <rialaccone@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 5:30 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of animal rescue

[REDACTED]

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume / low cost spa neuter. Including veterinary offices, rescues, and pet parents.

Thank you Ria Laccone

Re: September 13th Health Committee Hearing, Animal Welfare

You are doubtless aware of the terrible situation in our city shelters which are overwhelmed with unwanted animals, of which by far the most are pit bulls, for no fault of their own. I adopted my wonderful pit bull from NYACC five years ago, a female who had clearly been abused and used for breeding. There are so many of them that we can't adopt or rescue our way out of this. The backyard breeders need to be decisively shut down. Right now, these innocent animals who didn't ask to be born are suffering with no end in sight. I believe Justin Brannon's Intro 1018 will take steps to address this and I hope it and any legislation needed will move forward.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

106

[REDACTED]

Dear New York City Council Members,

My name is Richelle Robinson and I'm writing you this testimony because Staten Island has a very bad cat colony crisis and we desperately need more low cost veterinary clinics. My mom and I are currently feeding 5 feral cats and one is possibly pregnant and missing an eye. The waitlist for these services are long and on Staten Island we only have one place available. This is unacceptable and we need to increase the funding budget so we can have more access to these services and get these cats off the streets.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Rick Houghton-Larsen <rhl@episode96.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:00 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funding plea for ACC

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

I urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Sincerely,

Rick Larsen

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Rose B. <rosebothomley@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 4:16 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Spay/Neuter funding

[REDACTED]

As a NYC resident and voter, I urge the city government to allocate significant funding and infrastructure for on going high volume, low cost spay and neuter services and veterinary care for all New Yorkers who need it. This includes funding for successful information campaigning in all 5 boroughs to ensure widespread use of the services and an exponentially higher rate of spaying/neutering within the city.

Thank you for your time and energy!

Rose Bothomley  
Brooklyn, NY

September 11, 2024

Hello, my name is Rose Sammut and I am a resident of Whitestone, Queens, District 19. My address is [REDACTED]. Vicki Paladino is my council woman. I am writing this testimony today on behalf of the welfare of the many feral/stray cats that roam the streets of Whitestone. I personally feed and provide shelter for many of these outdoor cats. I have also rescued many and found them safe homes. However, lately as I drive around the neighborhood, I notice more and more outdoor cats and kittens. I usually will stop and leave food, but obviously that is not enough. My cat food bill on average per month is \$200.00, but what stresses me the most is when the weather is bad, cats getting hit by cars and even people abusing them. The need for high volume, low cost spay and neuter services for all rescuers and pet parents provided by veterinarians who agree to offer these services is needed now. It is just heartbreaking to see the cat population on the streets growing and growing. Please consider implementing a program to help the cats. Thank you.



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[REDACTED]

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**From:** Ruby Berney <rubytberney@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:01 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Increased funding for vet care and rescuers

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I am writing to you with the request of creating funding for low-cost spay/neuter clinics and more affordable veterinary care. As a volunteer with the ACC New Hope Partner rabbit rescue Bunnies and Beyond, I see first hand the impact that the lack of low-cost spay/neuter clinics causes. In addition to fostering for the organization, I also run our social media platform. I cannot quantify the quantity of direct messages I receive from New Yorkers looking for places where they can afford vet care and spay/neuter for their rabbits. Every time I have to break the news that there are no exotic specialized veterinary clinics that provide such services. In doing that, I essentially inform pet owners of an early death for their beloved pets due to the well documented evidence of how spaying rabbits reduces chances of cancer and doubles their lifespans. I have coached people through surrendering their animal due to extreme injury that they could not afford to have treated. As a pet owner myself, I cannot imagine the grief and pain as a result of knowing my animal is out there in the world with someone else because I was not able to save them. It is also important to mention how the ability to spay/neuter animals helps rescue communities by getting rid of the possibility for "accidental" litters, contributing to the overpopulation in shelters.

Thank you for taking the time to read this message.

-Ruby Berney

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Ruth Baer <ruthmayabaer@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 10:09 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal care

[REDACTED]

I urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.  
Ruth Baer Maetzener, PhD

[REDACTED]

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**From:** sirkkatoo@aol.com  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:27 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] I have cat colony I feed and I need to fix them!

[REDACTED]

NYC needs badly financial help getting veterinary care and spay and neuter vets for pets as well as feral cat caregivers. We MUST reduce feral cat population by fixing them but when fixing a cat costs hundreds of dollars, it is hard to do that.  
Additionally it's a burden to care for pets without more inexpensive veterinary care in all communities.  
Please let us take care of all animals the way they deserve to be taken care!!!!  
Sincerely  
S. Dobson

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Sakinah A. <abdussamad.sakinah72@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:34 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting Testimony for 9/13/24 Health Cmte Hearing

[REDACTED]

Thank you to Committee Chair Lynn Schulman for scheduling last Friday's hearing and to the Health Committee members who are taking the time to read my testimony.

My name is Sakinah S. Abdus-samad and I have one cat named Brownee. She's 17 years old and I adopted her from Manhattan ACC eleven years ago. When I first brought her home she had zero chronic conditions, but now she has several including surviving mammary (breast) cancer diagnosed in April 2020 to Chronic Kidney Disease diagnosed last year.

Her care is costly including a recent 2 night hospitalization at Blue Pearl concerning issues with her kidney disease. The first night's bill was for \$4, 048.33 and the second night, \$2,354.78. Payment has to be made in advance which I did, so when I appeared to pick up Brownee on 8/24/24 I was surprised that the desk clerk told me I had a balance due. I had to talk to someone in their finance department to clear it up. Had I not done that then I would have paid an additional \$100 for a consult that never happened. This sometimes happens when dealing with veterinary hospitals and clinics. I've read stories where other pet owners just pay it.

I always use my credit card for vet visits and I'm reimbursed through Figo pet insurance. My monthly premium for this year is \$169 with an annual deductible of \$1500. Figo doesn't always want to reimburse my payments in full though that's stated in my policy; the pet insurance company tries to find ways to not pay while increasing their premiums. Also I recently learned that her gender is one of the reasons my premium for her is higher.

Paying for vet care in the beginning wasn't expensive. A lot of visits were paid with my annual federal tax and/or state tax refund, or bonuses from my job. However the jump in prices is scary especially when my credit card is near the max, and I'm not sure whether the pet insurance will reimburse my payment(s) quick enough to return the money to my credit card. If not, I may be unable to pay for the next office visit or worse -- another vet hospital stay in an emergency situation.

Based on my experiences I support low-cost veterinary care for the sake of pets and their owners. Flatbush Vet is an excellent model to copy; the only change needed would be to add those services they're unable to offer such as a 4-way x-ray views, echocardiograms and MRI testing.

Also I'm asking for the City to fund low-cost spay/neuter services. I understand that some people have trouble finding affordable services, but it's more than just about making it accessible and affordable. I think that people should be required to adhere to Local Law 59 regarding free roaming cats needing to be spayed or neutered. When they're not we end up with the situation I've noticed in my community. May of 2018 I moved to

Bensonhurst and I did see a few cats being fed by a few women and sometimes I would see cats during the day. These cats looked healthier than the typical stray cat and I figured it had to do with them being fed by residents, but the increase in the number of community cats is unmistakable. It's heartbreaking and expensive especially if you have your own pet.

I started feeding community cats in my neighborhood in June of 2024 after I noticed an increase in their numbers. I've learned since then that most cat feeders in Bensonhurst are elderly, some are homeowners and some feeders come from other parts of the neighborhood to look after these homeless cats.

Recently I talked to a couple who said they're feeding two groups of community cats; a woman passing by while I was feeding mentioned to me that she's feeding 8 cats and said it's expensive; there's a guy who does TNR and he has 2 jobs, but still shows up on his bike 7 days a week at 8 pm to feed cats. One elderly homeowner I talked to 2 months ago is exhausted by the number of cats that he's been feeding. With low-cost spay/neuter, or free spay/neuter (even better), as proposed by Council member Ariola pet owners will have no reason to not follow Local Law 59. We can reduce the number of community cats and lift the burden of rescuers and residents who can't bear to see the cats go hungry. It's a quality of life issue for New Yorkers and cats.

On 8/29/24, I had a meeting with Council member Zhuang concerning this hearing and she mentioned there's a cat colony being fed by Assemblyman Colton. We didn't discuss whether he has someone help him to spay or neuter these cats, but government officials need to set an example. Feeding cats without not taking the necessary action to reduce their numbers is irresponsible. According to Council member Zhuang, some Bensonhurst residents believe spaying and neutering cats takes something away from them, but the public just needs to be informed about the benefits of spay/neuter -- how it's a cancer preventative, keeps pets in their homes, puts an end to the homeless cat (or dog) population and ends unwanted animals from being euthanized in our shelters. Maybe the City Council can help to educate the public about the benefits of spay/neuter to help end any false beliefs.

The last thing I want to add concerns the animal shelters. I think the shelters would do better and not draw so much criticism from the public if DOHMH is no longer handling oversight. They were silent every time the ACC made public pleas for the public to adopt or foster due to overcrowding and that includes OAW. Concerning DOHMH just go back to the June 2020 audit by former Comptroller Scott Stringer proves that DOH doesn't care about shelter animals, or ACC staff and how hard it is to care for someone. Because ACC cares for animals doesn't mean it's easy to do. Everyone affected by DOHMH's lack of interest deserves much better.

The City Council had several great ideas -- a separate Animal Task Force, free spaying and neutering services, more funding for TNR, and low cost vet care. If I could add anything it would be to suspend dog breeding until the number of dog intakes decreases in the shelters and a hotline to report backyard breeders.

Thank you for your time,

Sakinah S. Abdus-samad  
[REDACTED], Brooklyn 11204

Dear New York City Council,

My name is Samantha Cohen and I am a resident of the state of New York and a pet owner. While my two cats are lucky to have a home, there are hundreds of cats that don't. Affordable spaying and neutering is important to keep the population low and the animals healthy. The high cost of vet care prevents good-hearted New York residents from rescuing some of these animals off the streets. I have helped friends in the past care for some of the strays that live across the city. Please take this hearing seriously and help make our state a safe place for all of its residents-human and animal alike.

Best Regards,

Samantha Cohen

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Samarth Hegde <samhegde2006@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 10:47 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Emergency State of animal rescue

[REDACTED]

I'm Samarth, a New York City resident in East Harlem, zip code 10029.

I have been an active member of the community for several years, and dealt with the substantial increase in abandoned pets in my neighborhood. I volunteer at the Manhattan Animal care center (MACC) and have seen firsthand the dramatic rise in animal surrenders and breeder dumps, and poor conditions due to overcrowding and understaffing. The pets-unfriendly renting market and rise in evictions have compounded such issues, and rescue organizations cannot sustain their work without the city stepping in.

I was heartened to see the New York City Council hold a hearing on the current state of animal rescue; I would like to add testimony urging the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs. I would also like to emphasize how important it is for the city to support affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

We can be a model city for others in this scenario, with long-term planning and funding.

Sincerely,

Samarth Hegde

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Sammy Zhu <sammyzhu@ymail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 10:33 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] LOW COST SPAY NEUTER

[REDACTED]

We urge the city to allocate substantial and necessary funding for affordable veterinary care and low cost spay/neuter services for any New Yorker in need whether it be pet owners or rescuers.

Funding for veterinary care and low cost spay/neuter is necessary in protecting animals and keeping them safe. Funding needs to be put towards educating people about TNR. Without low cost spay/neuter, it can be difficult to help animals get the care they need and deserve. A substantial amount of funding will help lower costs for pet parents and rescuers, in turn saving more lives.

Thank you

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** S S <sandrasparling@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 9:35 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Please help us have pet care

[REDACTED]

Good morning,

I am a single mother of two children and I have had pets my entire life. Sadly, we lost to our beloved cats during the pandemic I have and unable to afford getting pets for my kid because the cost is so astronomical. I honestly should've brought my beloved pets to the doctor sooner but I didn't have the money and it's a real heartbreak for a lot of New Yorkers. We love animals we want to give our children with pets and we can't can barely afford to buy food. Let alone buy food for animals. New York City should have low-cost spay neuter TNR services for all the communities. I see nothing but stray cats and dumped cats everywhere I go. It's absolutely heartbreaking. People are just dumping their cats in the street. It's a mess. This is not a civilized society we have to treat our animals better and treat our people better please I beg you, to find some money for this program you'll help the mental health problem at the same time having animals calms people and makes them happy but the stress of not being able to afford them or help them is just the worst feeling in the entire world

Thank you 🙏

Sandra Sparling  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Sara Beth Haring <sbharing@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 10:50 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Low-Cost Spaying/Neutering is Desperately Needed for NYC Rescues/Pet Parents

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I've been involved in the NYC rescue community for several years. It has been heartbreaking to see the number of kittens/cats on the street skyrocket post-COVID. **I beg that you please allocate city funds to assist with low-cost spaying and neutering of strays and pets for both animal rescuers and pet parents.** There is no way for rescuers to stay on top of controlling the pet population on the streets without government assistance. With vets charging \$600+ dollars for a simple spay/netuer surgery (office visit, blood work, surgery on another day), it makes it impossible for already struggling rescues as well as low-income pet parents to make the responsible decision of spaying/neutering animals. As more animals are being born on the streets, I'm also seeing an increase in tragic stories of animals getting injured by cars and/or sick with more people crying out for resources from already tapped-out rescues to pay for urgent vet care bills. Our streets aren't safe for furry creatures. It's exhausting work and disheartening when you see kittens being born left and right on the streets with no open homes for them to go to. I pray you help these furry New Yorkers by providing much-needed resources just like you are to new people relocating to this area from other parts of the world.

Thank you,  
Sara Beth Haring  
[REDACTED]  
Upper West Side

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Sarah Craver <sbcraver@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:21 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Supporting animal welfare programs in NYC

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council Members:

As a NYC resident and voter, I urge you to support the city's incredibly overburdened municipal shelters and hundreds of animal rescue organizations by helping stem some of the city's longstanding animal (and pet parent) crises. I urge the city to commit substantial, ongoing funding to high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Please support your human and animal citizens in this way. Your commitment and funding allocation would make a substantial difference in helping all of these animal rescuers, shelter staff, pet parents, and the larger NYC community in much-needed ways. Thank you very much for your attention and prompt, lasting action.

Sincerely,

Sarah Craver  
Resident of Manhattan, pet parent, and volunteer with NYCACC and PAWS NY

[REDACTED]

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**From:** sarahe684@gmail.com  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 1:50 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] NYC Council State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Dear Council Members -

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. The animals of NYC are important and need our help.

Thank you,

Sarah Ellmore  
Astoria, Queens (District 22)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Sarah Gompper <sarcieg@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:53 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Please fund animal rescue in our city

[REDACTED]

Hi,

I live in Yorkville and am writing to encourage you to do all you can for NYC rescues, pets, and pet parents. Please fund spay/neuter and veterinary care for New Yorkers in need, including rescuers. It will save lives.

Thank you!  
Sarah Gompper

## Sarah Hauser testimony

Hi everyone, I am really happy to have the opportunity to share with you this morning.

The work I do has involved, over the course of many years, working with therapeutic modalities such as Reiki and TTouch, combined with socialization techniques. I share these modalities in shelter and rescue environments with traumatized animals, animals that have been injured, or are sick, or may have been abused physically and/or emotionally, specializing in fearful and feral cats. These environments range from larger shelters to working with individual rescuers, to working with rescued animals in vet's offices. And I also work with people and their rescued pets in their homes.

This experience has allowed me to see the animal rescue world from a variety of perspectives, and has allowed me to see how the current situation is impacting so many people and animals.

The pandemic started a chain reaction of crises in animal rescue and animal care – a world that was already stressed, overworked, underpaid and overwhelmed:

During this time period, spay and neuter was pretty much put on hold, so the people who have been rescuing animals were not able to do their work in the way they need to – as spay and neuter is a vital part of the equation. And that situation has resulted in a huge increase in the population of animals that need help.

Many people lost their jobs or had to take a decrease in pay or hours and so lots of people have had to surrender their pets as they can no longer care for them.

Many vet offices have closed, or have been taken over by large corporations whose priorities may not be as well oriented as private practices. The remaining vets not run by these corporations are overworked. Prices of veterinary care have risen. And the rising prices and less availability of reasonably-priced veterinary care are impacting the shelters, rescuers and pet guardians.

The whole system is overwhelmed in every way. And so many individual rescuers who I know are working tirelessly, as they always do, now more than ever, and are stretched way past their limits, often paying for everything out of their own pockets. The NYC animal rescue community deserves support and funding to continue the important work that they do.

And we need the NYC government to allocate funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for anyone in need. Help the rescuers to help the animals, and help pet parents to be able to keep their pets. Pets are our family and we want everyone to be able to afford to care for them and keep them in their homes.

Dear Esteemed Council Members,

My name is Sarah Lucas and I am a team member of LIC Feral Feeders (LICFF), a 501(c)3 nonprofit cat rescue based in Long Island City, Queens. LICFF is located in District 26 and I am a constituent of District 22. I currently serve as a volunteer and have been involved in the cat rescue field for five years. Our cat-loving group of volunteers at LICFF works on a wide range of initiatives to tackle the NYC cat overpopulation crisis and help the cat guardians of our community. However, we continue to be overwhelmed by rescue requests due to the severe lack of affordable services.

Council Members, I urge you to support city-funded high volume spay and neuter that would come at no to low cost for rescuers and pet owners alike. Cats in our neighborhoods are part of the NYC environment and population, and therefore, our city needs to provide adequate funding to resolve the population crisis and lessen the suffering our feline friends experience living outdoors. Due to the rising cost of pet care and a lack of low cost spay and neuter services, owned pets end up being abandoned or surrendered when their owners can no longer support them.

We need your help making spay and neuter appointments more accessible both in quantity and cost. This will allow rescuers and cat owners to provide cats with the medical treatment and procedures they need in a timely manner. I hope you will support your constituents in advocating for the cats and people of our community.

Many thanks,

Sarah Lucas

The following are some of my experiences in cat rescue.

Until moving to Harlem in 2003 I had never seen unowned cats roaming the streets. I began taking in the friendly ones and learned how to trap and neuter those who were truly feral.

I then moved to the Bronx in 2021 and since then I've seen many more street cats. I immediately began feeding the 10 or so cats around my building until I could take in the friendly ones and get the others neutered. The latter took over 2 years because during the pandemic, the ASPCA had to severely curtail their free spay/neuter services.

Feeding the street cats exposed me to hostility from some in the neighborhood. One person in particular threatened repeatedly to poison the cats and eventually threatened me. I had to call the police.

I spend about \$350 a month on food for the cats. The friendly cats I've taken in and continue to foster have had a number of health crises and it is my responsibility to cover the vet bills. Last year one cat got very sick on a weekend. I took him to an emergency vet, and the bill was over \$2500. I just paid off that bill last week. This past Saturday another cat got very sick, and the bill for this emergency visit was \$1400 even after they gave me a discount because I regularly worked with a rescue group. These costs have become significantly more burdensome since I am now retired. I have lost nights of sleep worrying about how to support this work financially. It's only because I dearly love and care about these animals that I remain involved.

Since living in the Bronx I've had many people ask me how they can get their pets spayed or neutered, but since low cost services have remained so very limited I don't know what to tell them. Often these people have no recourse but to put their pets out on the street, believing that this would be preferable to a shelter where the animals might be killed.

Please, help us and the animals of New York City with the enormous task of caring for these cats. They are outside through no fault of their own, and we, who did not contribute to the problem, have nevertheless borne the entire burden.

Sarah Sears

Ladies and gentlemen of the City Council, thank you for this opportunity to speak.

I would like to discuss an important amendment to the current bill concerning the use of animals as prizes in local events. The existing legislation is found under Section 358- A Chapter 69 Article 2 While this current legislation prohibits giving away live animals as prizes it happens to exclude fish. I urge you to consider adding fish to the list of animals banned as prizes. Specifically Goldfish and Betta Fish.

The practice of giving fish (specifically goldfish and betta fish) as prizes raises several ethical and environmental concerns. Firstly, fish are living, feeling beings just like any other animal that require specific care and environments to thrive. The decision to have a companion animal is a serious responsibility, which requires planning and commitment to their long-term care. It should not be based on throwing a ping-pong ball into a bowl. When fish are handed out as prizes, at fairs and carnivals they are often subjected to inadequate conditions, leading to stress and premature death. This not only affects the welfare of the fish but also sends a message that life can be treated carelessly.

Moreover, releasing these fish into local waterways, whether intentionally or accidentally, poses a risk to native ecosystems.

By amending the bill to include fish, we align our community with responsible and humane practices, ensuring that we treat all animals with the dignity and respect they deserve. I urge the council to take this necessary step for the welfare of our environment and community. Thank you.

Sarai Garcia

# SECTION 358-A

Live animals as prizes prohibited

Agriculture & Markets (AGM) CHAPTER 69, ARTICLE 26

§ 358-a. Live animals as prizes prohibited. No person shall give or offer to give away as a prize, or exchange or offer to exchange for nominal consideration, any live animal other than purebred livestock or fish.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Shannon Jones <spadawg@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:24 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Cc:** Puppy Kitty NYC  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] re: funding for rescues and pet owners

[REDACTED]

Dear Council,

I am sending this email to request that funds be allocated for animal rescues and shelters, and low-cost veterinary care for anyone who needs help caring for a pet.

I started working with cat rescue groups local to my neighborhood of Inwood in 2016 when my cat Cody crossed the rainbow bridge after a long, expensive battle with cancer. I donated his food and leftover medicine to a cat rescue, and before I knew it, I was asking about opportunities to volunteer. Since then, I have fostered about a dozen cats for several rescues, but mostly for Puppy Kitty NYC. Recently I had the luck and joy to foster an entire litter of babies, and I adopted three precious, furry monsters out of the family, who make me laugh and scoop a lot of litter every day.

Having a pet can be the most challenging and rewarding experience. I have been struggling with my mental health for several years, mostly due to financial stress. I delayed adopting for many years, because I was worried about how I'd pay all the expenses. Fostering cats gave me a sense of fulfillment. I could have a cat, I could be financially supported, and I could prepare a rescue cat to be adopted out to a loving home while also keeping them safer than they are on the street. Now, I am grateful to Puppy Kitty NYC for bringing these kittens in and letting me foster, and also providing the vetting that babies need (as well as momma). My fosters and my adopted kittens have been such a joy for me. They light up my day by making me laugh, they sit with me and purr when I'm stressed, and caring for them stops me from spirally in my own anxiety.

Rescue groups provide an invaluable service here in New York City. Not only are they taking care of abandoned animals who are sick and need help, they are also allowing someone to care for that animal, and in return, receive the warmth and support an animal can offer. Rescues can save animals that have the right to live healthily or be euthanized mercifully when they are too sick, and humans who want to protect those animals will be set up for success by adopting an animal that has been vaxxed and altered.

In this stressful time and economic downturn in the city, more people need assistance both with mental health and finances. Petting an animal has been shown to decrease stress and lower heart rates. A cat's purr has been said to vibrate at a frequency that soothes the heart, reducing sadness. Dogs help people who have disabilities live normal lives and also provide emotional support.

Providing funding to help spay and neuter animals will help so many souls, human and animal alike, creating a positive ripple effect. Opening more low-cost spay and neuter clinics, and even providing basic vet services, makes it possible for more people to give animals a loving home. This means more animals off the streets,

fewer animals to add to the current overpopulation, and more humans to experience the joy and comfort that owning a healthy animal can provide. Supporting the rescue groups in their work in TNRing and rescuing animals needing medical care means that we can get the current population off the streets and healthy.

Shannon Jones

*get a facial or a consult : [book here](#)*

*follow me on instagram for skincare tips and tricks: [@skin.by.shannon](#)*

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Shanthrax To The Max <shandidsullivan@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 7:36 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Advocate  
**Attachments:** Video.MOV

[REDACTED]

To city council members:

I am not an animal rescuer or work for a non-profit animal organization. I am a cat owner who has lived in NYC for the past 20 years. I have never come across as many street cats as I have over the past few years. On every single block I walk down, and I walk down them a lot for work, I will see at least one street cat. Every block in every neighborhood is experiencing a crisis. There are not enough resources to care for our animals. The high rocketing cost of living in NYC has caused caring animal owners to either abandon their pets or surrender them. Having to move to cheaper housing which doesn't allow pets. Being unable to provide the proper medical care or pay rent has become a difficult decision for many New Yorkers.

I myself have 3 cats living in my home that were living on the street. The most recent addition to my home was an abandoned cat that had a mass in her belly. She had been neglected to the point that the fur on her back had become entirely matted. Matted fur pulls and tugs at an animals skin, becoming incredibly painful. I just happened to come across her one afternoon, as she was sitting out in the hot sun, crying to be helped. Abandoned former house cats do not possess the skills to survive outside. Many pass away from infections from wounds or having difficult finding food or fresh water to drink. Thankfully for Parker(named her after the park I found her at), I sprung into action and took her home . After reaching out to over 15 different rescues for help, Bushwick Cats reached out that they could. Almost all of the rescues are over capacity or lacking in funds to save anymore animals. Parker's mass took over an hour to remove and her entire body had to be shaved. She is now safe. That is sadly a good story that many animals in New York aren't able to have. Providing the public with affordable services will help! I urge you to allocate a larger budget to help your constituents that are animals lovers. Please find photos of Parker attached.

Thank you for your time,

Shandi



Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Sharon Krugman <freya831@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:21 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] NYC State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

We urge the city of New York to allocate substantial funding for spay and neuter, for high volume, low cost and affordable veterinary care.

We rescue cats in Astoria, NY and have never seen so many cats dumped on the streets before. Most of the cats are being dumped by the housing projects. People are unable to afford spay/neuter services and basic veterinary care.

Providing services would prevent dumping and this is why. Unfixed male cats have potent smelling urine and so people throw them out because as they grow from kittens the smell becomes worse. Female cats go into heat at 4 months and people discard them. Then, all the discarded pets mate and more and more cats are born. A female cat can get pregnant at 4 months and the gestation is 2 months.

It is so preventable. As a rescue who sees heartbreaking cases of domesticated animals left to fend for themselves on the streets - we urge you to stop the suffering by providing affordable veterinary care. ASPCA spots are hard to get and we are constantly fundraising to bring cats to private vets. When people from low income housing ask us for help we often have to say no because we are small rescue and do not have the resources.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,  
Sharon Krugman  
Catstoria Rescue

Sharon Stanton

David Krock

 New York, New York 10128

[Iminmanhattan@gmail.com](mailto:Iminmanhattan@gmail.com)

[Davidekrock@gmail.com](mailto:Davidekrock@gmail.com)

September 16, 2024

Dear City Council Members,

My husband and I were appalled to read the recent article in the New York Times regarding the deplorable conditions of pets at city shelters. We immediately began to research how we could directly help at the shelter as volunteers. As we did, we discovered that there was little or no mention of a spay neuter program anywhere on the website. How can this be?

People need help paying for food and vet care, especially spay/neuter procedures, in order to maintain pet well being, and human well being. But these items are too expensive for the average person. We know, we have four adopted animals.

Shelters throughout the northeast require pets to be spayed and neutered, what is the problem in New York City? Programs in Florida, yes, Florida are exceptionally better run than what we see here in New York City. These programs exist and succeed in FLORIDA! Maybe New York City should take a look at the work of First Coast No More Homeless Pets for suggestions on how to improve their pet care facilities and programs.

In any case, we encourage city council members to address these issues. Immediately. Please support programs and funding for shelter programs, spay/neuter, and programs to help pet owners be good pet owners.

Sincerely,

Sharon Stanton and David Krock

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Shawn Young <shawnyoungnyc@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:40 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee hearing

[REDACTED]

Shawn Young, President  
North Brooklyn Cats  
229 Frost St.  
Brooklyn NY 11211

This is testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee hearing that I was unable to attend in person. I am the head of a tiny two-person, one-car cat rescue operation in northern Brooklyn. I join my colleagues from around the city to call for comprehensive city-financed or subsidized spay/neuter and routine vet care for all New Yorkers who need it. As you've heard, New York is far behind other cities in spending on animal welfare, and the people, including devoted veterinarians, that you're hearing from are picking up the pieces.

One place where the situation is particularly grim is in NYCHA housing and low-income communities across the city. Several years ago when I was getting some cats fixed on a rare mobile van at a NYCHA facility in Queens, the number of people who came up to me asking to get their pets fixed and otherwise cared for was heartbreaking. I had no authority over the van, I was just standing there. People were walking up to me with their animals in their arms asking for help.

Before those mobile clinics all but disappeared, people would line up at 4am or earlier year-round for those first-come-first-served opportunities to get care for their pets. Those vans didn't come close to meeting the need, but they made a big difference. Their disappearance has directly led to an increase in abandonment and an unmanageable burden on volunteer rescuers. One longtime rescuer friend of mine has rescued, spayed or neutered over 200 cats in public housing this year on the Lower East Side alone.

A lot of my own work takes place in the industrial and semi-industrial corners of Brooklyn and Queens where people dump pets they can't afford or don't want. And in some 20 years of rescue work, I've never seen things as bad as they are now. As you've heard from others, we have all been overwhelmed logistically, financially and at times emotionally with the urgent pleas for help and photos of suffering animals we get every day. In addition to whatever money my group raises, I routinely spend at least \$10,000 a year out of pocket on my rescue work even though my group is fortunate to be able to handle a lot of routine care and common illnesses ourselves.

Please work with us to make a difference!

Shawn Young, North Brooklyn Cats

A year ago, I rescued a puppy, my Lucy. She came at me sick and scared; she had been stolen for a homeless mentally ill person who wasn't able to take care of her, fed her cat food, and kept her in a small bag all the time, thanks to the intervention of other rescuers she came at me. Thanks to the continuing work of rescuers, I was able to get her vaccines, and neutered, but I shouldn't have to wait over 6 months. I should have been able to go to an accessible low-cost clinic.

We need more funds, we need more resources, we need better laws to help and prevent situations of abuse and/or hoarding, we need more help from our city.

For twenty years I had done rescue, I don't know what I would have done if not for the help of the ASPCA trucks, but even that is not enough.

For twenty years I have pushed for the animal shelter in the Bronx but is not enough.

Organizing with other rescue groups, and people like me, trapping and releasing, but is not enough.

Every single spring - every single station really – I would have new sets of kittens that needed help. And a frightened, hungry new cat living with me, till or if I found a new home.

When my baby Lucy was hit for a drunk driver, she died in my arms, because in a holiday is impossible to find where to go with your pet, if something goes wrong.

Here I am today to ask for more resources, more places, for better laws so the help is more effective for all of us

Sheila Sanchez

President of the Northwest Bronx Democrats

President of the Friends of the Oval Park

[REDACTED]

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**From:** S Ledesma <sheinaledesma@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:29 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of Animal Rescue in NYC

[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Sheina Llanos and I'm a native New Yorker who resides in Manhattan. I am writing to urge the city to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low cost spay/neuter services and affordable vet care for any New Yorker in need, including local rescuers/t&r folks.

This is such an important way New Yorkers can be helped and animals can receive the care they desperately need.

NYC has the funds to provide these services but typically chooses to spend money on other areas that don't actually improve the quality of life for residents. However, this is a way our tax money can actually make a positive impact on communities in the city and innocent animals who deserve care.

Thank you.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** shelah reisman <shelah2@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 12:55 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Sept 13 Health Hearing

[REDACTED]

Hello! I was unable to make it to the hearing in person so sending this email in turn. I have been doing tnr/cat rescue for about 5 years now. I was never a cat person, never had a pet growing up and actually the last person that should be doing tnr...for so many reasons. But one day leaving my house I came across a cat that looked like its leg was hanging off its body. I could not imagine the pain this poor thing must have been in. I spoke to someone about it the next day who said the only way I could help this animal would be trapping it. Me? Trap a cat? What the....? No way. But I could not get that poor cat out of my mind and so the next day I trapped him. We brought him to the vet who said the cat was suffering so much that it would be best to take him out of his misery and put him to sleep which I did. That day changed everything and I now could not help but notice the 10-20 cats on every single street in my neighborhood (Boro Park, Brooklyn). Kittens, injured cats, starving cats...cats getting hit by cars. I got certified by the aspca and now 500 cats later here I am. I think about quitting every day...it's taken a tremendous toll on me...physically (I'm not 20 any more!!), emotionally, and financially. Low cost spay/neuter is very hard to come by, the time I have to take off from work to transport back and forth...every dollar coming out of my pocket...it's simply not fair! Here I am...along with many others...who are trying to do a noble good deed...doing it all on my own time and dime...trying to help these poor cats that are truly suffering on the streets...with no help from the city. I beg of you...help me help them. Help me help the countless cats and kittens that are suffering on the streets. We are so desperate for high volume, low cost spay/neuter/veterinary care. Please...this cannot wait. I want to do good...I want to make a difference but I cannot do it without the city's help.

Thank you for listening. Praying something good finally happens for us rescuers and more so for the poor cats who are suffering every day.

Sheila R.  
Brooklyn NY

[REDACTED]

**From:** sramseyesq@aol.com  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 9:56 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] From

[REDACTED]

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to request that the Council allocate funding to cover more spay/neuter programs and for veterinary care for animals in need. This will alleviate the burden on organizations that are providing this care,

It is important to note that not providing these funds will result in additional burdens on the city and the organizations and individuals that do this work to prevent animal suffering. Providing these funds now will prevent future and additional problems. NYC can serve as a model for addressing the problem and providing a means to ensure that the problems that exist will be address now.

Thank you for you attention to this important matter.  
Best,  
Sherry Ramsey

*Sherry Ramsey, Esq.*  
[REDACTED], ID, NY, NY 10023  
*Licensed Attorney NY, NJ & VA*  
*Adjunct Professor Animal Law at NYLS*  
[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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**From:** Sheryle Trainer <sheryletrainer1949@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 13, 2024 5:01 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Queens Animal Shelter and Animal Control Services in New York City

[REDACTED]

My name is Sheryle Trainer and I am submitting testimony regarding the present state of the Queens Animal Shelter and animal care and control services in general in NYC. I had been professionally involved with animal control and shelter field for 12 years. I managed the Manhattan ASPCA when the organization was performing animal control and sheltering in all five boroughs as well as animal rescue. This was done 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

What we now have in NYC is a nightmare. Services within the city are drastically cut or nonexistent. The shelter in Queens is dirty, animals are not being fed and watered properly and vital veterinary care is absent. Where is supervision monitoring the staff and the activities within the shelter? The conditions under which the animals are being cared for is totally unacceptable. Are the employees given training programs in animal handling and behavior, sanitary maintenance of the kennels, disease detection, proper animal nutrition, flow of animal intake and release? When animals other than dogs and cats come into the shelter does the staff know what to do? What are the qualifications of the shelter manager?

Please, I do not mean to be so hard and negative. Shelter work is difficult. For those of us who have worked in these places it can take your heart and squeeze it until it hurts. Yet you have to remain committed, sensitive and observant. In order to do the job properly more funds are desperately needed for staff training and development, additional shelter space must be provided in order to house the abundant amount of unwanted animals, hours of operation must be increased and, animal rescue and veterinary services must be expanded. Without proper animal control we will see an increase in animal abandonment posing a health hazard to people, the environment and the animals.

I have been a teacher for many years and in addition to the academics I teach the importance of the human animal bond and having compassion for all living things. We call this emotional intelligence as you are aware. I implore you to exercise this edict in the care we give to the animals in NYC. We have an obligation to do so. I have worked my whole life and have been a tax payer my whole life. Yet the one issue that I, and so many others care desperately about is consistently being put on the back burner. I would hate to say that City Hall doesn't care about animals. But the inactions of this administration has pushed me to come to this conclusion. Please change my mind. Please adequately fund animal care both in Queens and the rest of the city.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Sofija Ostojic <sofija.ostojic@sumeruequity.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:05 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony on State of Animal Rescue in NYC

[REDACTED]

Hello,

To whom it may concern, I strongly urge the city government to allocate meaningful funding for high-volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. There is a cat crisis in the city and we can meaningfully rectify it with spay/neuter.

Best,  
Sofija

**Sofija Ostojic**  
**Principal**  
**Sumeru Equity Partners**  
512 W. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street (Floor 8), New York, NY 10011  
[REDACTED]  
[www.sumeruequity.com](http://www.sumeruequity.com)

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Sonia Leahey <sonia.leahey@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 1:25 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony for State of Animal Rescue Hearing 9/13/24

[REDACTED]

Submitted testimony for Committee on Health hearing on September 13, 2024  
Re: The State of Animal Rescue in NYC

My name is Sonia Leahey and I am a longtime resident of Bay Ridge Brooklyn, in Justin Brannan's district. Thank you to the city council for having this hearing. It is long overdue and I was heartened by what I heard at the hearing.

I have been volunteering my time to help homeless cats in my neighborhood for about five years. I am the founder of a rescue called Sunset Park Cats based in Sunset Park, Brooklyn.

In 2019 I found out about a colony of about 30 cats in the neighborhood. They were completely unfixed and unmanaged, breeding, and there were kittens. Myself along with a couple of other individuals began doing TNR here, and we got the entire colony spayed and neutered over the course of about a year and a half. We spent countless hours of our own time trapping each and every one of these cats, and driving them all the way from south Brooklyn to Queens for ASPCA appointments since there was absolutely no low cost spay/neuter clinic in our area. (This was before the opening of Flatbush Vet and Brooklyn Cat Cafe clinics, which are now additional options, albeit still definitely not enough to meet the need.)

Thanks to our TNR work, done completely unpaid and on a volunteer basis, there have been no kittens at the colony since 2020.

We started social media accounts to document our rescue activities and to collect donations to cover the costs. Before long we started receiving messages from people all over the area asking us to come rescue cats. It has been difficult to have the public approach us as an on-demand service, when we are doing this on a 100% volunteer basis. But they do it because they have no other good options.

We have rescued or TNR'd hundreds of cats in the neighborhood over the past five years. Sunset Park is a neighborhood that is overrun with homeless cats. They are in almost every city block and there are many, many large colonies.

I want the city council to know the situation on the ground here. I have seen cats lying dead in the street, hit by cars. I have seen cats that had been hit by cars but still alive, with devastating injuries, dragging their back legs. We rescued one such cat in December 2022 and her life was saved with \$7K surgery. We went through the traumatic experience of having to trap two others with this type of injury, (no easy task because it took hours), and then bringing them in to be euthanized.

We have found many homeless kittens hideously sick, sometimes with eyes crusted over and sealed shut or riddled with other disease. We once rescued a cat in 2020 that had been dumped outside by his owner, and that had then been slashed by a cruel person with a knife or blade. That injury was fixed with surgery that cost

\$4K. I've spent two hours with my cheek to the pavement, coaxing out a kitten that was hiding in the underside of a car. I've rescued cats that were locked in basements with no food or water.

We have rescued countless cats off the street who were obviously abandoned pets, completely friendly and begging for help, sometimes very sick and in bad shape because all they had ever known was indoor life and they had no skills to survive outside. These cats are almost always not spayed or neutered when they come to us.

Another source of immense grief and stress on us who care about animal welfare is bodegas. We need the department of health to start caring about what is happening to animals in countless bodegas all across the five boroughs and enforcing the laws that are already on the books. Our city has an epidemic of small stores and bodegas harboring neglected and abused cats in their stores and in their basements, breeding them and selling or giving away the kittens, and not allowing these animals any access to spay/neuter or any medical care. Sometimes the store owners and workers are cooperative with the concerns of rescuers, and let rescuers intervene by taking the cats or at least facilitating needed medical care. But all too often the store workers are hostile and refuse to let cat rescuers help the cats. Attempting to report this cruelty to 311 or NYPD yields absolutely no action.

I am a pre-K teacher in a NYCEEC school. Every day I give up my lunch break to walk over to my aforementioned original cat colony to do my daily feeding. I once rescued a kitten in front of my pre-K class, when it showed up out of nowhere in the street right next to our playground, and was in danger of getting killed by cars. This kitten was the talk of the class for the next several days. Several times when walking to my main colony on my lunch breaks, I have been greeted with the upsetting surprise of finding a cat on the streets or at my main colony that was gravely ill and needed immediate help. I have had to run back to the location with a trap after work and put in hours of my own time trapping and bringing cats to the ER for humane euthanasia.

I don't want to be doing this. This is not something i want to devote my life to. I do this because I can't look away. I can't leave them there.

Cats do NOT belong on our streets. I do not want my pre-K students to see this suffering as they walk home from school. Cats living in these conditions shouldn't be normalized.

This is NOT a matter of doing more adoptions. We cannot adopt our way out of this.

What we need is aggressive action to stop the population explosion and meaningfully reduce the population of cats that are unowned and living on our streets, in empty lots, in backyards, on construction sites. We need free or low cost spay/neuter clinics not just in every borough, but in every neighborhood. We don't have another 3-5 years to wait.

I urge the city council to take action now and to not look away.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Sophia Bishop <sophia.m.bishop@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 2:02 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony to Save NYC Pets

[REDACTED]

Dear New York City Government Leaders,

We have a pet care crisis specifically for dogs and cats, at our city shelters. Their euthanization due to overcrowding, poor planning and under resourced care is **inhumane**. They are not objects to be exploited for mass gain then destroyed when inconvenient. They are often members of family, providers of companionship and therapy for millions of NYC citizens who need them, but cannot afford them for various reasons the city government can impact to resolve **now**.

Please allocate substantial funding to:

1. **Safely spay/neuter dogs and cats** at scale, across shelters rescues and veterinary care. Access to proper care is a major barrier
2. **Create more affordable vet care.** Veterinary bills often are the reason pets languish and die in shelters.
3. **Manage the downsizing of pet stores and breeders.** They exacerbate a pet population problem where too many are euthanized unnecessarily
4. **Create affordable housing for pet owners with their pets.** City landlords exploit renters by making rents too high and/or not allowing pets. This forces owners to put pets in shelters, where they are euthanized
5. **Create pet friendly workplaces.** Incentivize companies to support by providing space, insurance and/or pet care monies.

These are just a few suggestions but I'm sure you have many experts who can help create solutions to get to the root of the problem.

Forcing many workers to work onsite after being virtual or hybrid post Covid, is another huge cause for increased pet population at shelters. The workplace should be a safe space for pets too.

Thank you,  
Sophia

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Stella Gillham <stellagillham@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:17 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] City Support for Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

My name is Stella Gillham. I have lived and worked in NYC for the last 20 years. I am also a pet parent and supporter of PuppyKittyNY, a non-profit organization that rescues and adopts hundreds if not thousands of animals yearly.

As a supporter of PuppyKittyNY, I was discouraged when I tuned in to the recent Council hearing on animal welfare. The lack of answers from the city-funded departments was, literally insane. The questioning from council members was all valid and logical and the utter unpreparedness of the city-funded department shows a lack of care. This does NOT bode well for the animals that they rescue.

One example, money that is being spent on salaries, which one of the speakers couldn't even determine how many people that covered, could be allocated towards many of the local/area animal rescues. The burden of funding that is left up to rescues is unconscionable. Many of the volunteers are under-employed and/or underpaid. They will very often use their own funds to support these rescues.

I urge the city government to allocate funding for high-volume and low cost spay/neuter, as well as affordable vet care for ANY New Yorker in need, MOST ESPECIALLY rescues and pet parents.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Stella Gillham  
[stellagillham@gmail.com](mailto:stellagillham@gmail.com)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Meowsquad NYC Rescue <info@meowsquadnyc.org>  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 14, 2024 11:48 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal welfare hearing 9/13/2024

[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Stephanie Castro, and I am the President and Founder of Meowsquad Rescue, as well as a licensed funeral director here in New York State. I founded my rescue in 2019 after many years of working independently, seeking a way to access more resources by establishing an official 501(c)(3) organization. Like so many others, I faced numerous challenges building rescue through the pandemic, during which I handled nearly 500 death cases.

On a daily basis, I balance my work with grieving families during the worst moments of their lives with crisis situations involving NYC cats. Believe it or not, the cats often bring me more stress and sadness. As you may have heard in other testimonies, many rescuers are in a similar position—balancing full-time jobs with the relentless demands of animal rescue. Rescuers are among the most dedicated, determined, and creative problem-solvers you'll ever meet. I know people who have checked themselves out of hospitals to tend to their animals, those who regularly risk their lives to save animals, and others who have made immense personal sacrifices, especially financially, to continue their mission. All of this is done without compensation. Can you imagine paying out of your own pocket to keep doing a job where you're expected to be available 24/7, and often, you're mistreated because you simply can't do more? We do it all the time.

To put things into perspective, I currently have over 150 cats in my care. My vet bills at just one clinic this year have exceeded \$40,000, and I regularly use services at four different clinics to find the best prices, even if it means driving upstate or to New Jersey. My current outstanding vet debt is over \$10,000. Not only am I personally responsible for that debt, but owing it greatly limits what I can accomplish in new cases. This financial strain, combined with the overwhelming number of animals in need, underscores how essential support from the city is for the future of rescue efforts.

I share all of this to emphasize the incredible force of dedication that exists in this city. We rescuers are ready and willing to put in the work, and we already do, but real, large-scale change will not be possible without major reforms at the city level.

\*Here's where we need support:\*

1. **\*\*Low to No-Cost, High-Volume Spay and Neuter Services\*\***: These services must be made widely available—not just at brick-and-mortar clinics but also through mobile clinics that travel to all neighborhoods across the city. If these services aren't easily accessible and free, many people simply won't take advantage of them, a fact any rescuer can confirm.
2. **\*\*Access to Low-Cost Veterinary Care\*\***: In addition to spay and neuter services, rescuers need affordable veterinary care. Veterinary expenses are one of the largest financial burdens faced by rescuers, and affordable options would allow us to provide better care for animals and take on more cases without being limited by cost.

3. **Targeted Education Campaigns**: Services alone aren't enough. We need to educate communities about the benefits of spay/neuter and responsible animal care. Cultural differences often impact how companion animals are treated. We see countless friendly, unfixed companion animals left on the street, facing injury or contributing to the overpopulation crisis. Education—through both targeted advertising and school programs—can foster compassion and inspire the next generation to make a difference.

4. **Easier Access to Funding**: Access to resources like veterinary care, food, and supplies is crucial, yet the process for obtaining funding is unnecessarily complex. While my rescue has been fortunate to receive discretionary funds from Council Members Joann Ariola and James Gennaro, the application process has been overwhelming. Every step seems to demand more documents and forms, discouraging many rescuers from even applying. The city needs to understand that we are not large corporations with legal teams. We are small, grassroots operations. If the process isn't simplified, the funds are rendered unattainable.

5. **Stronger Partnerships for Adoption Initiatives**: The city should foster more partnerships with rescues for initiatives like adoption events and brick-and-mortar adoption spaces. These collaborations would amplify the voices of rescuers and expand our reach. Having city-backed spaces and events would not only increase visibility but also encourage more community involvement in animal adoption and rescue. This would create an invaluable platform for both rescuers and animals in need.

I often tell myself, "I can't save them all, but at least I saved this one." However, that doesn't have to be the reality. We *can* save them all—if we're given the proper resources and support. The mantra "One by one until there are none" can become a reality in NYC. We have thousands of dedicated people ready to assist. All we need is the help to make it happen.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Stephanie Castro  
President and Founder, Meowsquad Rescue

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Subrina Moorley <subrina.moorley@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:14 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Written Testimony Regarding the State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Hello,

First, thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony. I'm a native New Yorker living in Brooklyn. I do not consider myself a cat rescuer, but due to the overpopulation of cats on my block, I was moved to get certified in Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) and have since been working to prevent the population on my block from getting out of hand again.

I do not want to see additional cats run over by cars, dying of poison, or suffering from injury or disease on the street that is supposed to be my home. I should not be anticipating seeing a life sadly lost when I walk outside, and this is what convinced me I needed to educate myself about this prevalent issue and take action.

Unfortunately, even with people like me who are aware of the realities of animal rescue and welfare, spay-neuter resources are not enough. Rescuers are picking up too much of the slack, yet they receive no assistance from the city. As one of the richest cities in the country, I find it appalling that you can walk around so many neighborhoods and see diseased or dumped cats on the street because residents cannot afford veterinary care such as spay-neuter.

The issue of the cost of veterinary care is certainly more nuanced and complicated than I am presenting it, and vets work extremely hard for very little, but the system is simply not working for regular folks who either want to be able to provide shelter for pets or at least help the community cats in their neighborhood.

It is deeply disappointing to me that my city continues to ignore these pleas and act like animals are not a part of our communities. It is wholly depressing to walk around a neighborhood and see dead animals, to see kittens with infected eyes who cannot fend for themselves, or deal with animals suffering because they are in heat.

There's a solution to this problem: The City Council must devote substantial funds for TNR programs to handle the number of stray cats out on the streets. The City Council must also devote enough funds to supporting the valuable work that cat rescue groups perform, and providing financial assistance to pet parents in need of affordable veterinary care to spay and neuter their pets and tame overpopulation.

This is the most dynamic and prosperous city in the country. We have the means to support these efforts. NYC cannot be taken seriously and our communities cannot be seen as healthy and thriving until we address our animal overpopulation.

Sincerely,

Subrina M.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 17, 2024 7:53 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]

[REDACTED]

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Susan Esposito

Sent from [AOL Desktop](#)

Trump 2024

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Scm Y <scmyod@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 11:00 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24

[REDACTED]

To Whom It May Concern,

I wanted to share my small but meaningful stint of 2 years as a cat rescuer. I first noticed a cat almost get hit by a car crossing the street by my workplace. I saw it make its way to a residential building where it joined a friend. I surmised there must be others, left a note by a bowl of cat food and got in touch with an older woman who had been feeding cats there for 3 years begging rescues to help fix the cats who kept reproducing while someone was taking the kittens for God knows what reason. I also reached out to rescues via social media and most never answered except to say they could get help.

During this time I saw at least 10 cats and while waiting for rescue responses in the dead of winter I discovered that two had frozen to death, an older cat and a young kitten.

I vowed then I couldn't wait for the experts, I had to learn to do something myself.

Rescuing cats, getting them vetted, socializing the shy ones that came from dangerous places they couldn't return to, treating medically sick cats even ones that could not be socialized, getting cats ready for adoption and making sure they went to safe and appropriate homes consumed my life, even with my own full time job.

The scarcity of spay/neuter appts for rescue rates were extremely difficult to come across and get. The hours were odd and rarely on days off. This was also a huge barrier in how many cats could actually be trapped to be fixed. You had to have connections otherwise you'd be straight out of luck.

Cats reproduce very frequently and in litters of multiples along with the fact that they can get pregnant as early as FOUR months old.

We cannot get ahead of the problem if there is not more EDUCATION and more access to free and low cost Spay/Neuter appointments for all.

It's heart breaking how many sweet cats and kittens have to fend for them outside when anyone who's owned a cat before know how sensitive they are. Even indoors they get spooked by loud sudden noises and outdoors they are always on alert. Feral cats are automatically deemed aggressive but I've seen that often to not be the case. They are just scared or wary enough to keep their distance as it keeps them safe.

I've unfortunately seen first hand what happens when friendly cats approach the wrong person— one whose head was smashed over the head with a hammer and eyes popped out of their head while I cried all the way to the ER while the sweetest cat in the world fought for his life but did not make it.

Fighting with my spouse because I've had to house up to 11 cats in our home while trying to find placement and save the ones I could from said monster who was not arrested because cats are considered property when they are in fact sentient beings and those who hurt and kill animals move onto humans next.

Rescue work is unfortunately heart breaking and disheartening because it is like putting out little fires everywhere that continually spring up from sparks.

The fact that such a large and prosperous city as NY allocates so little to tackle this issue while the burden falls on a small group of mostly women who honestly let it consume and ruin their lives before they burn out and bail as I had to sue to my financial and emotional well being.

I implore you guys to please help give more of the resources that are so deeply needed. It is unfair to let it continue on this way.

Sincerely,  
Susan Mun

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Susan Scharf <furrytailfarm922@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, September 14, 2024 8:29 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] FUNDING FOR ANIMALS AND THEIR PEOPLE/RESCUERS

[REDACTED]

The greatest city in the world is a HORROR for the animals. It is very unfortunate that we cannot have a NO-KILL shelter and the AC&C is disgusting!! As a rescuer/volunteer and Treasurer for Give Me Shelter Project, Inc/pet-lover & childless cat/dog lady, I offer the following needs:

1. **\*\*Low to No-Cost, High-Volume Spay and Neuter Services\*\***: These services must be made widely available—not just at brick-and-mortar clinics but also through mobile clinics that travel to all neighborhoods across the city. If these services aren't easily accessible and free, many people simply won't take advantage of them, a fact any rescuer can confirm.
2. **\*\*Access to Low-Cost Veterinary Care\*\***: In addition to spay and neuter services, rescuers need affordable veterinary care. Veterinary expenses are one of the largest financial burdens faced by rescuers, and affordable options would allow us to provide better care for animals and take on more cases without being limited by cost.
3. **\*\*Targeted Education Campaigns\*\***: Services alone aren't enough. We need to educate communities about the benefits of spay/neuter and responsible animal care. Cultural differences often impact how companion animals are treated. We see countless friendly, unfixed companion animals left on the street, facing injury or contributing to the overpopulation crisis. Education—through both targeted advertising and school programs—can foster compassion and inspire the next generation to make a difference.
4. **\*\*Easier Access to Funding\*\***: Access to resources like veterinary care, food, and supplies is crucial, yet the process for obtaining funding is unnecessarily

complex. Every step seems to demand more documents and forms, discouraging many rescuers from even applying. The city needs to understand that we are not large corporations with legal teams. We are small, grassroots operations. If the process isn't simplified, the funds are rendered unattainable.

5. **\*\*Stronger Partnerships for Adoption Initiatives\*\***: The city should foster more partnerships with rescues for initiatives like adoption events and brick-and-mortar adoption spaces. These collaborations would amplify the voices of rescuers and expand our reach. Having city-backed spaces and events would not only increase visibility but also encourage more community involvement in animal adoption and rescue. This would create an invaluable platform for both rescuers and animals in need.

6. **\*\*Housing Regulations\*\***: We are now the city of Yes, except when it comes to our pets. Very difficult to find housing that allows dogs/cats with their size restrictions and illegal "breed" restrictions and these poor animals that had homes, end up on the street or in kill shelters unless one of the self-funded rescue groups have space. Very unacceptable.

7. **\*\*END THE SPEND\*\***: Many, many, many stores are selling puppy mill puppies. They also do this for cats. Even supposedly reputable breeders need to stop. Until there are none, adopt one (or 2) should be the new motto for our city of Yes!

In addition to constantly fundraising and begging we put ourselves into debt and take out loans (if we are eligible). We should be able to save them all—if we're given the proper resources and support. Give Me Shelter Project says: "Each Animal Counts" and we live by that. Each animal will get the best we can offer. There is no reason the city cannot partner with rescue groups to SAVE THEM ALL. Our fosters are dedicated to the point of poverty but will spend their last penny to help an animal. The city needs to step up.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Susan Scharf  
human/rescuer/animal lover  
Give Me Shelter Project, Inc  
Flushing, NY 11367

[REDACTED]

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**From:** suse goericke <sgoericke@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 2:26 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Cc:** Suse Goericke  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Hearing of the NYC Council Committee on Health on 9/13: The State of Animal Rescue in New York City > Testimony

[REDACTED]

Dear New York City Council:

I want to thank you for turning your attention to the animal overpopulation and abandonment crisis in our city via the hearing on Friday.

My name is Susanne Goericke. I live in the 41st district, Councilmember Mealy's district. I live adjacent to the Kingsborough Houses, where a lot of my rescue work centers. Since 2020, I have rescued, rehomed, and provided access to low-cost spay/neuter and vet care for **more than 250 cats**. I've also assisted neighbors with access to low-cost care for their dogs.

I have spent **more than \$20,000** on the animals' care, and that number is only this \*low\* because my friends at 501(c)3's (which are all volunteer-run by people who have full-time jobs and families) were able to get discounts at certain veterinary offices.

In addition to my full-time job (which is not in animal rescue), I spend about 40 hours a week on rescue work. While the work is fulfilling, it's fraught with constant psychological stress, making decisions about life or possible death for abandoned pets, alleviating my neighbors' financial burdens, and balancing my home and professional life with the demands of rescue.

You've heard from many dedicated rescuers already, so let me add for you this story: Last fall, while I was working my dayjob, the NYPD knocked on my door. Someone had told them "a lady lives here who rescues cats." The officers were called because someone had abandoned a dirty, obese, matted cat in a bucket of old food. The cat was hyperventilating, panting, and paralyzed with fear. The officers looked to me for help because:

- they weren't sure of how to handle the cat
- they didn't know whether they should take her to ACC
- none of us thought she'd survive there

I knew a cat in this shape and with this temperament wouldn't fare well at the shelter. So I made the decision to take her in, provide her ~\$300 worth of care (with a discount!), and find her a foster and later adoptive home.

**How can the richest city in America (and the world) fail its citizens to the point where one has to abandon their pet, and another citizen has to do the job of TWO city agencies (NYPD and ACC) because the knowledge and resources are too scarce?**

We need your help desperately to provide:

- **Access to affordable vet care for those who need it (incl. pet parents and rescuers)**
- **Access to no or low-cost spay/neuter** to avoid more animals being born and then abandoned: We need 100,000 spay/neuter spots per year to get a handle on this problem.
- **Substantially increased funding for ACC** so they can intake all animals that need it, provide them care, and not house them in hallways and offices (also preventing burnout and mental health challenges for ACC employees, who do such important work)

With best regards and a lot of hope,  
Susanne Goericke

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Susin Garcia <susingarcia@me.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 12:58 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Submitting testimony for 9/13/24 Health Committee hearing

[REDACTED]

**Attention:** NYC Health Committee

As a lifelong animal advocate and New York City resident, I stand before you today to address the urgent crisis of feral cats in our communities. Our city faces a momentous challenge with an estimated 500,000 free-roaming cats across the five boroughs. This crisis is not caused by cats, but is a direct result of human irresponsibility and our failure to protect these domesticated animals.

Cats, once cherished companions, have been abandoned and left to fend for themselves in our unforgiving urban landscape. These animals, domesticated over millennia, are ill-equipped to survive on their own. They face constant struggles with hunger, exposure to harsh weather, and vulnerability to accidents and cruelty. This is a crisis of our own making, stemming from irresponsible pet ownership and a lack of accessible spay/neuter services.

The burden of managing this issue has unfairly fallen on compassionate volunteers and low-income residents who spend their own time and money to address a problem that requires municipal intervention. Our animal shelters are overwhelmed, particularly during kitten season, struggling to keep up with the influx of cats in need.

There is a clear, humane, and proven solution to this crisis: mass spay/neuter programs, specifically Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). TNR is the only method that effectively and humanely controls and reduces feral cat populations over time. However, the success of TNR relies on consistent implementation and widespread accessibility.

I implore the NYC Health Committee to take immediate action by allocating substantial funding for mass spay/neuter programs across the city.

This should include:

- Free or low-cost spay/neuter services for all cats, both owned and free-roaming.
- Support for TNR efforts, including trapping equipment and transportation.

- Education programs to promote responsible pet ownership and the importance of spay/neuter.
- Strict enforcement of laws mandating spay/neuter of owned cats and making it a felony to abandon a cat.

By investing in these initiatives, we can address the feral cat crisis humanely, improve the lives of these animals, and create a more compassionate urban environment for all New Yorkers. The time to act is now. Let's make New York City a model for compassionate and effective feral cat management, acknowledging our responsibility to the animals we've domesticated.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Susin S. Garcia**



Staten Island, NY 10301

Visit [www.nychealthandhospitals.org](http://www.nychealthandhospitals.org)



Tamara Bechara  
tbechara55@gmail.com



Friday, September 13, 2024

Dear City Council Members,

My name is Tamara Bechara and I'm a resident of West Harlem where I've resided for eleven years. I've been caring for the community cats in the neighborhood since 2013 and have had great success spaying and neutering feral cats as well as adopting out friendly strays.

As a devoted animal activist and volunteer, it would be most helpful to have greater access to affordable veterinary care in New York City, as I would be able to provide more support to sick and injured cats.

Thank you so much for considering my testimony.

Best wishes,

Tamara Bechara

My name is Tanya Copeland and I am the co-founder and President of Bronx Community Cats. We are based in the 14th Council District and wish to thank our Council Member Sanchez for her recognition and support of our work through Discretionary Funding.

In the last four years, we have fixed over 3,600 cats, including a record 1,138 cats in 2023. We were able to accomplish this with a team of diverse and motivated volunteers, primarily utilizing services provided by the ASPCA, as well as a few smaller, private clinics.

In response to the alarming number of socialized, abandoned cats we were finding outdoors during our trapping projects, we have increased resources to pet owners in the last two years. The best way to prevent pet cats from becoming community cats and mating with the existing outdoor population is to fix them. Currently, 30 percent of the cats we arrange services for each month have homes, yet at least 40 percent of owned cats in The Bronx remain unsterilized (vs 7 percent in Manhattan). I'm certain that gap has widened since the beginning of the pandemic.

The mental health benefits of pet ownership are well-documented and a simple surgery can make the difference in preventing surrender and abandonment. Spay/neuter is effectively harm reduction and requires an accompanying public health strategy to lessen the societal burden of sheltering and caring for homeless animals.

When it comes to spay/neuter, intensity matters. That is, it's not just the total number of cats we can fix, it has to be done quickly to derive the best outcomes and stabilize the existing population (e.g., prevention of pregnancies, reproductive cancers, and emergencies like pyometra). The Bronx cannot wait 3-5 years for another nonprofit clinic to open its doors, and with 40 percent of the residents living below poverty level, who's to say the current fee scale for "low cost" services is even accessible?

If the Humane Society of the United States can deploy teams of veterinary professionals and volunteers to Puerto Rico and fix over 52,000 animals in just six multi-day spay-a-thons, we can certainly implement a similar model in New York City as a stop-gap measure.

A few of our volunteers have young children, including my co-founder (a mom of 2-year-old twins). We strive toward a future for children growing up in outer boroughs where free-roaming and neglected cats become an anomaly, rather than normalized. And we trust the elected officials in this world-class City can fund and implement innovative solutions to make this a real possibility.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Tanya Elder <elderta@mac.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 1:08 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Spay and Neuter and General Help for Cat and Dog Rescuers in NYC

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council Members:

My name is Tanya Elder and I reside at [REDACTED] Brooklyn, NY 11238, [REDACTED].

My cat colony, 800 Kitties Rescue is registered with Neighborhood Cats. I have been TNR certified for several years, but rarely have I been able to book any appointments with the ASPCA due to the lack of openings. I partner with several rescue organizations, including Infinite Hope (defunct), Little Wanderers, PuppyKittyCity, Good Home Pet Rescue, Eastchester Bay (City Island) Cat Rescue, Cat Cafe BK, and several others when needed.

Back in the day, I lived in Mott Haven in the Bronx and there was a building whose owner let the cats he cared for reproduce because it was "god's will." After seeing multiple kittens born and dead from this person, I gave up and concentrated on cats I could help but sadly, I moved away from the Bronx and now reside in Brooklyn.

When I first moved to my current address in 2009, there were cats who lived in the front and the back of the building. I fed six cats in the front, and helped my next door neighbor several times with their unfixed or injured cats, either through my own funds or raising funds to help. There were more appointments at the ASPCA back then, when Bloomberg had the Mayor's Alliance for New York City's Animals, but since the city stopped this program and since Bidewee has taken over, the days of really being able to help cats seem to be over.

In 2017, my landlord told me I couldn't feed the cats in front of the building anymore, I systematically was able to remove the remaining cats into homes or shelters, but it was not easy. The back of my building is a parking lot where I currently care for a colony of three cats outdoors, and am longterm fostering a blind cat, along with my own three cats. This colony is set up as a "secret agreement" between me and my building landlord that can end at any moment. I have bought trail cameras, so when I see a new cats come into the back yard who is not fixed or is injured, I can see what is going on and then arrange to trap them and get them help. The cats have shelters for the winter that I clean out each season for use. The cats do attract mice and rats, but even today I saw a dead baby mouse that the cats has successfully dispatched. Once the rats get big, though, the cats are like, er... not messing with that thing. Haha. But I sit with the cats each day while they eat their food and only leave a small bit of dry out for them for the rest of the day. But that is another story.

I created 800 Kitties NYC as a vehicle to help get more involved with other rescuers. You can see my Instagram account here: <https://www.instagram.com/800kittiesrescue/>.

I pay each month for cat food out of my own pocket. If a cat gets sick, I fundraise to get them to the vet. When a cat needs a home, I try my best to find one for it. Much of this comes from my own pocket, but I cannot take it

off my city taxes because I'm not a registered non-profit. I cannot take it off my federal taxes because again, I'm not a registered non-profit. Yet I spend thousands of dollars on the cat situation in this city that I barely get help for.

I urge the city to talk with and listen to the cat and dog rescuers of New York City: we need help, financially or materially or otherwise.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Tanya Elder

[REDACTED]  
Brooklyn, NY 11238  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Tanya Leet <tanya.leet@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 10:33 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of the Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

Thank you for holding a hearing on Friday. I livestreamed it because I was unable to attend in person. I urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable vet care for any NYC resident in need, both including rescuers and pet owners.

Tanya Leet

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Tasnim Hussain <tasnimh97@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:17 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Low-Cost Spay/Neuter & Affordable Vet Care in NYC

[REDACTED]

Hi NYC Council,

My name is Tasnim, I am a native New Yorker and I live in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. I am a pet owner that is burdened by the cost of vet care in NYC. I am also deeply devastated by the amount of abandoned cats I see around Bay Ridge - animals that have been ousted from the only homes they know due to the lack of resources, support and knowledge of many new yorkers.

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet owners.

Thank you,  
Tasnim

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Taylor Bowne <taylor@riversideparknyc.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 12:12 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] State of animal rescue in NYC

[REDACTED]

Hello,

I am a rescue worker located in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and I am writing in to request that NYC government allocate a larger amount of funds to help with the Shelter and rescue crisis.

I have been rescuing and fostering since 2020 and together with my partner we have fostered over 20 cats. Sadly many, many more are fighting to survive on the streets of Brooklyn and the other boroughs because they were born on the streets or were dumped due to medical cost. As a pet owner as well, I have felt the burden of increased medical care for my other animals.

Investing now in subsidized, low cost Spay/neuter procedures and vet care for NYC pet owners will go a long way to helping relieve the burden on shelters and rescue workers. Most importantly, it will greatly help the animals fighting to survive on the streets and in shelters.

**Taylor Bowne**  
Administrative Assistant

**Riverside Park Conservancy**  
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 455  
New York, NY 10115  
Taylor@Riversideparknyc.org  
212.870.3070

Follow Riverside Park Conservancy on social media for park updates!



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Tegan Miller <tegan5684@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:42 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony - State of Animal Rescue in NYC

[REDACTED]

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to request that the City Council allocate funding for Animal Rescue in NYC. I live in Forest Hills where I regularly see the stray cat crisis. I've seen a number of them killed by cars and often walking the streets feral and desperate. We need funding to help control the pet population by spaying/neutering. I am also devastated by shelters being overrun, especially with large dogs. Shelters need the resources to manage this problem, and we need to provide low cost veterinary services so more people can keep their companions. Vet services have become a luxury, only available to those at a certain income level. Having a loving companion should not come with such a high cost - we need to help lower income individuals keep their pets - to support people's mental health and keep more animals out of the shelters.

This is a very serious concern of mine, and I will make it a leading issue when I head to the voting booth.

Thank you,  
Tegan Miller

[REDACTED]  
Forest hills, NY

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Tera Ponce <ponce.tera@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 9:26 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Animal Welfare Action - Please grant more funding

[REDACTED]

Hello,

My name is Tera Ponce. I have lived in New York for a little over 3 years now. As soon as I arrived, I immediately noticed lots of cats around my neighborhood. The amount of them was incredibly shocking. I lived in Seattle for almost 10 years, and while Seattle has a host of issues, you'd never see this amount of stray cats.

I have had about 5 cats coming and going just from my own backyard. I managed to trap and find homes for 2 of them. But it was EXPENSIVE, and I hesitate now to take any more action, because it's just such an undertaking.

PLEASE, I urge you, other cities do not have this problem at this magnitude and it's only going to get worse.

I urge the city to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost, spay/neuter and affordable vet care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you,

Tera Ponce

A recently published article in the New York Post on the Willets Point project - intended to revitalize the downtrodden area of central Queens – will likely doom a population of over 100 stray cats. Council Member Francisco Moya represents the Willets Point area and has worked on the revitalization plan for years, and in April 2024, the City Council approved the plan. The cat colony can be traced back at least a century, activists say, to strays that once called Shea Stadium home. This is yet another example of the City ignoring a segment of our population that thousands of New Yorkers value and care for. As Bryan Kortis of Neighborhood Cats points out, “The city has never taken any responsibility for the free-roaming cat situation ... It’s been a chronic problem for many, many years, and it leads to situations like the one you have in Willets Point.” It is past time for the City of New York to care and take action on the issue.

Teresa D’Amico

[REDACTED]

---

**From:** teresa kiezik <witch2313@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:03 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony to support free or low cost spay/neutering for cats and dogs

[REDACTED]

Good evening,

My name is Teresa Kiezik. For the past 20 years I have been living in Brooklyn Council District 40. Three years ago I retired from ITD position at Department of City Planning and for the past 60 years of my life I have been involved in animal rescue.

I am a member of Neighborhood Cats organization and I'm TNR certified. I feed every single day about 35-40 cats, do tnr and rescue if there is a need. I see feeding cats not as a hobby or my craziness, but an important tool in doing tnr, which is the only humane way of controlling and lowering street cats population. The feeding time is the best screening time also. I see new comers and can react fast by trapping and fixing them.

Low cost or even better free spaying and neutering is extremely important, but that topic was perfectly covered by my cats loving friends during the meeting. I would like to talk about the incredible obstacle in doing TNR job created by uneducated and unwilling to be educated in this subject residents of my district. There are no chances on having civilized conversation about cats in any shape or form with those people. In the best scenario you are simply ignored. In this situation trapping often is impossible and months of hard work go through the window, because as we know one female cat can fast repopulate the area you worked on for months.

People should see feeders and TNR volunteers as blessings for the community, not as a nuance. Not so long ago I started feeding cats in a small alley next to Jewish school. Reason - two new cats probably abandoned. In just a few days into the feeding a barricade made of large, cement bricks was erected to block access to the alley. No feeding, no trapping.

I must add that when I feed I wait for cats to finish eating, collect plates and clean leftovers. Never give reason for resident to be upset about that, but obviously this is not enough. The main reason was the existence of cats!

In another instance I was trying to trap pregnant cat and was putting plate with food at the sidewalk curb. Students of the same school (be aware it was 5am!) surrounded me, started cursing me to intimidate, kicked plate with food and to be honest I thought I will be physically attacked by them. The final result - cat got scared, I didn't trap her and she gave birth somewhere on the railroad that runs behind the school.

These are just two out of many similar situations where residents purposely intervene with TNR. Residents should be forced to cooperate with TNR volunteers by city law and this can be achieved by sending via mail information about the process and eventual restrictions if this cooperation is refused. TNR should be mandatory as an only solution to face overpopulation of street cats!

Council City district representative should contact religious representatives in this area in order to explain the importance of TNR and to get their full support.

Regular citizen like me have no way of reaching the head of Yeshivah school or rabbi for example.

I hope that with time and strong effort from all involved in this we will achieve what we fight for.

Thank you for you time and very productive meeting I watched on TV on Friday.

Sincerely

Teresa Kiezik

Teresa Russo

[REDACTED]  
Staten Island, NY 10306

**TESTIMONY BEFORE CITY COUNCIL – COMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
RE ACC OVERSIGHT & RESCUE  
September 13, 2024**

My name is Teresa Russo. I live in Staten Island, NY. I am a certified TNR person and feral cat care giver, as well as a member of the animal welfare community. I am currently associated with the Coalition for NYC Animals, Inc.

So many healthy animals are being put down by the NYC ACC. I think that more could and should be done to save these animals' lives. One of the problems, is that currently the oversight of the NYC ACC falls to the Department of Health. This is a large agency that is mainly concerned with overseeing the health, safety and well being of humans, such as preventing threats to public health, issuing birth certificates, restaurant inspections among other things. They are not equipped or have time to delve into specific problems such as healthy animals being euthanized in the City shelters. In order to save more animal lives, there needs to be a dedicated agency that deals with animal welfare issues, and animal welfare issues only.

The animals being put down are former pets who for one reason or another have been abandoned to a City shelter, or strays that no one has come forward to claim. With some of these, the owner is aware that the animal was found, but is not interested in reclaiming. With others, it's an animal that someone is desperately looking for, but has not been able to find their whereabouts. In this case, an animal may be put down by the NYC ACC simply because the owner could not find their pet in time.

There are cruelty cases where an animal was neglected, even abused, and comes into the shelter skin and bones. The shelter will run a test on an animal, where they're tested for "food guarding". The famished dog is given a dish of food. As it begins eating, a handler will use a fake hand to pull the dish away from the dog. If the dog growls, because it's so hungry and wants the food that's being taken away, the dog is judged as food guarding, an excuse for euthanizing the dog. Animals are also getting sick once in the shelter, and this is also a reason to euthanize the animal. For reasons such as this, I STRONGLY urge that there is better oversight of the NYC ACC, by an agency dedicated to animal welfare, staffed by experts on animal welfare, rather than an agency that has no interest in animals, such as the Department of Health.

Some people cannot afford to keep an animal, if they have to choose between feeding their family and taking care of an animal. Other people have been forced to move, and are not allowed to bring their animal to their new home. There must be financial assistance to lower income families to help with the costs of keeping a pet, so that more animals can stay in their homes, or be adopted into new homes. Also there should be better laws that allow people to bring their pets when they have to move to new housing. No one should ever have

to give up a pet because they have to move. Spaying and neutering should be mandatory, with free and low cost spay/neuter available to low income people.

Pet over population is also exacerbated by the fact that anyone could breed animals at home and sell them online. This should not be allowed. Stopping pet stores from selling dogs, cats and rabbits is not going to make a difference if that is just going to be replaced by "back yard breeders".

Another point I'd like to make is that healthy feral cats, who have been neutered, and ear-tipped, are being trapped by some people who don't want them in their neighborhood, and brought into the city shelters. There is no reason to do this, and ACC should not be accepting healthy, neutered feral cats. There are caretakers feeding them and seeing to it that they have some shelter, and most importantly, neutering them, so they won't reproduce, dramatically cutting down on their numbers. When these cats are brought into an ACC shelter, they are taking up space that might have allowed a pet cat in a shelter to have more time to get adopted. Feral cats are generally not friendly and do better outside, being taken care of in a colony. They rarely make good pets, unless maybe brought in as kittens, so the possibility of them being adopted is small. Not only will they most certainly be put down, but it will make it more likely that a former pet cat will be put down sooner due to lack of space.

Because of recent cuts from the ASPCA, and the rising cost of veterinary care, rescuers are in need of financial resources in order to continue with TNR and spay/neuter programs. There are a lot of unneutered feral cat colonies around the city. This is a huge problem, and no one person, or even small group, can afford to take care of it on their own. So many of the organizations listed on the Mayor's Alliance page are saying that they can no longer help with the spay and neuter. The city needs to make this a priority issue, and come up with funding for the rescuers.

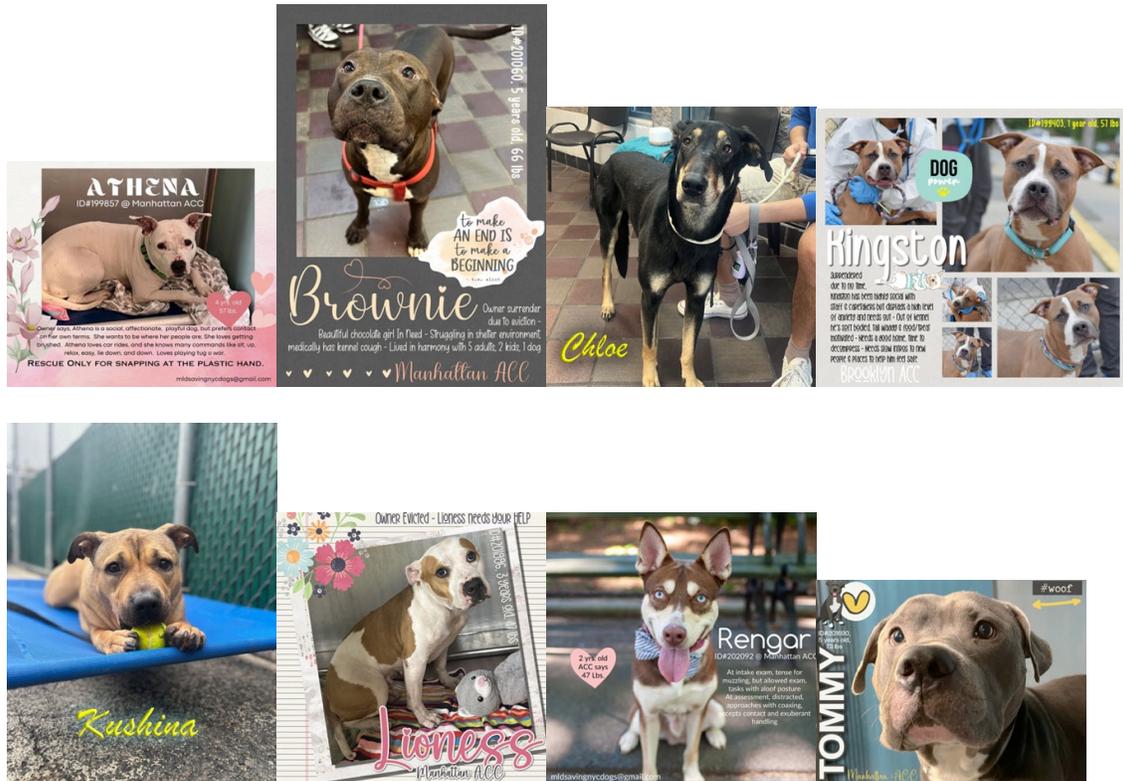
I believe that it is the responsibility of the City, and City Council, to do a better job of saving the lives of the animals in the shelters. A Department of Animal Welfare should be established, a department that's one job will be to advocate for the animals, and that department should be in charge of oversight of the NYC ACC. PLEASE put this on the November Ballot.

Please try to realize, these are not just numbers on a spread sheet. Imagine a dog, or cat, or other pet, totally bewildered when dropped off at a shelter, then more and more depressed every day, wondering when their human companions are coming back for them. Think about how they feel when being led down the hall to the euthanasia room. They know something is wrong, and are terrified as they are led into the room. These are living beings with feelings. Here are a few of them, who were euthanized at the NY ACC:

Athena failed the "plastic hand" test. Chloe was put down this past Father's Day. All of these dogs were scared and wanted to live. These are only a few. I counted 26 dogs euthanized at NYC ACC, in June alone. I don't know how many cats. To be killing this many animals is a disgrace, and unacceptable. The city should be doing more to save animals lives, and I hope you will agree and implement real changes in the way the NYC ACC is being run, as well as

helping out with the pet overpopulation problem.

ALL DEAD.



Thank you so much for the opportunity to submit testimony.

My name is Teresa Youngblood and I am a resident of Inwood. I am disabled and live on a low income. I have struggled for years to find affordable veterinary care.

My cats were previously spayed and neutered through the ASPCA mobile vet clinic at low cost, which made all the difference for me. But that service is no longer available in Manhattan.

I also have a service dog who requires vet care. I have benefitted from a grant for part of his vet expenses for his first year of life, but it is uncertain year to year whether it will be continued.

Also, many stray and feral cats live in our midst, and people often drop off unwanted cats in our area. This is heartbreaking to see. We have wonderful community members including Osi Kaminer, who expend huge amounts of time, energy and resources trying to provide the most urgent needs for these often suffering cats, and to provide spay and neuter services so that overpopulation doesn't bring yet more suffering. They and the cats desperately need help and support.

When people don't have access to affordable vet care, the animals suffer but the people do too. Our pets - and in my case, my service dog - are such important parts of our lives. And when the community can't provide vet care, illness and suffering multiplies - diseases are spread - and the amount of harm multiplies.

We would be so very grateful if you would please consider extending affordable vet care to Inwood and to Manhattan. Many of us live on limited resources yet try to do all in our power to care for our animals. We need your help.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Jennifer Rhein <JennR9@ymail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 8:18 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fwd: Testimony for the City Council Hearing

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Theresa Samsingh <theresa.samsingh@foranimalsinc.com>  
**Date:** September 15, 2024 at 8:06:19 PM EDT  
**To:** Jennifer Rhein <JennR9@ymail.com>, Theresa Samsingh <theresa.samsingh@foranimalsinc.com>  
**Subject: Testimony for the City Council Hearing**

Twenty plus years in, thousands of cats TNRed, thousands of kittens and adults taken off the streets and placed into homes, hundreds of colony cats managed over those years, and we, For Animals Inc., is still going strong despite the obvious obstacles.

I started doing TNR when most people in rescue did not know what the acronym TNR meant. I lined up at the ASPCA truck outside in the cold/or summer heat trying to get my animals admitted before they reached the 25 cat intake quota for the day.

We have come a long way from those days now that we have stationary spay/neuter clinics in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens, but I feel that in terms of the number of healthy cats and dogs still being euthanized at our city shelters and the million plus homeless, friendly and feral, cats on our streets, things have gotten much much worse for NYC's animals.

As a rescuer I have never gotten assistance from the police or fire department when it comes to saving an animal from abuse or other forms of cruelty.

We have reported several hoarding situations to the ASPCA and NYC Dept. of Health over the years--nothing was done--these same situations continue to this day.

Myself and others from FAI have called for help with cats trapped in garages or a cat with a broken back on private property only to be threatened by the police that we would be arrested if we did not leave. We have called 311/911/Dept of Health to report backyard breeders. We are continuously told there is nothing that can be done to stop private citizens from breeding

their animals. Backyard dog breeding continues throughout our city, unabated, year after year, with impunity.

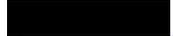
NYC rescuers need help. There are no concise procedures to follow that will legally resolve abuse, neglect or criminal activities involving animals.

NYC rescuers need more spay/neuter/dental/euthanization resources. We cannot afford to pay \$300+ for a euthanization/cremation. We cannot afford \$1400+ to help a feral colony cat live without dental disease.

NYC Rescuers need help. Too many of us have ruined lives because we just wanted to help the most innocent in our city.

Finally, I leave with this question: Why doesn't NYC have a mandatory spay/neuter law for ALL dogs and cats? Why?!

Theresa Samsingh, MSW



[theresa.samsingh@foranimalsinc.com](mailto:theresa.samsingh@foranimalsinc.com)

## For Animals

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***"We patronize the animals for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein we err, and greatly err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours, they are more finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other Nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time." -- Henry Beston***

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Tiffany Roman <roman.tiffany@ymail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 8:32 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Vet Care

[REDACTED]

Hello,

We urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Thank you,

Tiffany  
Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Tina LaMonaca <tina\_lamonaca@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 5:42 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Spay neuter veterinary care

[REDACTED]

Dear City Council,

As one of your tax paying constituents I'm urging you to please allocate very substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay/ neuter and veterinary care for any New Yorkers and rescuers in need. There is a pet crisis in this City and your help and partnership is greatly needed.

Thank you,  
Tina LaMonaca

Sent from my iPhone

[REDACTED]

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**From:** tina nigro <tinanigro115@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 3:53 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] FUNDING FOR LOW COST SPAY NEUTER

[REDACTED]

I am a colony feeder and registered TNR I also volunteer at Queens and Brooklyn animal shelters  
I am urging the city government to allocate substantial funding for spay-neuter and low-cost vet care as a  
rescuer and a pet owner with rescued pets I see the impact of not having this for our residents every day I am a  
homeowner in Queens and would love some of my taxes to fund something like this  
thank u  
Tina Nigro

--  
Tina Nigro  
Costume Designer  
[REDACTED]

# Testimony for Animal Care Centers of NYC:

What I have seen over the last several years is a true disgrace and tragedy. The current regime that runs the shelter system in NYC is basically a killing machine. I have followed this for many years and watched as kill lists grew in number of dogs/cats on the euthanasia list and the lists became more frequent. It seems that little to no effort is made to find homes. There are a group of volunteers not affiliated with the shelter that try valiantly to get dogs/cats out before they are killed. They work mostly with the use of social media. It's very hard for them to save dogs/cats since more and more are killed quicker and quicker. This is a regime problem. The current people running this place are ruthless and heartless. They do not value life. They must go. I have watched Risa Weinstock murder dogs for years that were adoptable. She bragged about opening a new center in Queens. The conditions are filthy and the murders began immediately. Changes are needed desperately. She must go. In fact, the entire DOH should be held accountable. They have failed the taxpayers and every dog that has entered its doors. For years animal activists have been trying to change things for the dogs and cats. We are begging you to please start over with people who have compassion for animal lives. There are NO KILL models running successfully all over the country. It can be done with the correct people in place.

Thank you for considering to take the actions that need to happen!

Kind Regards,  
Toni Keller

September 5, 2024

Good afternoon-

Thank you for allowing me to submit my testimony. I want to address a critical issue in pet welfare: the need for accessible, low-cost, or free spay/neuter programs. These services are not merely a convenience but a necessity for the well-being of our communities and the animals we cherish.

Spaying and neutering are fundamental to controlling the pet population. Each year, millions of animals enter shelters, many of whom face uncertain futures. Prohibitive costs often deter pet owners from seeking these essential procedures, leading to more unwanted litters and overburdened shelters. By providing low-cost or free spay/neuter services, we can significantly reduce the number of animals entering shelters and subsequently improve their quality of life.

Moreover, spaying and neutering have health benefits for pets, reducing the risk of certain cancers and other medical issues. This contributes to the overall well-being of our animals, leading to healthier, happier pets and fewer veterinary emergencies.

These programs also help alleviate the financial strain on families who may struggle to afford these procedures. By removing economic barriers, we empower more pet owners to take responsible actions, ensuring that every animal has the chance to live a full and healthy life.

Investing in low-cost or free spay/neuter programs is an investment in a more humane and compassionate society. It reflects our commitment to animal welfare and our dedication to solving one of the most pressing issues in pet overpopulation.

Thank you for your attention to this most important matter.

Sincerely,

Toni Martucci

[tonimartucci@gmail.com](mailto:tonimartucci@gmail.com)



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Tuba Azam <tubaazam101@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 8:00 AM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Testimony to the NYC Council on the State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED] pected phishing emails with the Phish Alert Button or forward them to [phish@oti.nyc.gov](mailto:phish@oti.nyc.gov) as an attachment.

Good morning members of the Council,

My name is Tuba Azam and I am a resident of Astoria, NY. I am here as an advocate for animal rescue, representing the collective voices of countless rescuers, shelters, and compassionate New Yorkers who dedicate their time, resources, and hearts to saving and caring for animals in need.

The state of animal rescue in New York City is both inspiring and deeply challenging. Every day, rescuers across the city work tirelessly to save animals from abandonment, abuse, neglect, and overpopulation. These animals cannot speak for themselves, which is why it is our duty, as a society, to be their voice and stand up for their well-being. They rely on us for protection, care, and advocacy, and it is our responsibility to ensure they are not forgotten or left to suffer.

Rescuing animals is not just an act of compassion; it is a moral imperative. These vulnerable creatures deserve a second chance at life, and through rescue efforts, they are given the opportunity to experience love, care, and safety. However, the reality is that many rescuers are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of animals in need, often without the necessary resources to provide adequate care.

One of the most pressing issues we face is the lack of accessible and affordable veterinary care, including spay and neuter services. The cost of veterinary care has risen dramatically, placing an enormous financial burden on pet parents and rescuers alike. This has had a ripple effect on animal overpopulation and the well-being of both rescued animals and those already in homes.

We urge the City government to **allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents**. These programs are essential not only to reducing the strain on animal shelters and preventing the cycle of overpopulation but also to fulfilling our duty to care for those who cannot care for themselves.

By rescuing these animals, we are not only saving individual lives but also addressing a larger societal issue. The humane treatment of animals reflects the values of our city, and we must lead by example in providing the resources necessary to protect and care for them. Expanding affordable veterinary care and spay/neuter services is a critical step toward ensuring that no animal is left behind, and that every person who wants to help can do so without facing insurmountable financial barriers.

In closing, we believe that every animal deserves a loving home, and every rescuer and pet parent deserves the support necessary to provide that care. We are calling on you, our elected officials, to stand with us and ensure

that NYC becomes a leader in humane, compassionate, and accessible animal care. The animals cannot speak for themselves, but together, we can be their voice and ensure they are heard.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dear Esteemed Council Members,

My name is Valentina Osorio, and I am a team member of LIC Feral Feeders (LICFF), a 501(c)3 nonprofit cat rescue based in Long Island City, Queens. LICFF is located in District 26 and I am a constituent of District 23. I currently serve as a Medical Coordinator and have been involved in the cat rescue field for 4 years. Our cat-loving group of volunteers at LICFF works on a wide range of initiatives to tackle the NYC cat overpopulation crisis and help the cat guardians of our community. However, we continue to be overwhelmed by rescue requests due to the severe lack of affordable services.

Council Members, I urge you to support city-funded high volume spay and neuter that would come at no to low cost for rescuers and pet owners alike. Cats in our neighborhoods are part of the NYC environment and population, and therefore, our city needs to provide adequate funding to resolve the population crisis and lessen the suffering our feline friends experience living outdoors. Due to the rising cost of pet care and a lack of low cost spay and neuter services, owned pets end up being abandoned or surrendered when their owners can no longer support them.

I have seen the result of not having these adequate resources in my own district where we have several colonies that end up having litter after litter which contributes to the overpopulation of strays. Having access to no to low cost spay and neuters will not only help the population of cats but also avoid altercations between intact cats that can be life threatening when lacking appropriate veterinary treatment. As a veterinary technician, I have seen many cats come in in bad conditions that could have been avoided if owners and rescuers had access to affordable services. Working at Maspeth Animal Hospital and Veterinary Emergency Group has served as an eye opener to the crisis that these cats and pets are facing because of the rise of cost of veterinary care. Not only will providing these services help reduce the flow of kittens in shelters and rescues but also improve the lives of existing cats.

We need your help making spay and neuter appointments more accessible both in quantity and cost. This will allow rescuers and cat owners to provide cats with the medical treatment and procedures they need in a timely manner. I hope you will support your constituents in advocating for the cats and people of our community.

Many thanks,

Valentina O.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Valeria Rosalez <valeriarosalez@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 3:28 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The State of Animal Rescue Testimony

[REDACTED]

My name is Valeria Rosalez and I am a volunteer for PuppyKitty NYCity and a pet parent to four cats. I help care for PKNYC cats that are available for adoption at Petco Industry City. The cost of veterinary care in NYC is so outrageous that people are abandoning their pets. I know this because there is a constant influx of cats that are so friendly they can't survive without human intervention. They are clearly indoor pets that have been abandoned. New York City is going through an affordability crisis that is unsustainable for pet owners of varying income levels. I deeply urge the city to allocate substantial funding for ultra-high volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents. The city also needs to create a city-wide TNR policy to help control the cat population by offering free spay/neuter for community cats. The city is currently failing to take any responsibility and leaving it up to New Yorkers who are financially strapped. We are one of the richest cities in the world, and yet we are doing nothing. New York City should be ashamed. Stray cats and dogs are New Yorkers, too.

--  
**Valeria Rosalez**  
[REDACTED]  
Brooklyn, NY

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Valerie Foley <v.r.foley@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 1:40 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] the state of animal rescue

[REDACTED]

Dear Sir or Madam:

I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need. This includes not only rescuers, who have been supplementing city services out of their own pockets, but also to pet owners who, since the pandemic, have found the costs of goods and services spiraling beyond their original budgets.

Sincerely,

Valerie Foley

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Valerie Vlasaty <valerie.v1107@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 4:22 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] City Council Meeting on 9/13 / TESTIMONY

[REDACTED]

I was unable to attend the City Council Health Committee Meeting on September 13th but would like to add my testimony to the many that have already spoken or written. My name is Valerie Vlasaty and I am the Intake Manager at KittyKind. We are a small, not for profit, all volunteer cat adoption group, our adoption center is at Petco, Union Square.

As intake manager I get about two dozen requests for help each week from people wanting to surrender their cats and from rescuers who are finding "stray" cats who are friendly and were dumped by owners who are no longer willing or able to care for them. Since covid the homeless cat situation has swelled to the extent that it is no longer manageable and many healthy adoptable cats are left outside to fend for themselves or are taken to a shelter where they are at high risk of euthanasia. The simple fact is that there are many more homeless cats than there are homes to care for them. The key to breaking this cycle is low cost spay neuter and basic vet care along with a program to educate the public on the necessity of getting their pets fixed.

Vet costs have skyrocketed in the last decade and the facilities for low cost spay/neuter have dried up putting the burden on individuals and small groups like ours to try to help with very limited resources. Fifteen years ago when I first volunteered with KittyKind we had 15 set appointments per month at ASPCA Glendale where we could get kittens or adult cats fixed for a nominal amount along with a rabies shot. Any extra services like vaccination or microchip could be added for a small fee. Besides the huge savings, the other advantage is that we didn't have to register or compete with other groups for these spots, we just had to show up with the cats on the third Saturday of every month. When Glendale closed, around the time of the covid quarantine, spay/neuter services went into a downward spiral.

It is my sincere hope that we can get back to a system where we no longer have to scramble and compete for each spay/neuter spot and/or reach deep into our pockets for these basic services. In addition it is vital that the public be made aware of the low cost spay/neuter services that do exist and that they be urged to take full advantage of them. I get cries for help on a regular basis from individuals whose cat population has gotten out of control (they now have 20 or more cats!) only because they failed to get their first cat fixed.

Thank you for taking the time to hear this testimony.

Sincerely,  
Valerie Vlasaty

Hello, Thank you for the opportunity to express my observations, experiences and concerns on the subject of animal welfare in nyc, particularly in regards to the stray, dumped, and feral cat population of New York City and all it's peripheral concerns.

I currently live in Bushwick, Brooklyn since 2010. I started rescuing street cats in the early 2000s when I lived in the lower East side of Manhattan. I knew a woman that taught me how to trap the stray kitties I would see when I came home late at night from my bartending job. I brought them all into my home and joked that I cleaned up norfolk street, which made the gentrification of the neighborhood much easier I'm sure. When I got out priced of being able to live there anymore is when I moved to Brooklyn. After seeing a hoarding situation in 2002 in deep Brooklyn that I volunteered to help with cleaning and moving cats to new locations , an experience which was traumatizing, I knew that when I relocated myself and my 7 lower East side rescue cats to Bushwick that I could not start taking in cats the same way I did in Norfolk street in fear of becoming a hoarding nightmare. I luckily learned of tnr and would soon become certified and start taking action on the streets of my immediate area.

Cut to, I now manage 3 colonies totaling about 15-20 outside cats most of whom have been tnr'd by myself and like minded neighbors, I feed them daily, I also have 17 indoor rescued, spayed and neutered Bushwick cats and I have placed into adopting homes about another 10 local rescue cats. This has become my routine over the past 10 years. I spend \$30 a day approximately on food for them all, the spay neuter bills have been sometimes free and with the help of rescue groups but at least half of them I have paid for out of pocket as well as car services to their surgeries. There is also the winter management including winter shelter purchasing and fabricating. I work a part time bartending and chef job and am a freelance astrologer and sag actor. My income is nowhere near secure enough to be taking on these expenses. I created a go fund me but fundraising is not my strong point, my electric bill is long past due, my rent is always 2-3 weeks late. And the best worst part is that when I do taxes I can't write off or claim as dependents any of the cat rescue work. However this is clearly a service to the community as I mentioned before" cleaning up norfolk street"

The lack of skilled vets left me heart broken after one of my attempts to tnr a favorite big orange guy named Big resulted in him dying post surgery at aspca because the vet tech gave him more sedative after he woke up post surgery,, I don't really understand the story but or seemed like malpractice of sorts, they still made me pay to get his ashes!

I've also experienced dealing with the haters. There are many ignorant people who are against the care routine I'm providing for the outdoor cats, claiming I'm feeding rats, going to such lengths as destroying their winter shelters, and placing loose poison in the outdoor environment subjecting me and other wildlife to illegal poisoning and also

unfortunately succeeding in killing a few of my beloved tnr friends. The harassment is very real. Thankfully recently I am meeting more supportive neighbors. But there are also the neighbors that point out the new colonies popping up expecting that I somehow magically have the time and resources to fix it. Because I am benevolent and generous by nature, it seems this attribute does not go unpunished.

I am exhausted, I am exhausted, I am broke, I am traumatized and I still have hope, this hearing gives me energy and hope.

Thank you

Vanessa Cleary

[Djness13@yahoo.com](mailto:Djness13@yahoo.com)



[REDACTED]

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**From:** Vanessa Michel Diaz <vanessamicheldiaz@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 12:48 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] My Urgent Request/Testimony for Pet Rescue Funding in New York City

[REDACTED]

Members of the New York City Council,

As a resident of Astoria, Queens, I have witnessed firsthand the immense challenges faced by neglected, abandoned, and sick animals and the tireless efforts of animal rescuers and non-profit organizations working to alleviate their suffering. Despite their dedication, the lack of accessible, affordable veterinary care and spay/neuter services has led to needless animal suffering. This issue can no longer be overlooked.

As a compassionate and civilized society, we have a moral obligation to ensure all animals' protection, safety, and well-being. **Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."** It is time for New York City to reflect this greatness.

I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding toward high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care for all New Yorkers, particularly animal rescuers and pet owners in need. By doing so, we can reduce animal suffering, support the individuals and organizations that work tirelessly to rescue and care for them, and ultimately improve the quality of life in our communities.

Thank you for considering this critical issue, and I hope we can work together to create a city where all living beings are treated with the compassion and care they deserve.

Sincerely,  
Vanessa Michel Diaz  
Resident, Astoria, Queens, NY

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Vanja Sredojevic <vanjasredojevic312@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 12:20 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Resident Testimony - State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

My name is Vanja Sredojevic, I live in Jackson Heights, Queens, NY.

This email concerns the recent hearing regarding the State of Animal Rescue.

As a New York City resident and registered voter, I urge the city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

As a pet parent and volunteer for a local rescue organization, I have seen first-hand the importance and urgency of this need. Please consider helping the kind people who spend countless hours trying to help abandoned, injured and loving animals.

Kind regards,

Vanja Sredojevic  
[REDACTED]

## CB testimony

As a long time Queens and NYC resident I have witnessed the dramatic increase in vet services over the past several years. This has led to residents abandoning their companion animals because they're unable to provide them with much needed healthcare.

While volunteering to help take care of community cats the strain on local rescuers who are left to solve this problem that affects all of us, all on their own with no support is tremendous. I've seen several rescuers burn out and run out of funds and have to quit both animal care and the city altogether.

This leads to even greater strain on the city's finances as it now has to support the adoption of these animals.

It's very evident both in my personal witness and from the experts that a slight increase in investment to support the volunteers who are doing so much work with access to cheaper vet services and coordination resources would not just help improve the lives of the people of the city and the animals of the city but would also save the city money on the back end as the number of animals needing support from the city would reduce.

I'm hoping the council takes this into consideration and provides a sufficient and sustained source of funding and resources for these hard working volunteers and city residents who are unable to afford basic vet services.

Sincerely,

Varun Prasad

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Veecha Woi <the\_veecha@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 1:15 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funding veterinary care

[REDACTED]

I write in support of government funding for an allocation of funds in humanely rescuing stray animals and providing affordable veterinary care to people who rescue and adopt animals.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Ronnie Campbell <theburrellgroup ltd@msn.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 12:53 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] NYC Council on the State of Animal Rescue

[REDACTED]

As a resident of Queens, New York, I'd like to offer my testimony urging our city government to allocate funds for an affordable high-volume, low-cost spay and neuter program, in addition to affordable veterinary care for rescue organizations and those who have pets.

The amount of money it requires to take care of a pet today is not sustainable for many. I know a great number of individuals, me included, who have gone into debt to treat their family pet. It's a sad reality that there are too many who can't afford vet care, or are not willing to do so, and will then euthanize or dump their pet with a local rescue or the NYACC.

There have been times that I have found a hurt or stray animal, and I'm very grateful for the local rescues of Queens, who I know could ill afford to take in a suffering or stray animal, but they do it anyway. I always try to donate to those who have helped me over the years, but I know donations hardly cover their overhead.

It's time for NYC to step up and offer an affordable spay/neuter program, affordable vet care, and provide more funds to be shared equitably between fully vetted non-profit animal rescue organizations of NYC. I'm not sure if this is on the slate, but it's also important we have more pet-friendly dwellings made available. I can only imagine how stressful it must be for someone who is moving and they have no choice but to give up their pet because it's not allowed. It's a sad story that I see too often on local rescue and NYACC social media feeds.

Please make all the above a reality! It is long overdue and will be a worthy investment for our great city, and I'm certain will positively impact the lives of NYC residents and their pets.

Sincerely,

Veronica Thomas Campbell  
[REDACTED] / Hollis, NY 11423  
[REDACTED] / [theburrellgroup ltd@msn.com](mailto:theburrellgroup ltd@msn.com)

Dear Sir or Madam,  
September 10, 2024

My name is Victoria Berkhin. I would like to introduce myself as a passionate animal advocate.

Through the years I have helped rescue animals - mostly stray, abandoned, and abused cats - and subsequently place them in loving homes.

Over the time of over 15 years my friends and I have cooperated in taking hundreds of young kittens as well as adult cats off the streets of Brooklyn and Staten Island, NY where we work and live. We have managed to put our very limited resources together doing all we could for these misfortunate creatures. Over the time, our homes have turned into miniature animal shelters, where cats are not only fed and cared for but vaccinated and spayed/neutered, if necessary. Many cats were sick and needed professional care. We have paid many veterinary clinics' bills from our own wallets. Nowadays, only visit to the vet costs about \$100. To fix a cat with TNR card costs from \$100 to \$150. And not all vets accept TNR rescuers.

Most of us are full time working people and most of us are women. We have to carry heavy metallic traps and stand on the street in any weather, at any time of the day, waiting for a cat to enter the trap. We have our own health problems, we have families, we have to take care of our children. It is very hard work that we do. We spend our time, our health, our strength, large amounts of money and in addition, the neighbors hate us. We are attacked by people not only verbally but sometimes we are physically abused. When we call the police, they do not protect us; they are on the side of the abusers. People around us throw out bowls with food and destroy the shelters we build for winter. Nobody protects poor animals and us. WE NEED PROTECTION. There is a law which protects animals, but it is useless. Oftentimes we ask the police to help to protect cats from the abusers, but they do nothing. The government should send warning letters to each family in the city to stop abusing animals. We need to help more people to see that all cats whether they are stray, feral or abandoned pets, are not responsible for their own misfortune of being homeless. All animal organizations which are usually government agencies: Animal Control, Human Society, ASPCA, Animal shelters, BAA and others are not helpful. There are thousands of animal organizations you can find on the internet, but they all are helpless.

This work should be done by the state and special organizations. The government should hire people and pay wages for this work.

It should be more free clinics and mobile hospitals in each borough of the city. Sometimes we travel from one borough to another to fix cats. To catch the spot we have to be in the system and have a license. Everything is very complicated.

I also would like to bring to your attention cats that are kept in Grocery Stores. Some owners keep them in a very poor condition. The cats live in basements without light, food and water. These owners keep them for catching mice. Sometimes we manage to save them too. Somebody must check these stores. People are so cruel.

**Animal breeding should be banned. People earn money from animals, when the animals leave their factory, breeders through them away or bring to the shelter.**

**My email: [mikeb651@hotmail.com](mailto:mikeb651@hotmail.com) My phone: [REDACTED]**

Dear City Council,

My name is Victoria Emem, and I'm a lifelong cat lover living in Briarwood, Queens. Despite facing financial challenges after being laid off last year, I've dedicated myself to helping the countless stray cats in my neighborhood.

With the support of PuppyKittyNYC, I've rescued and rehomed five cats, but the overwhelming number of strays this summer, especially kittens, has made it impossible for even them to keep up. That's why I became TNR certified and started trapping, neutering, and fostering cats myself. Thanks to Halo Veterinary in Nassau County, I've been able to access affordable spay and neuter services, but unfortunately, these options are limited within New York City.

I'm personally funding my efforts to improve the lives of these animals, but I can't do it alone. We need more accessible and affordable veterinary care options for all New Yorkers, including rescuers and pet parents.

I urge the city government to allocate significant funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter programs and affordable veterinary care for all. By investing in these initiatives, we can not only reduce the number of unwanted animals but also ensure that every pet in our city has the chance to live a healthy and happy life.

Thank you,

Victoria Emem

[vc.emem@gmail.com](mailto:vc.emem@gmail.com)

Dear Council Members.

I am an employee of the City of New York (Criminalist at NYPD Police Laboratory) and a full-time resident of NYC for the last thirty years.

Last summer I started feeding two stray kittens next to my house in South Ozone Park, Queens. The kittens' mother was nowhere around and they were meowing so loudly. We already had two pet cats inside the house. My husband was afraid that I will want to bring the two stray kittens inside with the start of the cold weather. To prevent our house becoming a four cat household he built a warm outside cat shelter. I didn't want those kittens to grow up and have their own litters (a single pair of cats and their kittens can produce as many as 420,000 kittens in just seven years). So I arranged my stray kittens to be neutered (both of them turned out to be males). This required trapping them, taking them to the vet, and holding them indoors for a couple of days after surgery to recuperate. The veterinarian has also provided rabies shot and administered flea medication. I paid for the vet's services.

Other cats started coming around our house during feeding times. I have taken two more stray cats to be fixed. Using my own funds. Luckily, I was able to be reimbursed for one of those surgeries by the charitable organization "Neighborhood Cats".

These experiences made me painfully aware of how dire is the situation with overpopulation of cats in NYC. The numerous citizens who are involved with the spay/neuter/rescue of stray and oftentimes sick cats are barely making a dent in this problem. People who own cats as pets are not always willing to pay to have them spayed/neutered. The cat who is not spayed/neutered is likely to escape from the house into the streets. These poor cats are facing a number of hazards in NYC. The cats are not safe in the streets even if they are being fed on a regular basis by people like myself. Speeding cars, evil people, raccoons, and heavy rains are all endangering their lives. One of my two original kittens was found dead in my driveway. I suspect he was poisoned. One of my other stray cats was killed by a car.

A neighbor on the next block who is trying to feed the strays to the best of her ability (on limited fixed retirement income) told me of so many kittens and cats who were eaten by raccoons, drowned during one of those torrential downpours, and hit by cars. In addition, even if someone is just feeding a cat on the street and that cat becomes sick/injured the feeder is probably going to try to treat the cat since they are already attached. Yes, there are some charitable organizations that do their best to raise funds to treat injured animals, however they just can't keep up: for every cat being taken off the streets, treated, and being listed for adoption there are many more kittens born. Unfortunately, there are just not enough Furever homes for all those cats.

I urge you to make funding available for affordable spay/neuter services so more people can prevent the birth of unwanted kittens by spaying and neutering their pets and the strays as well.

Regards,

Victoria Ivanova

As an individual resuer, not affiliated with the small local rescues, I have focused on helping neighbors in Queens with spay/neuter services offered by the ASPCA and North Shore Animal League. The limited services offered are in high demand and results in not being able to help all of our neighbors needed affordable spay/neuter services. This applies to both owned cats of low income NYC residents and community cats living in the street and being fed by kind NYC residents. Low cost veterinary care is also needed for both owned cats and community cats. I have spent thousands out of my own pocket to help cats who have needed medical care. The lack of affordable spay/neuter results in thousands of homeless kittens born in the street every year. Estimates are that 70% of them die on the streets. Friendly cats released in the streets because NYC residents cannot afford vet care or cat food can and have fallen in the hands of those who run illegal dog fighting rings. I myself have taken in 4 kittens from the street, which added to my 5 resident adopted cats results in very high cat food and veterinary bills that I cover.

WE urge city government to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

Viviana Perez

Wendy Montalvo



Howard Beach, NY 11414

Testimony: The Urgent Need for Low-Cost to No-Cost Spay and Neuter Services for TNR Certified Independent Caretakers

Hello, my name is Wendy, and I've been a TNR-certified independent caretaker since April 2023. I took the certification class in response to the overwhelming stray cat overpopulation in my neighborhood. Since then, I've worked tirelessly alongside other independent caretakers who feed and care for these animals. To date, I've TNR'd over 100 feral and abandoned cats that live in outdoor colonies throughout the area. This involves spending hours—mostly on weekends—waiting in my car or hidden behind structures for traps to close, then transporting the cats for surgery, providing vaccinations, and caring for them during recovery before returning them to their colonies.

One of my biggest challenges is the financial burden of getting these cats spayed and neutered. So far, I've spent close to \$10,000 out of pocket, as I do not have access to low-cost or no-cost services. Like many other caretakers, I'm struggling to cover these expenses, and it's limiting the number of cats I'm able to help.

I do this because I love animals, but the lack of affordable spay/neuter appointments and veterinary services is becoming unsustainable. I'm not independently wealthy—my savings are depleted, my credit cards are maxed out, and I've taken on side jobs just to pay them down. It's a never-ending cycle. With access to more affordable spay/neuter services and veterinary care, I could relieve the financial strain I'm under and do so much more for these animals. Right now, I'm overwhelmed and deeply concerned that the feral cat population will continue to grow without intervention.

In conclusion, I'm asking the NYC Council to invest in expanding programs that provide low-cost spay/neuter and veterinary services, especially for TNR-certified caretakers. These services are a cost-effective way to address overpopulation, reduce shelter intake, and ensure a more humane environment for all animals in our city. I hope that by sharing my story, I can raise awareness about the challenges faced by rescuers like me and highlight the urgent need for action to help our city's feral and abandoned cats.

I will continue doing what I can, one cat at a time, but I urge you to consider increasing access to low- or no-cost spay/neuter services, affordable veterinary care, and perhaps even funding options. Until then, I'll keep whispering my motto—borrowed from my favorite superhero, The Flash—'Just save one.'

Thank you for your time and consideration of this critical issue. I strongly encourage you to act swiftly to support these essential services.

Sincerely

Wendy Montalvo

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Will <wrosado@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 6:01 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Funding for Animal Rescue in NYC

[REDACTED]

Good evening,

I am writing to urge the City Council on the State of Animal Rescue to allocate substantial funding for high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter and affordable veterinary care for any New Yorker in need, including rescuers and pet parents.

I rescued an emaciated street cat with scabs all over her body. She needed care and was only 6 months old. We took her in, but she had many health issues that needed treatment and had not yet been spayed. During the early days of the Covid lockdown, I struggled to find any affordable providers who could treat her. Private Vets were charging \$800+ for care. We eventually received a significant discount from the Humane Society, who treated her and provided care, but this was only after exhausting all other options. There was a massive line at the Humane Society, and they were overwhelmed.

It is time for the City of New York to treat these defenseless animals with compassion and care. To let cats needlessly suffer in our community is upsetting, inhumane, and ethically and morally wrong. Please do the right thing and provide funding so that animal rescuers can have the resources they need to rescue these helpless creatures.  
Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,  
Will Rosado

--  
**Will Rosado**  
<http://www.williamrosado.com>  
[wrosado@gmail.com](mailto:wrosado@gmail.com)  
[https://www.instagram.com/pinkdiaz\\_art/](https://www.instagram.com/pinkdiaz_art/)

Honored members of the council and committee,

My name is Yanina and I am an independent cat rescuer in South Brooklyn.

My fellow rescuers and I do this work out of our own pocket. Many rescuers I know couldn't make it to the hearing, because they can't take a day off work as we always need every penny to help the cats in our neighborhoods.

Speaking from my own experience we are always picking up cats who were dumped on the street. Most of the time they are not spayed/neutered.

This past spring we had at least 8 cats dumped in just one area of Marine Park. They were most likely from a hoarding situation and 2 of them were so sick that they didn't even make it to the vet when they were rescued. The 3 that I picked up all ended up having some medical issues besides not being spayed/neutered.

The hoarding situations also happen when people who really do love and care for animals get overwhelmed with the costs and lack of availability of low cost spay/neuter programs.

There are places that offer these services at a lower cost, but because there are so few they cannot accommodate everybody who needs them. And waiting for an appointment for a few weeks can mean another litter of kittens.

Then it is just a snowball effect.

Same happens with the outside cat colonies, but in even greater numbers.

Kitten seasons get harder and longer each year.

However, besides spay/neuter services we desperately need other veterinary care at lower costs.

I've had to make the tough decision when the prognosis for a successful outcome of treatment was not good, but the cost of it was thousands if not tens of thousands of dollars. I don't wish on anyone to have to make that decision!

It is in your power to help New Yorkers and especially Rescuers to do the work we do!

It can be done through city-run veterinary centers or grants to organizations and even private vets (I am sure many of them would be happy to help if they were given the ability to do so).

And the public needs to be better informed about the available services for their pets. Many New Yorkers simply don't know how and where to find low cost spay/neuter services.

Information needs to be distributed to the various communities of NY, in the various languages that are spoken there.

Thank you for taking the time to read my statement!

## **Testimony- Feral Cat Crisis - Jamaica**

Hello, my name is Yvonne and I've lived in Jamaica for 30 years. Over the years, I've grown quite attached to the feral cats that have made our neighborhood their home.

I've tried to help them as much as I can, including trapping them for spay and neuter surgeries. Unfortunately, some of these cats can't be returned to their original locations due to safety concerns or health issues. It's heartbreaking to know that they have nowhere to go.

I believe we need a pathway for these cats to go to a sanctuary where they can live out their lives in peace. Additionally, for the friendly cats that are trapped and fixed, we should give them a chance at adoption by placing them in a cat-centric shelter.

These shelters can provide a more comfortable and welcoming environment for cats, increasing their chances of finding loving homes. It's important to create a TNR and Shelter system with a Sanctuary pathway that supports both the feral and friendly cat populations in our community. Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

## **Testimony: Addressing the Crisis of Stray Cats, Dog Surrenders, and Overburdened Shelters in NYC**

As a concerned advocate for animal welfare in New York City, I am compelled to highlight the ongoing crisis affecting our animal population, particularly in the face of stray and owned cat overpopulation, large dog surrenders, overburdened shelters, unaffordable veterinary care, and the rise of irresponsible backyard breeders.

First, stray and owned cats have reached alarming numbers in our city. Feral colonies continue to grow as more owned cats are abandoned by families facing financial hardship, housing instability, or unexpected challenges. Without accessible spay and neuter programs, these cats reproduce unchecked, leading to an unsustainable population that shelters cannot absorb. TNR (trap-neuter-return) efforts are helping, but the scale of the problem demands more comprehensive, citywide intervention.

Simultaneously, large dog breeds are being surrendered at an unprecedented rate. Families who adopted dogs during the pandemic are now returning them due to changes in living circumstances or the realization that they cannot meet the needs of larger dogs. These surrenders are overwhelming shelters already struggling with capacity issues. The lack of available space, coupled with a stagnant adoption rate, is pushing many of these animals into lengthy stays, jeopardizing their well-being and increasing the risk of euthanasia.

The burden on shelters is exacerbated by unaffordable veterinary care, making it difficult for many pet owners to provide basic health services for their animals. Veterinary costs, which include routine exams, vaccinations, and emergency care, have become increasingly out of reach for average New Yorkers. This has not only contributed to pet abandonment but also led to a growing population of sick or injured animals that shelters are left to treat, often with limited resources.

Furthermore, the proliferation of backyard breeders in the city is compounding these challenges. Unregulated and often motivated by profit, backyard breeders continue to produce animals without proper care or regard for responsible breeding practices. This reckless breeding fuels the overpopulation crisis, especially when animals are sold to uninformed or unprepared buyers who later surrender them.

New York City's animal welfare system is at a breaking point. The combination of stray and abandoned cats, rising dog surrenders, unaffordable vet care, and unethical breeding practices is straining our already overburdened shelters. Immediate and coordinated action is essential. We must invest in affordable spay and neuter services, offer low-cost veterinary care, tighten regulations on breeders, and support shelters in finding homes for the many animals waiting for their second chance.

The time to act is now, before the crisis deepens beyond repair. Together, we can create a compassionate and sustainable future for our city's animals.

Good day people of the committee,

I am a parent to three cats; Darcy, Molly and Chimmy. They have become beloved members of this family and I work hard to make sure they receive the best life a cat deserves to have. Based on personal belief, I am thankful to God for giving me the sufficient income to ensure that my cats receive excellent veterinary services however I do wish I could provide for more. Such as extra services and to be able to take them to the vet as often as I want to make sure they are healthy. It's not fair in having to choose which cats get what services and how much money can be put into each cat.

I am a passionate cat lover and unfortunately due to how expensive and the lack of support within the NYC government and animal rescuers limits my passion in wanting to take part of NYC animal rescuers community. I occasionally feed cats around me and that's the only thing I can do because I am aware of the challenges animal rescuers face everyday to ensure the cats in their care receive the most from them. I have seen dead cats that should've had a chance to live at least one day a life of my own cats. Two of my cats were found in the streets and I hate imagining what would've been of them if they hadn't been found by me. I cry feeling helpless over other cats that deserve a quality life but due to circumstances out of their control, live and die not knowing a life that God intended them to have.

It is within our hands as a community to ensure a member of it receives the best of humanity, the same way we work to ensure children, a voiceless member of our community, we should push and work together to ensure animals receive at least a grain of what humanity can be. As caretakers of this earth God has given us, it is our job to provide a high quality of life for these animals. Regardless of the mistakes our biblical forefathers have committed, the original plan was to enjoy the fruits of earth and to live in peace with the animals, and that can be it's goal once again by redirecting financial support towards low cost spay/neuter services and veterinary services to make it happen.

It will take a long time to make it happen but it starts now. I would like to imagine that thanks to the work each committee member takes in making this happen your future generations will enjoy giving the best of humanity towards future furry family members.

Thank you for your time and for the consideration you'll be giving to this letter. May you continue feeling humane towards the voiceless and based on personal belief, that when the time comes for us to be called God will personally thank you for being another guardian for the creatures He dedicated the time in creating.

Thank you once again. Blessings to you and your family.

[REDACTED]

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**From:** Claire C <claire@brooklynanimalaction.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 16, 2024 5:20 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Hearing on Health

- [REDACTED]
- As a rescuer for 18 years and a founding member of Brooklyn Animal Action I believed all our hard work would help things get better for cats after a decade or so not worse. Since Brooklyn Animal Actions founding in 2010 we have adopted out 600-1000 cats year (not including deaths or TNR), our costs in 2010 were 100K and are now over 350K, tripling in 14 years without an increase in capacity. We are all volunteer-run non-profit who is always in the red and we are all working full time jobs.
  - Lack of funding to ACC means they are constantly asking rescuers to cover bigger vet bills that the city should be covering.
  - There is no Animal Cruelty Committee or help of any sort in nyc despite testimony to the contrary by DOH and the mayors one animal advocate.
  - ASPCA appts can't come close to filling the need and offer nothing on weekends requiring rescuers to take off from work to get animals fixed if they can get an appointment. The city needs to step up and offer free and accessible Spay/neuter for all pets.
  - There is no city agency that helps with hoarders, cruelty, animals locked in empty apartments, or closed stores. No one to call, no one to help and rescuers have to call and try to convince police and and missing landlords to let them in before animals starve to death
  - Onerous rules for all landlords meant to help renters are forcing small landlords to sell their properties-which are then purchased by LLCs who increase rents and institute no pet policies.

**There are Solutions to these problems:**

- \* To increase pro pet policies for landlords : tax breaks to landlords if the allow pets- larger for big dogs or multiple pets, etc
- \* Onerous laws (parapet inspections, trash laws that change every few months, fines for a sighting or rat feces when the city construction is causing rat displacement, lead laws [that are impossible to adhere to given lead being tracked in from the street] should be adjusted so small landlords don't sell their properties because they can't keep up with cityrules and regulations
- \* DOH should have nothing to do with ACC or any animal welfare since they do not care
- \* ACC needs funding to do their own spay/neuter which they do not do, they send the animals to ASPCA
- \* More money that goes to the rescuers going broke trying to save animals the city ignores
- \* Effective city agencies who are well funded to do the work

**Solutions for scarce vets:**

Scholarships and debt forgiveness for veterinarian and vet tech graduates willing to work for rescue friendly vets or shelters in nyc for a minimum of 5 years

Thank you for listening,

Claire

--

Claire

Rescuer, Foster, Volunteer, Co-founder

See 2 of our Rescuers in the film, [The Cat Rescuers](#) which you can now stream on Google Play, Amazon and Vudu!

See our adoptable pets:

<http://www.AdoptaPet.com/shelter79002-cats.html>

Follow us on Instagram!

[@brooklynanimalaction](#)

BAA is a 501c3 Non-profit All-Volunteer Animal Rescue – Certified TNR and Rescue

<http://www.brooklynanimalaction.org>

"Not being able to govern events, I govern myself."– Michel de Montaigne

## NYC COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE MEETING ON ANIMAL RESCUES – 9/13/24

I am writing to thank the Health Committee for conducting a Meeting on Animal Rescues, and on behalf of the animals who need our efforts and voices to simply survive. We were so very disappointed to find that every other member of the Committee (except for Chair Schulman and Council Member Ariola) whose salaries are all paid for by NYC taxpayers, was MIA and feel that this was unconscionable and unacceptable. Clearly, most members of the Health Committee, did not even feel it was necessary to fulfill their obligation or worth their time to be present at this meeting and where animals are concerned, have been missing in action for years!

I have been an animal advocate, a dedicated animal rights activist and networker for animals and especially for those helpless, voiceless animals on the streets and in our shelters, for more than 30 years. I have attended numerous City Council meetings over the years, and would like to share my comments and observations re the Hearing, with you.

The “elephant” in the City Council Meeting room, on September 13, 2024, was the unspoken and abject FAILURE of the leadership of NYC Animal Care Centers, of NYC's Mayor and officials, and of the general membership of the Health Committee of the NYC City Council, with the exception of Council Member Ariola, to hold NYC ACC and the inept, derelict Department of Health accountable and responsible for the unconscionable and immoral increase in the number of healthy, treatable, adoptable animals being killed in our tax-payer supported failed shelter system, even while the intake rate has gone down.

Rescuers have been saddled with a responsibility that they carry out with compassion and dedication and at great personal sacrifice, because of the failure of the City and State to provide them with adequate funding and resources. Furthermore, the current dire situation is due to ACC's total failure - in one of the wealthiest cities in the world, and with a population of more than 8 million people - to make the necessary efforts to find homes for the animals; in fact, it is not unusual to find friendly, loving house cats who have been “dumped” into a community cat colony, often because of the difficulties involved in surrendering an animal to our shelter system. With a 34 year contract, to the tune of one and a half billion dollars, NYC ACC continues to cry poverty, decrease services and hours for adoption as well as necessary care for the animals, who are generally drugged upon entry, whether they need it or not. Unbelievably, the justification and worn-out excuses that are promoted by ACC, claim that they are killing animals for illnesses (mostly treatable and contracted while at ACC) or concocted behavioral issues (mostly situational - fear and stress-induced) as well as for “space” i.e. the lack thereof, when volunteers have claimed there have been empty cages in the shelters. Why in this day and age, is there even a “permissible” acceptance of killing our beloved companion animals rather than an all-out focus on rehabilitating and saving and securing safe, loving homes for dogs and cats?

There is an obvious lack of commitment to the animals NYC ACC is paid to “shelter” and find homes for. The Shelter Director, Risa Weinstock, is clearly totally ineffective and should have been removed and replaced long ago. Her lack of creativeness and dedication, the absence of vision, and the inexcusable inertia – as ACC continues to use the same old playbook, same old “excuses” - to justify killing/and “oops” mistakes, in conjunction with their failed paradigm - instead of fully adopting and implementing the life-saving and successful “No-Kill Equation” (<https://www.nathanwinograd.com/the-no-kill-equation/>).

The new Queens shelter (an inexcusably ill-conceived and costly shelter, to begin with), had the shameful audacity to begin killing animals **on DAY ONE!!!!** Why was there no effort to instead offer free adoptions and services? To make that day, one with a great deal of fanfare, press, and celebration, with community invited in and focused on getting the animals homes? It costs more to kill and dispose of dead animals, than to find safe, loving homes or rescues for them, but it is simply easier to kill the animals than to make the necessary efforts for adoptions or finding additional space elsewhere. And where are those adoption events and adoption vans, that are supposed to be out in the city? Where are the events that would bring families into the shelters?

The “elephant” is staring us all in the face...unless you’re talking about Happy, the elephant in the Bronx Zoo who, inexplicably, has not been seen in months (see Meeting Testimony by Roxanne Delgado).

Thank you again, and on behalf of the members of People for the End of Animal Cruelty and Exploitation~PEACE, I look forward to hearing from you with a follow-up to all the grievances and issues that have been raised.

Zelda Penzel

## **Testimony for City Council Hearing, 9/13/24, regarding “Oversight - The State of Animal Rescue in New York City.”**

Hello, my name is Christine, and I've lived in Rosedale, Southeast Queens for over 15 years. Our backyard has always been a sanctuary for a small colony of feral cats. I've provided them with food, shelter, and occasional medical care.

Over the years, I've noticed a growing number of feral cats in the neighborhood. It's heartbreaking to see them struggling to survive. Losing a cat or kitten is a painful experience, especially when it's due to a car accident. Many people want to help but are unsure where to start. There's a significant lack of accessible resources and information for those seeking to make a difference.

I've tried to assist as much as possible, but it's been challenging. Finding affordable veterinary care in Rosedale, particularly for feral cats, is difficult. And at times, I've felt overwhelmed by the sheer number of cats in need.

Fortunately, I was able to TNR my colony in 2020 after a chance meeting with a neighbor who had experience navigating the rescue community outside of Rosedale and NYC. This was a breakthrough after years of unsuccessful attempts to find assistance from rescuers in NYC outside of Rosedale because there are no accessible resources here.

I believe the city needs to provide more support to Rosedale and Southeast Queens. Low-cost spay and neuter clinics, community education programs, and increased access to TNR resources would make a significant impact. These measures would empower residents like me to care for feral cats and create a more sustainable and humane environment for these animals.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

# Cat Crisis Possible Solution

Trapperaid is a platform that centralizes services (funds, holding space, transport) while providing local governments access to data about the numbers of spayed/neutered cats, their treatment cost, and veterinary offices that offer discounted services to feral cats.

Visit: [www.catcrisispossiblesolution.com](http://www.catcrisispossiblesolution.com) to find out more about the Trapperaid project.

TrapperAid@gmail.com

 **Trapperaid** How it works Create account Login 

# Trapperaid

Trapperaid is a platform that connects individuals involved in Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), enabling them to access and offer essential services.

After becoming a member, you will be able to

-  Raise funds to spay/neuter your colony cats.
-  Find and offer trapping services, holding space, and transportation.
-  Schedule veterinary appointments.

[JOIN TRAPPERAID](#)



Read more about Trapperaid on promo website:  
[www.catcrisispossiblesolution.com](http://www.catcrisispossiblesolution.com)

## Services available



### FUNDRAISING

Raise money for spay/neuter appointments and unexpected medical treatments.



### HOLDING SPACE

Find or offer holding space for the cats before and after their appointments.



### COLONY TRANSPORT

Find available drivers or become a driver to assist with colony transport.



### SCHEDULE VETS APPOINTMENTS

Schedule spay/neuter appointments with partnering veterinary clinics.



### TRAPPING

Find experienced trappers to assist with catching a colony or help others with trapping.

## Not a TNR person, but still want to help? Donate to our cats colonies fundraisers.

Location  
Ridgewood, Queens, New York, NY  

 <p><b>Sweet Tabbies' Colony</b> Ridgewood, Queens, NY Gathered funds: \$2545</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p>	 <p><b>Crazy Strays' Colony</b> Ridgewood, Queens, NY Gathered funds: \$545</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p>	 <p><b>Kings' Colony</b> Ridgewood, Queens, NY Gathered funds: \$3090</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p>	 <p><b>Only Boys' Colony</b> Ridgewood, Queens, NY Gathered funds: \$600</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p>
 <p><b>Sweet Tabbies' Colony</b> Ridgewood, Queens, NY Gathered funds: \$2545</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p>	 <p><b>Crazy Strays' Colony</b> Ridgewood, Queens, NY Gathered funds: \$545</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p>	 <p><b>Kings' Colony</b> Ridgewood, Queens, NY Gathered funds: \$3090</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p>	 <p><b>Only Boys' Colony</b> Ridgewood, Queens, NY Gathered funds: \$600</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p>
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[SHOW MORE](#)

TrapperAid@gmail.com



# Join Trapperaid

By joining the Trapperaid platform you support the TNR initiative and help reduce the homeless cat population.

### Create Account

Use your real name and last name for verification purposes.

First Name  
Alexa

Last Name  
Kyler

E-mail  
alexatrapperaid@gmail.com

Password  
\*\*\*\*\*

Re-type Password  
\*\*\*\*\*

Take a selfie  
Please enable the camera on your computer or device



Why am I asked for a selfie?  
Trapperaid wants to create a safe community for TNR practitioners making sure that the person registering the account is truly a real person.

Provide government ID



Drag and drop here

or Upload 

Why should I upload the government issued ID?  
We will match your selfie with your photo ID and name provided on it. Make sure you register under your real name and not a nickname for verification purposes. The verification is necessary to join the platform. Please read the information below to find out more. Once approved to the platform, you will get a confirmation e-mail. The whole process might take up to 24 hours.

[JOIN TRAPPERAID](#)

## Why am I asked to verify my identity?

People have their own beliefs when it comes to spaying/neutering the animals and preventing their overpopulation. Plenty of people and colony's feeders don't follow the healthy TNR practices further worsening the problem of homeless cats and contributing to suffering of the animals on the streets.

Many TNR practitioners face challenges created by these people who want to prevent or prohibit TNR. The wildlife protection communities are fighting back with TNR program claiming that it is helping cats to thrive due to a regular feedings. This cannot be further from the truth.

By verifying your profile, we want to make sure we don't give an access to our community to those misled by a false information and their own personal beliefs. We don't want to give the opportunity to the people to sabotage the platform and destroy the efforts of volunteers that fight every day to improve the quality of homeless cats.

Your personal information is not used in any mean. It is stored in our system for a security reasons.



#### General

- About Trapperaid
- How It works
- Trappers Stories
- Become a Trapper
- Contact

#### Legal

- Terms & Conditions
- Privacy Policy
- Colony's Confidentiality
- Report Colony's Abuse
- FAQ

#### Mission

- What TNR stands for
- Why donate to Trapperaid?
- Volunteer at Trapperaid
- Partnering Vets Centers & Vets
- Become TNR Person

#### Resources

- Spay/Neuter Appointments
- Holding Spaces
- Transport
- Trappers
- Partnering Vets Centers & Vets



### YOUR PROFILE

Please, tell us what you want to do:

- I want to raise funds to fix a colony
- I want to provide holding space
- I want to provide transport
- I want to help trap cats

#### About me:

Hi! I'm Alexa! I am the founder of Trapperaid and an avid lover of cats. I created this platform with a team of dedicated working professionals in an effort to connect the TNR community together so they can offer each other critical resources and services. I believe that together we can make the world a better place.



Drag and drop here your profile image

or Upload

**Personal Information**

Full Name: Alexa Kyler  
 E-mail address: alexatrapperaid@gmail.com  
 Phone number: +1 675-865-4336

To change your personal details go to Settings. If you want to change your first and last name you will have to get verified again. Your new name must match your government issued ID.

### Manage Activities

- RAISE FUNDS FOR YOUR COLONY'S CATS ▼
- ADD HOLDING SPACE YOU WANT TO PROVIDE ▼
- ADD TRANSPORT YOU WANT TO PROVIDE ▼



**FIND TRAPPERS/  
HOLDING SPACE/  
TRANSPORT**

Find help



**SEARCH FUNDRAISERS**

Donate to Colony's Fundraisers.



**USE GATHERED FUNDS**

Pay at the veterinary center now.



**SCHEDULE SPAY/  
NEUTER APPT**

Schedule an appointment with the vet.



**Trapperaid**

Providing resources to the TNR community.

**General**

- [About Trapperaid](#)
- [How it works](#)
- [Trappers Stories](#)
- [Become Trapper](#)
- [Contact](#)

**Legal**

- [Terms & Conditions](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Colony's Confidentiality](#)
- [Report Colony's Abuse](#)
- [FAQ](#)

**Mission**

- [What TNR stands for](#)
- [Why donate to Trapperaid?](#)
- [Volunteer at Trapperaid](#)
- [Work at Trapperaid](#)
- [Become TNR Person](#)

**Resources**

- [Spay/Neuter Appointments](#)
- [Holding Spaces](#)
- [Transport](#)
- [Trappers](#)
- [Partnering Vets Centers & Vets](#)



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# Schedule the spay/neuter appointment

Schedule the appointment with our partnering vets or find an information about the vets outside the network.

### Your location:

Type either your location or the area where you want to spay/neuter the cats. We will match given location with the closest veterinary office in that area. your area.

60-67 Myrtle Ave, Ridgewood, NY 11385

### Partnering Vets

<p>1 mile away</p> <p><b>Animal Clinics of Queens</b></p> <p>6512 Fresh Pond Rd, Flushing, NY 11385 +1718-4176-200 <a href="https://www.geniusvets.com">https://www.geniusvets.com</a></p> <p><a href="#">Schedule Appointment</a></p>	<p>2 miles away</p> <p><b>Glendale Vet Clinic</b></p> <p>67-40 Myrtle Ave, Queens, NY 11385 +1347-5991-335 <a href="http://www.glendalevetclinic.com">http://www.glendalevetclinic.com</a></p> <p><a href="#">Schedule Appointment</a></p>	<p>3 miles away</p> <p><b>Veterinary Care Group</b></p> <p>6209 Fresh Pond Rd, Middle Village, NY 11379 +1718-386-0655 <a href="https://www.veterinarycaregroup.com">https://www.veterinarycaregroup.com</a></p> <p><a href="#">Schedule Appointment</a></p>
<p>4 miles away</p> <p><b>Neighborhood Vet</b></p> <p>169 Central Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11221 +1718-456-2168 <a href="https://theneighborhoodvet.org">https://theneighborhoodvet.org</a></p> <p><a href="#">Schedule Appointment</a></p>	<p>5 miles away</p> <p><b>Vet Wheels</b></p> <p>244 Knickerbocker Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11237 +1718-4902-412 <a href="https://vetwheels.com/">https://vetwheels.com/</a></p> <p><a href="#">Schedule Appointment</a></p>	<p>6 miles away</p> <p><b>Bushwick Veterinary Center</b></p> <p>4 Porter Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11237 +1347-725-3900 <a href="http://www.bushwickveterinarycenter.com">http://www.bushwickveterinarycenter.com</a></p> <p><a href="#">Schedule Appointment</a></p>

### Out of network

Schedule the appointment via the vet's website or a phone call. Use Trapperaid card or the platform to pay for the surgeries.

<p>7 miles away</p> <p><b>Williamsburg Animal Clinic</b></p> <p>760 Grand St, Brooklyn, NY 11211 +1718-302-2420 <a href="http://www.williamsburgvetny.com/">http://www.williamsburgvetny.com/</a></p> <p><a href="#">Schedule Appointment</a></p>	<p>8 miles away</p> <p><b>Bedford-Stuy Veterinary Clinic</b></p> <p>1403 Fulton St, Brooklyn, NY 11216 +1718-6225-7511 <a href="https://www.bedstuyveterinary.com/">https://www.bedstuyveterinary.com/</a></p> <p><a href="#">Schedule Appointment</a></p>	<p>9 miles away</p> <p><b>Bond Vet - Bed-Stuy</b></p> <p>1134 Fulton St, Brooklyn, NY 11216 +1212-9708-9393 <a href="https://bondvet.com/">https://bondvet.com/</a></p> <p><a href="#">Schedule Appointment</a></p>
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#### General

- [About Trapperaid](#)
- [How it works](#)
- [Trappers Stories](#)
- [Become Trapper](#)
- [Contact](#)

#### Legal

- [Terms & Conditions](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Colony's Confidentiality](#)
- [Report Colony's Abuse](#)
- [FAQ](#)

#### Mission

- [What TNR stands for](#)
- [Why donate to Trapperaid?](#)
- [Volunteer at Trapperaid](#)
- [Partnering Vets Centers & Vets](#)
- [Become TNR Person](#)

#### Resources

- [Spay/Neuter Appointments](#)
- [Holding Spaces](#)
- [Transport](#)
- [Trappers](#)
- [Partnering Vets Centers & Vets](#)



[Trapperaid](#)
[FIND HELP](#)
[SEARCH FUNDRAISERS](#)
[PAY AT THE VET](#)
[SCHEDULE APPOINTMENT](#)

# Find Help

## Find Trapper, Holding Space, and Transport

- Find a Trapper and ask them to help you with trapping colony cats.
- Search for available holding spaces. Reserve the holding space.
- Search for transport. Book a lift with a driver.

### FIND TRAPPER

[Trappers](#)
[Holding Spaces](#)
[Transport](#)

Where: **Ridgewood, Queens, New York, NY**
 What Trapper does: **Willing to assist in trapping**

**Alexa Kyler**  
What Trapper does

About: Hi! My name is Alexa. I'm TNR certified and have been involved in TNR for...

[Full Profile](#)

**Susana Ginter**  
What Trapper does

About: I am living in Queens and I am willing to help in trapping the colony cats in my...

[Full Profile](#)

**Maribel Garcia**  
What Trapper does

About: I am the TNR member willing to teach the others how to do TNR properly. I am...

[Full Profile](#)

**Mark Smith**  
What Trapper does

About: I am a student of Cornell Veterinary University and I would like to get invol...

[Full Profile](#)

**Eloise Black**  
What Trapper does

About: Hi! My name is Eloise. I'm TNR certified and have been involved in TNR for...

[Full Profile](#)

**Margaret Brown**  
What Trapper does

About: Hi! My name is Alexa. I'm TNR certified and have been involved in TNR for...

[Full Profile](#)

**Robert O' Connor**  
What Trapper does

About: Hi! My name is Alexa. I'm TNR certified and have been involved in TNR for...

[Full Profile](#)

**Chantel Dune**  
What Trapper does

About: Hi! My name is Alexa. I'm TNR certified and have been involved in TNR for...

[Full Profile](#)

**Katarzyna Druch**  
What Trapper does

About: Hi! My name is Alexa. I'm TNR certified and have been involved in TNR for...

[Full Profile](#)

**Elena Piotrovich**  
What Trapper does

About: Hi! My name is Alexa. I'm TNR certified and have been involved in TNR for...

[Full Profile](#)

**Andrew Rock**  
What Trapper does

About: Hi! My name is Alexa. I'm TNR certified and have been involved in TNR for...

[Full Profile](#)

**Martha Stewart**  
What Trapper does

About: Hi! My name is Alexa. I'm TNR certified and have been involved in TNR for...

[Full Profile](#)

[SHOW MORE](#)

**Trapperaid**  
 Providing resources to the TNR community

**General**

- About Trapperaid
- How it works
- Trapper Stories
- Become Trapper
- Contact

**Legal**

- Terms & Conditions
- Privacy Policy
- Colony's Confidentiality
- Report Colony Abuse
- FAQ

**Mission**

- What TNR stands for
- Why donate to Trapperaid?
- Volunteer at Trapperaid
- Partnering with Centers & Vets
- Become TNR Person

**Resources**

- Spay/Neuter Appointments
- Holding Spaces
- Transport
- Trappers
- Partnering with Centers & Vets

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Trapperaid FIND HELP SEARCH FUNDRAISERS PAY AT THE VET SCHEDULE APPOINTMENT

# Find Help

Find Trapper, Holding Space, and Transport

- Find a Trapper and ask them to help you with trapping colony cats.
- Search for available holding spaces. Reserve the holding space.
- Search for transport. Book a lift with a driver.

## FIND HOLDING SPACE

Trappers Holding Spaces Transport

Where: Ridgewood, Queens, New York, NY Availability: 21/06/24 - 24/06/24 Sq Feet: +1000

**Alexa's Cat House**  
Amenities: Water, Windows, Light  
Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space

**Kitty's Club**  
Amenities: AC, Light  
Availability: 04/01/24 - 08/24/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
I am happy to host a few cats before.

Check Holding Space

**Bridges House**  
Amenities: Windows, Light  
Availability: 05/10/24 - 12/24/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space

**Maggie's Catuary**  
Amenities: Water, Light  
Availability: 02/21/24 - 12/17/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space

**Zora's Space**  
Amenities: Water, Second Entry  
Availability: 01/21/24 - 12/24/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space

**Cathouse**  
Amenities: Light, AC  
Availability: 02/21/24 - 09/15/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space

**Queen's House**  
Amenities: Windows, Water  
Availability: 03/21/24 - 11/10/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space

**Mary Jane Place**  
Amenities: Light, Second Entry  
Availability: 04/21/24 - 10/09/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space

**Robert's Tavern**  
Amenities: AC, Water, Light  
Availability: 05/21/24 - 12/04/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space

**Catoland**  
Amenities: Windows, Light, AC  
Availability: 04/02/24 - 11/11/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space

**House of Cats**  
Amenities: Second Entrance, AC  
Availability: 04/03/24 - 10/14/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space

**Crazy Catland**  
Amenities: Water, Windows  
Availability: 06/13/24 - 08/18/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space

SHOW MORE

Trapperaid Providing resources to the TNR community.

**General**

- About Trapperaid
- How it works
- Trappers Stories
- Become Trapper
- Contact

**Legal**

- Terms & Conditions
- Privacy Policy
- Colony's Confidentiality
- Report Colony's Abuse
- FAQ

**Mission**

- What TNR stands for
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- Volunteer at Trapperaid
- Partnering Vets Centers & Vets
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- Transport
- Trappers
- Partnering Vets Centers & Vets

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Share

Ridgewood, Queens, NY 11385

### Alexa's Cat House

#### About

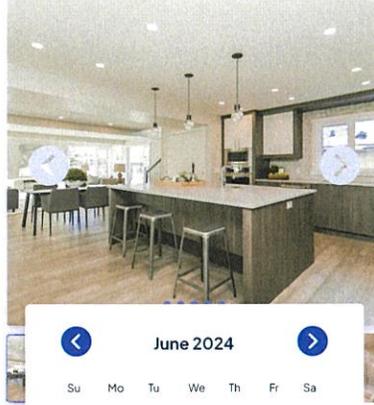
My house in Ridgewood is very large. I have 3 bedrooms and one large basement here, and I am willing to rent the basement to a Trapper. You can use the water and sink...My house in Ridgewood is very large. I have 3 bedrooms and one large basement here, and I am willing to rent the basement to a Trapper. You can use the water.

How many square feet does the place have?

+1000

#### Amenities:

- Windows
- Light
- Water (sink, shower, etc.)
- A/C
- Second Entrance



June 2024

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

You should reserve at least 3 days in a row as cats need at least 2 days to recover.

#### HOST INFO



Alexa Kyler  
Host | Caretaker



#### Do you need a transport?

Good news! Alexa is a driver too, and she's available to drive on 24/06/2024 in the Evening from 6 pm - 9 pm. Do you want to book her for a lift?

BOOK A LIFT

#### SIMILAR HOLDING SPACES IN THE AREA



##### Lucy's House

Amenities: Water, Windows, Light  
Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
Sq Feet: +1000

About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space



##### Kitty's Club

Amenities: A/C, Light  
Availability: 06/01/24 - 08/24/24  
Sq Feet: +1000

About  
I am happy to host a few cats before.

Check Holding Space



##### Bridge House

Amenities: Windows, Light  
Availability: 05/10/24 - 12/24/24  
Sq Feet: +1000

About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space



##### Maggie's Catnary

Amenities: Water, Light  
Availability: 02/21/24 - 12/17/24  
Sq Feet: +1000

About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space



#### General

- [About Trapperaid](#)
- [How it works](#)
- [Trappers Stories](#)
- [Become Trapper](#)
- [Contact](#)

#### Legal

- [Terms & Conditions](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Colony's Confidentiality](#)
- [Report Colony's Abuse](#)
- [FAQ](#)

#### Mission

- [What TNR stands for](#)
- [Why donate to Trapperaid?](#)
- [Volunteer at Trapperaid](#)
- [Partnering Vets Centers & Vets](#)
- [Become TNR Person](#)

#### Resources

- [Spay/Neuter Appointments](#)
- [Holding Spaces](#)
- [Transport](#)
- [Trappers](#)
- [Partnering Vets Centers & Vets](#)





Share

Ridgewood, Queens, NY 11385

### Alexa's Cat House

#### About

My house in Ridgewood is very large. I have 3 bedrooms and one large basement here, and I am willing to rent the basement to a Trapper. You can use the water and sink...My house in Ridgewood is very large. I have 3 bedrooms and one large basement here, and I am willing to rent the basement to a Trapper. You can use the water.

How many square feet does the place have?

+1000

#### Amenities:

- Windows
- Light
- Water (sink, shower, etc.)
- A/C
- Second Entrance



### CONGRATULATIONS!

You have booked Lucy's House to be your holding space from 12/03/2024 to 15/03/2024!

You can cancel the reservation anytime. Good luck with trapping the cats! Stay in touch with the Host and keep it updated about your trapping progress.

MESSAGE HOST

CLOSE WINDOW

#### HOST INFO



Alexa Kyler  
Host | Caretaker

#### Do you need a transport?

Good news! Alexa is a driver too, and she's available to drive on 24/06/2024 in the Evening from 6 pm - 9 pm. Do you want to book her for a lift?

BOOK A LIFT

#### SIMILAR HOLDING SPACES IN THE AREA



#### Lucy's House

Amenities: Water, Windows, Light  
Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
Sq Feet: +1000

#### About

My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space



#### Kitty's Club

Amenities: AC, Light  
Availability: 06/01/24 - 08/24/24  
Sq Feet: +1000

#### About

I am happy to host a few cats before.

Check Holding Space



#### Bridge House

Amenities: Windows, Light  
Availability: 05/10/24 - 12/24/24  
Sq Feet: +1000

#### About

My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space



#### Maggie's Catuary

Amenities: Water, Light  
Availability: 02/21/24 - 12/17/24  
Sq Feet: +1000

#### About

My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space



#### General

- [About Trapperaid](#)
- [How it works](#)
- [Trappers' Stories](#)
- [Become a Trapper](#)
- [Contact](#)

#### Legal

- [Terms & Conditions](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Colony & Confidentiality](#)
- [Report Colony's Abuse](#)
- [FAQ](#)

#### Mission

- [What TNR stands for](#)
- [Why donate to Trapperaid?](#)
- [Volunteer at Trapperaid](#)
- [Partnering Vets Centers & Vets](#)
- [Become TNR Person](#)

#### Resources

- [Spay/Neuter Appointments](#)
- [Holding Spaces](#)
- [Transport](#)
- [Trappers](#)
- [Partnering Vets Centers & Vets](#)





# Find Help

Find Trapper, Holding Space, and Transport



Find a Trapper and ask them to help you with trapping colony cats.



Search for available holding spaces. Reserve the holding space.



Search for transport. Book a lift with a driver.



## FIND TRANSPORT

Trappers

Holding Spaces

Transport

Where: **Ridgewood, Queens, NY** | Availability: **21/06/24 - 24/...** | Daytime: **Evening 6pm - 9pm** | Able to drive: **up to 20...**



**Alexa's Car**  
 Able to drive up to 10 miles  
 Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
 Daytime: Evening 6 pm - 9 pm  
 About  
 My car is very large and I can fit in it.

Check Transport



**Blue Lagoon**  
 Able to drive up to 10 miles  
 Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
 Daytime: Morning 7 am - 12 am  
 About  
 My Silver Dicks is a brand new and it's

Check Transport



**Jerry's Car**  
 Able to drive up to 5 miles  
 Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
 Daytime: Afternoon 12 pm - 6 pm  
 About  
 I am happy to drive a Trapper with the

Check Transport



**Orange Honda**  
 Able to drive up to 15 miles  
 Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
 Daytime: All Day 7 am - 9 pm  
 About  
 Used to trap, but now I drive only due

Check Transport



**Pandora**  
 Able to drive up to 5 miles  
 Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
 Daytime: Evening 6 pm - 9 pm  
 About  
 My car is very large and I can fit in it.

Check Transport



**Captain Marvel**  
 Able to drive up to 8 miles  
 Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
 Daytime: Morning 7 am - 12 am  
 About  
 My Silver Dicks is a brand new and it's

Check Transport



**Zoey's Machine**  
 Able to drive up to 5 miles  
 Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
 Daytime: Afternoon 12 pm - 6 pm  
 About  
 I am happy to drive a Trapper with the

Check Transport



**Rocket**  
 Able to drive up to 15 miles  
 Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
 Daytime: All Day 7 am - 9 pm  
 About  
 Used to trap, but now I drive only due

Check Transport



**Jandu Summer**  
 Able to drive up to 10 miles  
 Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
 Daytime: Evening 6 pm - 9 pm  
 About  
 My car is very large and I can fit in it.

Check Transport



**Elizabeth's Car**  
 Able to drive up to 5 miles  
 Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
 Daytime: Morning 7 am - 12 am  
 About  
 My Silver Dicks is a brand new and it's

Check Transport



**Lady Camila**  
 Able to drive up to 20 miles  
 Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
 Daytime: Afternoon 12 pm - 6 pm  
 About  
 I am happy to drive a Trapper with the

Check Transport



**Rocky Josh**  
 Able to drive up to 50 miles  
 Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
 Daytime: All Day 7 am - 9 pm  
 About  
 Used to trap, but now I drive only due

Check Transport

SHOW MORE



### General

- About Trapperaid
- How it works
- Trappers' Stories
- Become a Trapper
- Contact

### Legal

- Terms & Conditions
- Privacy Policy
- Colony's Confidentiality
- Report Colony's Abuse
- FAQ

### Mission

- What TNR stands for
- Why donate to Trapperaid?
- Volunteer at Trapperaid
- Partnering Vets, Centers & Vets
- Become TNR Person

### Resources

- Stay/Neuter Appointments
- Holding Spaces
- Transport
- Trappers
- Partnering Vets, Centers & Vets





Share

Ridgewood, Queens, NY 11385

### Alexa's Car

#### About

My house in Ridgewood is very large. I have 3 bedrooms and one large basement here, and I am willing to rent the basement to a Trapper. You can use the water and sink... My house in Ridgewood is very large. I have 3 bedrooms and one large basement here, and I am willing to rent the basement to a Trapper. You can use the water.

#### Car Type:

Sedan

#### Able to drive:

Up to 10 miles

#### A/C:

Yes



DATE

21/06/24

DAYTIME

Evening ( 6pm - 9pm )

How many cats do you plan to bring?

+/- 6

[BOOK A LIFT](#)

#### DRIVER INFO



Alexa Kyler  
Host | Caretaker



#### SIMILAR HOLDING SPACES IN THE AREA



#### Jandu Summer

Able to drive: up to 10 miles  
Availability 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
Daytime Evening 6 pm - 9 pm  
About  
My car is very large and I can fit in it a

[Check Transport](#)



#### Elizabeth's Car

Able to drive: up to 5 miles  
Availability 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
Daytime Morning 7 am - 12 am  
About  
My Silver Doe is a brand new and it ru

[Check Transport](#)



#### Lady Camila

Able to drive: up to 20 miles  
Availability 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
Daytime Afternoon 12 pm - 6 pm  
About  
I am happy to drive a Trapper with the

[Check Transport](#)



#### Rocky Josh

Able to drive: up to 50 miles  
Availability 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
Daytime All Day 7 am - 9 pm  
About  
I used to trap, but now I drive only due

[Check Transport](#)



#### General

- [About Trapperaid](#)
- [How it works](#)
- [Trappers Stories](#)
- [Become Trapper](#)
- [Contact](#)

#### Legal

- [Terms & Conditions](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Colony's Confidentiality](#)
- [Report Colony's Abuse](#)
- [FAQ](#)

#### Mission

- [What TNR stands for](#)
- [Why donate to Trapperaid?](#)
- [Volunteer at Trapperaid](#)
- [Partnering Vets Centers & Vets](#)
- [Become TNR Person](#)

#### Resources

- [Spay/Neuter Appointments](#)
- [Holding Spaces](#)
- [Transport](#)
- [Trappers](#)
- [Partnering Vets Centers & Vets](#)



Share

Ridgewood, Queens, NY 11385

### Crazy Boys

#### About

I have 10 cats in this colony. Four of them were TNRed, but remaining 6 still needs to be fixed. Most of the cats are feral and they don't like the humans around. They accept only a feeder who is me. I am able to come close to them but I can't pet them. They most likely will have to be returned to their territory after the surgery.

Are there any friendly cats that could be adoptable?

No

Are there any sick cats in need of immediate care?

No

How many females/males roughly are there?

I believe 7 females and 11 males.

Trapper seeks for:

- Holding Space
- Transport
- Help Trapping



Funds Gathered: \$440

[DONATE](#)

#### TRAPPER INFO



Alexa Kyler  
Trapper | Caretaker



If you want to provide the transport for Trapper, please check option: "I want to provide transport" in your profile.

**PROVIDE TRANSPORT TO TRAPPER**

HELP TRAPPER IN TRAPPING

**PROVIDE HOLDING SPACE TO TRAPPER**

We will notify the Trapper that you want to offer them your holding space. If you are no longer can offer your holding space, you can message Trapper or uncheck the option: "I want to provide holding space" in your profile.

### SIMILAR CAT COLONY'S FUNDRAISERS IN THE AREA



**Crazy Strays' Colony**  
Funds Gathered: \$545  
Colony's Size: 12 cats  
Needs:   
About  
My car is very large and I can fit in it a

[Check Cat Colony](#)



**Kings' Colony**  
Funds Gathered: \$3390  
Colony's Size: 6 cats  
Needs:   
About  
My car is very large and I can fit in it a

[Check Cat Colony](#)



**Only Boys' Colony**  
Funds Gathered: \$400  
Colony's Size: 4 cats  
Needs:   
About  
My car is very large and I can fit in it a

[Check Cat Colony](#)



**Winky' Colony**  
Funds Gathered: \$740  
Colony's Size: 15 cats  
Needs:   
About  
My car is very large and I can fit in it a

[Check Cat Colony](#)



#### General

- [About Trapperaid](#)
- [How it works](#)
- [Trappers Stories](#)
- [Become Trapper](#)
- [Contact](#)

#### Legal

- [Terms & Conditions](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Colony's Confidentiality](#)
- [Report Colony's Abuse](#)
- [FAQ](#)

#### Mission

- [What TNR stands for](#)
- [Why donate to Trapperaid?](#)
- [Volunteer at Trapperaid](#)
- [Partnering Vets Centers & Vets](#)
- [Become TNR Person](#)

#### Resources

- [Spay/Neuter Appointments](#)
- [Holding Spaces](#)
- [Transport](#)
- [Trappers](#)
- [Partnering Vets Centers & Vets](#)





You're supporting **Crazy Boys** colony!  
Your donation will help the trapper to spay/neuter their cats.

Funds gathered from donations **can be used only by Trapper at the vet office. The transactions made by platform or a Trapperaid debit card will be rejected if Trapper will try to use them somewhere else.** We ensure that your money goes for a right cause!

Enter your donation

\$  
USD

125.00

Payment method

 PayPal

 Credit or debit

Email  
alexakylernyc@gmail.com

First Name  
Alexa

Last Name  
Kyler

Use as billing name

Card number  
7896 8765 4325 7465

MM/YY  
08/25

CVV  
234

Name on card  
Alexa Kyler

Country  
United States

Postal code  
11385

- Save card for future donations.
- Don't display my name publicly on the fundraiser.
- I'm happy to provide Trapperaid my name and email, so they can notify me about other cat colonies in need. I understand that I can unsubscribe at any time.

Your donation \$60

Total due today \$60

**DONATE**

By choosing the payment method above, you agree to the Trapperaid Terms of Use and acknowledge the Privacy Policy.



**Trapperaid protects your donation**

Your money goes directly for a cat colony's fundraiser. If the money will not be used by Trapper to spay/neuter the cats, we will transfer your money to other colony located in the same area.



Share

Ridgewood, Queens, NY 11385

### Alexa's Cat House

#### About

My house in Ridgewood is very large. I have 3 bedrooms and one large basement here, and I am willing to rent the basement to a Trapper. You can use the water and sink. My house in Ridgewood is very large. I have 3 bedrooms and one large basement here, and I am willing to rent the basement to a Trapper. You can use the water.

How many square feet does the place have?  
+1000

#### Amenities:

- Windows
- Light
- Water (sink, shower, etc.)
- A/C
- Second Entrance



CHECK-IN: 21/06/24

CHECKOUT: 24/06/24

How many cats do you plan to bring?  
+/- 6

RESERVE

#### HOST INFO



Alexa Kyler  
Host | Caretaker



#### Do you need a transport?

Good news! Alexa is a driver too, and she's available to drive on 24/06/2024 in the Evening from 6 pm - 9 pm. Do you want to book her for a lift?

BOOK A LIFT

#### SIMILAR HOLDING SPACES IN THE AREA



**Lucy's House**  
Amenities: Water, Windows, Light  
Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space



**Kitty's Club**  
Amenities: AC, Light  
Availability: 06/01/24 - 08/24/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
I am happy to host a few cats before.

Check Holding Space



**Bridge House**  
Amenities: Windows, Light  
Availability: 05/10/24 - 12/24/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space



**Maggie's Catuary**  
Amenities: Water, Light  
Availability: 02/21/24 - 12/17/24  
Sq Feet: +1000  
About  
My house is located in the heart of Rid.

Check Holding Space



#### General

- About Trapperaid
- How it works
- Trappers Stories
- Become Trapper
- Contact

#### Legal

- Terms & Conditions
- Privacy Policy
- Colony's Confidentiality
- Report Colony's Abuse
- FAQ

#### Mission

- What TNR stands for
- Why donate to Trapperaid?
- Volunteer at Trapperaid
- Partnering Vets Centers & Vets
- Become TNR Person

#### Resources

- Splay/Neuter Appointments
- Holding Spaces
- Transport
- Trappers
- Partnering Vets Centers & Vets





Share

Ridgewood, Queens, NY 11385

### Alexa's Car

#### About

My house in Ridgewood is very large. I have 3 bedrooms and one large basement here, and I am willing to rent the basement to a Trapper. You can use the water and sink... My house in Ridgewood is very large. I have 3 bedrooms and one large basement here, and I am willing to rent the basement to a Trapper. You can use the water.

#### Car Type:

Sedan

#### Able to drive:

Up to 10 miles

#### A/C:

Yes



Calendar for June 2024 showing availability icons for each day. Legend: Available Morning (7 am - 12 pm), Available Afternoon (12 pm - 6 pm), Available All Day (7 am - 9 pm). **BOOK A LIFT**

#### DRIVER INFO



Alexa Kyler  
Host | Caretaker



#### SIMILAR HOLDING SPACES IN THE AREA

Grid of similar holding spaces with car images and details:

- Jandu Summer**: Able to drive: up to 10 miles. Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24. Daytime: Evening 6 pm - 9 pm.
- Elizabeth's Car**: Able to drive: up to 5 miles. Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24. Daytime: Morning 7 am - 12 am.
- Lady Camila**: Able to drive: up to 20 miles. Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24. Daytime: Afternoon 12 pm - 6 pm.
- Rocky Josh**: Able to drive: up to 50 miles. Availability: 06/21/24 - 06/24/24. Daytime: All Day 7 am - 9 pm.



#### General

- About Trapperaid
- How it works
- Trappers Stories
- Become Trapper
- Contact

#### Legal

- Terms & Conditions
- Privacy Policy
- Colony's Confidentiality
- Report Colony's Abuse
- FAQ

#### Mission

- What TNR stands for
- Why donate to Trapperaid?
- Volunteer at Trapperaid
- Partnering Vets Centers & Vets
- Become TNR Person

#### Resources

- Spay/Neuter Appointments
- Holding Spaces
- Transport
- Trappers
- Partnering Vets Centers & Vets



[REDACTED]

---

**From:** Zuzanna Wisniewska <zuzia.wisnie92@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 15, 2024 8:03 PM  
**To:** Testimony  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Need accessible and affordable spay/neuter services ASAP

[REDACTED]

We strongly encourage the city government to provide significant funding for accessible, affordable spay/neuter services and veterinary care for all New Yorkers who need it, including rescuers and pet parents.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Corinne Schiff

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Risa Weinstock

Address: ACC

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alex Silver, Director, Mayor's Office

Address: of Animal Welfare

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

9

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anna Gauthier / TRAPPER AID

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Edita Binnkrant

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NY CLASS

Address: 6450 Bix Crs HRS Fresh Market

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chloe Rein

Address: 16 Ocean Parkway, Brooklyn NY

I represent: Brooklyn Kitty Committee 11218

Address: Same ↑



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michelle Villagomez

Address: 520 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. 7Fl.

I represent: ASPCA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michelle Goldwasser

Address: 520 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. 7Fl.

I represent: ASPCA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rena LaFaille

Address: 520 8<sup>th</sup> Ave.

I represent: ASPCA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9-13-2024

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Lucy Johnson

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: ASPCA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 11/3/24

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: DeIones / DeFerrari

Address: 520 8th Ave

I represent: ASPCA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Cindy Stutz

Address: 825 Madison Ave NY NY 10035

I represent: Bunnies & Beyond

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DAN TEACHOUT

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 09/13/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Aleksandra Slomska

Address: 2641 3rd Street Astoria Queens

I represent: TRAPPERAID

Address: -11-

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PATRICIA BAUTISTA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ BROOKLYN, NY 11201

I represent: MYSELF

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 09/13/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Emily Olive Petit

Address: [REDACTED] Ridgewood NY 11385

I represent: Harlem Animal Rescue

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cardica Kumai Gwiazdowski

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn

I represent: NY

Address: 11222

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Myagan Lirari

Address: [REDACTED] du. date & address

I represent: PKVNYC

Address: sent

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Helepe Hartman

Address: [redacted] Grand Concourse

I represent: Bronx CB7

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Raguel Battle

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MAGGIE SHAWHERSON

Address: [redacted] BROOKLYN NY 11209

I represent: BAY RIDGE ETTENS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Leslie Ramos

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Bk

I represent: ~~frisco~~ Foster Volunteer

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ 107 Bk st  
cafe

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

110

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SHEILA SANCHEZ

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NORTHWEST BKWA DEMOCRATS  
FRIEND OF THE OVAL PARK

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sharon Brown Jeter

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Rose of Sharon Enterprises

Address: 43 Madison Street Bklyn NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

1128

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chloe Rice

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ 11211

I represent: myself and other childless cat ladies

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK 108**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 09/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Keylan Colin Santiago

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: New York City News

Address: Craig Newmark Journalism School

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deserie Mates

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Queens Village

I represent: Keep Me Warm Doghouses Inc.

Address: P.O. Box 260054 Bellerose NY 11426

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK** 101

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Roxanne Polych

Address: Belham Park

I represent: Bronx Animal Rights Elect

Address: 2341 Melrose Ave

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 9-13-2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nora Marino

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Legal Action Network for Animals

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

105

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Stewart Mitchell

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: V-Far

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Laura MacAvoy

Address: [Redacted] St Astor, NY 11003

I represent: Puppy K. Hy NYC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

9/13/24

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Crystal Hayes - Indigenous

Address: Bosedale, NY Besveo

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joan Silaco 11428

Address: [Redacted] Queens NY

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joan Pukalski

Address: [Redacted] Bellerose, NY

I represent: Concerned citizen who cares about

Address: animals!

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: Sept. 13, 2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: April Lang

Address: [Redacted]

I represent: Kitty Kind

Address: Detco at Union Square

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9-13-2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Erica Parks

Address: [Redacted] New York, NY

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9-13-28

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Francia Shelley-Grieler

Address: [redacted] NYC

I represent: Animal Behaviorist, US

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9-13-24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Laura Leopardo

Address: [redacted] St. Marks Ave

I represent: myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Bill SACREY

Address: 230 25th

I represent: SRAC

Address: 230 25th

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BRIAN SHAPIRO

Address: PO Box 7216 ALBANY NY 12224

I represent: HUMAN SOCIETY OF THE U.S.

Address: N/A

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Marilyn Galtin

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Voices for Shelter Animals

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DEBORAH THOMAS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: I'm a Volunteer @ ACO

Address: 396 E. 110th St.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: Sept 12, 2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Linda E Mann

Address: [Redacted] West End Ave

I represent: Self

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 17 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9-13-24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Phillips

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Urban Cat League

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Heidi Syto

Address: [Redacted] Bk, NY 11203

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Erica Kuberski

Address: [redacted] Bklyn NY 11215

I represent: Positive Tails

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Margaret Lee

Address: [redacted] Bond Street

I represent: animals

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jone Noveck

Address: [redacted] NYC 10036

I represent: Urban Cat League and myself

Address: Heel's Kitchen NYC

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1012 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Marilyn Zucker

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ashley Carter

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Betty Arce

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Bronx Tails Cat Rescue

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Lisa Lamberley (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Gypsy TNR CAT RESCUE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: LIBBY POST, NYSAPF (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 150 State St 4th Fl

I represent: NYS Animal Prof Federation

Address: Albany NY 12207

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

Name: Osi Kaminer (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ East NY NY 10034

I represent: Community Board 12 Manhattan

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tanya Copeland

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ 10468

I represent: Bronx Community Cnts

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Natara Loose

Address: 169 Central Ave ←

I represent: The Neighborhood Vel

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ ↓

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Julia Kassman

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: BBAWZ 11201

Address: 76 Montague St 11201

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: INDIA MALTAO

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: BBAWC

Address: 76 Montague St

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anne Levin

Address: 76 Montague St.

I represent: Brooklyn Bridge Animal Welfare

Address: 76 Montague St.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Debra Kalish

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ NYC 10024

I represent: Independent, Vols/feet

Address: ACC, 326 E-118, NYC 10029

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Esther Renelson

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ NY NY 10006

I represent: Animal Rescue

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor     in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kathy NIZZARI

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ NYC, NY 10001

I represent: LIGHTS OUT COALITION

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1017 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor     in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: VICTORIA KONIGARIS

Address: 10-34 49<sup>th</sup> Ave.

I represent: LIC Feral Feeders + Cat Rescue

Address: 10-34 49<sup>th</sup> Ave. LIC, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9.13.24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eliana Gibbos

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 09/13/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jannah Ahmed

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Astoria, NY 1106

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Isabel Klee

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Brooklyn NY 11222

I represent: myself - Acc / muddy paws

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rachael Ziering

Address: 821 9th Ave FLOOR NYC 10019

I represent: Muddy Paws Rescue

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MARILEHA SENATORO

Address: VAN BUREN ST, BROOKLYN

I represent: MYSELF

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Justin DeSola

Address: ASTORIA NY 1103

I represent: ASTORIA ANIMAL SOCIETY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer Brooks

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYC Second Chance Rescue

Address: 27-12 37 Ave.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9-13-2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MOLLY CALDWELL

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Avl BR NY 11207

I represent: myself

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nicole Kelly

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: self

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PATRICE MILLER

Address: [REDACTED] AU BROOKLYN NY

I represent: self

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: ~~9/13/24~~ 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rachel Pousson

Address: [REDACTED] Bklyn 11201

I represent: self / independent <sup>cat</sup> rescue

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DANA JACOBS

Address: [REDACTED] Brooklyn, NY 11216

I represent: Neighborhood Animal Rescue Network

Address: /

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Irene Richman

Address: [REDACTED] Bklyn NY 11224

I represent: NARN. CB

Address: "

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 9.13.2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer Rhein

Address: [REDACTED] Whitestone NY 11357

I represent: For Animals, Inc.

Address: Queens, New York

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: Sept 13 2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rio Iepoliti

Address: [REDACTED] NYC NY 10038

I represent: Voters for animal rights

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

1018

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christine Keaneally

Address: [Redacted] Bronx 10457

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michelle Marwitz

Address: [Redacted] NY 11234

I represent: Lincoln Terrace Park Cats

Address: 11212

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9.13.24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SAMANTHA KNOX

Address: 7219 CANTON ST NY - 11692

I represent: ITYBIM CITY KITTIES

Address: SAME AS ABOVE

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elizabeth Powers

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ 13K NY 1124

I represent: Position Tail

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sarah Hauser

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: I work with shelters + rescue groups

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Porsche Jones

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Position Tail

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 09/13/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dr. Lacheryl Ball

Address: [REDACTED] BK, NY, 11207

I represent: Flatbush Vet

Address: 1460 Flatbush Ave, BK, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ERIN HENDRY

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: OLIVER PLACE

Address: EAST UTAH

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: TONY POON

Address: [REDACTED]

I represent: Ollie's Place

Address: 430 E 9th St. NYC

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Will Zweigert

Address: [Redacted] Brooklyn NY 11226

I represent: Flatbush Cats

Address: 4462 Flatbush Ave BK NY 11210

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ROBERTO BAVELLI

Address: [Redacted]

I represent: THE ANIMALS' BATTALION

Address: 56-20 WOODSIDE AVE WOODSIDE NY 11791

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ANAMARIA SCURIC

Address: [Redacted] Astoria 11105

I represent: Astoria Cat Rescue

Address: Astoria

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MARIE MUNDACA

Address: [REDACTED] NY NY 10001

I represent: KITTYKIND

Address: P. 44 UNION SQ

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Allie Taylor

Address: 1276 Putnam Ave Brooklyn 11221

I represent: Voters For Animal Rights

Address: 1276 Putnam Ave Brooklyn 11221

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MADDY SAMADDAR - JOHNSON

Address: [REDACTED] BROOKLYN

I represent: SELF

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 210 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 09/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Claire Corey

Address: Jefferson Ave

I represent: Brooklyn Animal Action

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. 10

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sarah Borok

Address: Brooklyn, NY 11217

I represent: Positive Tails

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Hishol low cost stay/inmate Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: NATASHA REZNIK

Address: Brooklyn 11206

I represent: Self

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lili Trapper Aid

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Trapper Aid

Address: pla

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 18 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/23/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: EUZABETH CHAMP

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Elizabeth Champ

Address: Same

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Ban the Sale of Pets Date: 9.13.24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lynn Pacifico

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Dog owners action Committee

Address: SAA

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christina Liew

Address: [Redacted] Brooklyn NY 11214

I represent: self

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Marlan Bobb

Address: 307 West Broadway 10012

I represent: Best Friends Animal Society

Address: " "

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Margaret Holland

Address: 120 W 116 St Co D NYC

I represent: Community Cats in

Address: general

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1017 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David McClure

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: 10 Lives Rescue

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sara Lenkovicz - 10 Lives

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: 10 Lives Rescue

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Courtney Chandel

Address: 16 W # 77 St # 1EE

I represent: Little Wanderers NYC

Address: 16 W 77 St

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: FARRAH GOPP

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: 10 LIVES RESCUE NY

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: HUDIA COHEN

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: BRONX DOG HAVEN

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BONNIE BEHREND

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: MYSELF & NOAH'S ACT

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ NY 10022

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JUDITH Lustgarten, Gotsstein

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: The animals & my race 100%

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Janlyn Freeman

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Brooklyn NY 11226

I represent: NYC Cat Rescuer Alliance

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: September 13, 2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Megan Salerno

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Brooklyn, NY 11215

I represent: Waggytail Rescue, Self

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 09/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Yanina Panchishina

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Brooklyn

I represent: Self

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MATT MILLER

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ NY NY 10011

I represent: Muddy Paws Rescue

Address: 821 9th Ave (10019)

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1018 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/13/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rebecca Wisdom

Address: [REDACTED] BROOKLYN NY 11202

I represent: GREENPOINT CATS

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sassee Walker

Address: 569 E 108th St BROOKLYN NY 11236

I represent: Sassee cats / Cats All over

Address: SAME

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms