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Res. No. 288

Resolution calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.4533/A.416, to expand humane education requirements to secondary schools and require verification from schools that humane treatment of animals is being taught.

By Council Members Schulman, Gennaro, Gutiérrez and Louis

Whereas, According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Incident-Based Reporting System, the number of reported and tracked instances of animal cruelty, including simple and gross neglect, increased every year in the U.S. between 2016 and 2019, from 1,126 cases in 2016 to 9,956 cases in 2019; and

Whereas, Similarly, per the Shelter Animals Count's National Database, shelter intakes for all species grew in the U.S. by 7.5 percent in 2022 and by 3.1 percent in 2023, with 29 percent of these animals having been relinquished by owners in each of those years; and

Whereas, Shelter Animals Count's data indicate that for dogs, shelter intakes in the U.S. rose by 4.5 percent in 2023, with 25 percent having been relinquished by owners, and with 10 percent overall having been euthanized; and

Whereas, Also per Shelter Animals Count's data, for cats, shelter intakes expanded nationwide by 1.7 percent in 2023, with 34 percent having been relinquished by owners, and with 6 percent overall having been euthanized; and

Whereas, Shelter Animals Count's data show that for small mammals, such as guinea pigs, in 2023, 69 percent of shelter intakes in the U.S. were relinquished by owners, and 14 percent overall were euthanized; and

Whereas, According to Shelter Animals Count's data, in 2023, for all species, 44 percent of shelter intakes in New York State were relinquished by owners, and 7 percent overall were euthanized; and

Whereas, Per the same Shelter Animals Count's data, in 2023, for dogs, 31 percent of shelter intakes in New York State were relinquished by owners, and 6 percent overall were euthanized; and

Whereas, Shelter Animals Count's data indicate that for cats, in 2023, 51 percent of shelter intakes in New York State were relinquished by owners, and 4 percent overall were euthanized; and

Whereas, Shelter Animals Count's data also show that for small mammals, including guinea pigs, in 2023, 84 percent of shelter intakes in New York State were relinquished by owners, and 40 percent overall were euthanized; and

Whereas, According to the Animal Care Centers of NYC, the number of animal intakes in New York City shelters rose from 14,594 in 2021 to 16,565 in 2022; and

Whereas, Also per the Animal Care Centers of NYC, the number of animals relinquished by owners to New York City shelters grew from 6,299 in 2021 to 7,130 in 2022; and

Whereas, Animal Care Centers of NYC's data reveal that the number of dogs relinquished by owners to New York City shelters increased from 1,962 in 2021 to 2,266 in 2022; and

Whereas, Similarly, per Animal Care Centers of NYC's data, the number of cats relinquished by owners to New York City shelters also expanded from 3,648 in 2021 to 3,987 in 2022; and

Whereas, Animal Care Centers of NYC's data additionally indicate that the number of guinea pigs relinquished by owners to New York City shelters rose from 499 in 2021 to 616 in 2022; and

Whereas, One approach to addressing the issue of animal neglect and abandonment is to provide humane education instruction to children; and

Whereas, The National Humane Education Society defines humane education as teaching people how to accept and fulfill their responsibilities to companion animals, such as cats, dogs, rabbits, and guinea pigs, and to all forms of animal life, as well as explaining the consequences of irresponsible behavior and encouraging appreciation for the value of all living things; and

Whereas, Studies evaluating effectiveness and impact of humane education support its value, as

exemplified by a 2006 assessment of the Humane Education Project in New York City public elementary and middle schools by Fordham University researchers, and by a 2016 evaluation of In-Class Humane Education Programs in Chicago and New York City public elementary schools by a group of U.S., Belgian, and Italian scholars; and

Whereas, In particular, research demonstrates that humane education increases students' general empathy, frequency of prosocial behaviors, knowledge about animal needs, concern for animals and the environment, and interest in taking humane actions by joining a group to help animals or the environment and by urging their friends to join such a group; and

Whereas, Section 809 of New York State Education Law requires every publicly funded elementary school to provide instruction in the humane treatment and protection of animals and to annually report on such instruction; and

Whereas, State Senator Peter Harckham introduced S.4533 in the New York State Senate, and Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal introduced companion bill A.416 in the New York State Assembly, which would expand a requirement to teach humane education to secondary schools and require verification from schools that this subject is being taught; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.4533/A.416, to expand humane education requirements to secondary schools and require verification from schools that humane treatment of animals is being taught.

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