

SHELTER REFORM ACTION COMMITTEE

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My name is William Sacrey, Head of Communications for Shelter Reform Action Committee. I am pleased to read a statement by Shelter Reform's President, Esther Koslow, who could not be here today:

Four months ago we applauded Councilmember Brannan and others for sponsoring a bill to create a Department of Animal Welfare. Shelter Reform had just one request: to amend Intro. 1478 to have the new Department be responsible for *all* of the City's animals, not just those entering ACC.

For years, Shelter Reform has advocated for a full-fledged Department of Animal Welfare. The Department of Health is the wrong department to oversee animal welfare. All the DOH is required to do vis-à-vis animals is to protect people FROM them.

NYC's animals deserve a stand-alone City Department – with its own funding, substantial staff, a host of experts, and a clear mission statement -- to ensure the welfare of NYC's animals: pets, wildlife, carriage horses, etc.

However, Intro. 1478 as amended has replaced a "Department of Animal Welfare" with an "Office of Animal Welfare." Sounds the same. Ah, but there's a world of difference between an "office" and a "department".

The "Office" designation simply recognizes what two individuals have done for Mayor de Blasio for the past few years: working behind the scenes to try to improve the lives of NYC's animals. With Mayor de Blasio's blessings, they have tried to keep the DOH's worst impulses in check. If left to its own devices, the DOH would spend money ONLY on protecting people from so-called "vicious" animals and animal diseases.

But what happens if a future mayor is not generously disposed toward animals, or if the City hits another financial wall? This small "Office of Animal Welfare" won't find a receptive ear at Gracie Mansion. And the City's animals will suffer as they did under both Mayors Giuliani and Bloomberg.

Therefore, we oppose Intro. 1478 as amended. It's too timid a step. The time is ripe for big, bold change: for a Department of Animal Welfare. Thank you.