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## **The Dog and Cat Bill of Rights Introduced by Assemblymember Miguel Santiago and Sponsored by Social Compassion in Legislation**

**February 8, 2022 – Sacramento, CA –** Today, Assemblymember Miguel Santiago (D-Los Angeles) introduced AB 1881, the Dog and Cat Bill of Rights. The bill, sponsored by Social Compassion in Legislation, describes the rights of dogs and cats in seven broad clauses ranging from the right to be free from cruelty and neglect to the right to daily mental stimulation and appropriate exercise.

The list of rights will be required to be posted and accessible to public view at all public animal control agencies or shelters, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals shelters, humane society shelter, or rescue groups.

“As an owner of two dogs myself, I am proud to author the Dog and Cat Bill of Rights to help our furry friends live happier, healthier lives,” said **Assemblymember Santiago**. “Our dogs and cats deserve to be loved, and cared for, and the Dog and Cat Bill of Rights will help inform potential adopters of the care needed to create a healthy environment for their adopted pets.”

“We are so appreciative of Assemblymember Santiago for recognizing the need to uplift the conversation around the rights our dogs and cats deserve,” said **Judie Mancuso, founder and president of Social Compassion in Legislation**. “Those rights go beyond just food, water, and shelter. As stated in the bill, dogs and cats have the right to be respected as sentient beings that experience complex feelings that are common among living animals while being unique to each individual. We’re thrilled to be codifying this into law.”

In 2013, Gregory Berns, M.D., Ph.D., conducted the first “voluntary” study on canines in which dogs were trained to receive MRIs without any sedation, restraint, or stress. As cited in the Journal of Medical Ethics, Dr. Berns found, “These studies show that there exists a striking similarity between dogs and humans in the functioning of the caudate nucleus (associated with pleasure and emotion), and dogs experience positive emotions, empathic-like responses and demonstrate human bonding which, some scientists claim, may be at least comparable with human children.”

As Dr. Iain Booth, respected veterinarian and founder of VetUK, has noted, “A dog is a social creature, a pack animal. And to the dog you are the bona fide leader of the pack. You administer every facet of its life—you collect, you feed, you show it where it’s allowed to go and you—hopefully—nurture its development. ...The dog requires constant feedback and interaction. It wants to please you—that’s simply how it’s evolutionary hard-wired. . . . [M]ake no mistake, canine depression is a very real thing.”

The bill extends rights to cats as well, who have their own unique set of emotional needs. The American Association of Feline Practitioners states, “AAFP acknowledges that essential to preserving the optimal physical and mental health of our feline family members is providing them with an environment that meets their natural and normal behavioral needs. Several behavioral disorders and medical diseases seen in the feline patient are secondary to stress induced by an inappropriate indoor living environment.”

“Cats are highly intelligent, naturally curious and active animals that humans have chosen to take into their homes and own as pets. ‘A cat’s level of comfort with its environment is intrinsically linked to its physical health, emotional wellbeing and behavior. Meeting the cat’s essential environmental needs will reduce its stress and the incidence of both behavioral disorders and stress-related medical diseases.”

The bill also states dogs and cats have a right to health care, identification with microchips or other humane means, and to be spayed and neutered to prevent unwanted litters.