



SCIL
Social Compassion
in Legislation

March 1, 2024

The Honorable Alex Lee
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 2012 (Lee), Rabies control data – SPONSOR LETTER

Dear Assemblymember Lee:

I write on behalf of Social Compassion in Legislation, proud sponsor of AB 2012, to thank you for authoring this important legislation. The bill would require the Department of Public Health to resume collecting specified data, including in-take figures and categories of outcomes such as adoptions and euthanasia, from public animal shelters as part of their annual rabies control activities reporting. AB 2012 also authorizes the Department to contract with a California veterinary school to carry out the duties required under the legislation.

From 1995 through 2016, the Department collected all of the categories of data required under this bill from our state's animal shelters. This data helped give local and state policymakers an idea of the scope of the pet overpopulation problem. In 2016, the Department's report showed that the state's shelters euthanized 158,191 dogs and cats combined. Starting in 2017, the Department reduced the categories of data to exclude those pertaining to animals received and discharged, making it nearly impossible to know how many animals our state's shelters were handling each year.

Not only is this data useful to understand how animal shelters are operating, but this data could be critical if a future zoonotic disease outbreak occurs. Covid 19 was a zoonotic disease – the implications of which we are all aware of. Understanding how many animals are entering and exiting our shelters, and under what circumstances (stray, adopted, euthanized, died, etc) would be vital in any response to any kind of disease outbreak.

It is estimated that our local and state governments spend over \$400 million on operating animal shelters. That figure does not include the incalculable millions spent by nonprofit rescue organizations who pull dogs, cats, and various other animals from shelters before they are euthanized in order to save their lives and find them a loving home. Nor does it include the \$50 million dollars combined in 2021 and 2022 the state funded to UC Davis to support our state's animal shelters efforts to reduce euthanasia rates, in addition to the approximately \$488,000 granted out annually through the Pet Lover's License Plate Fund for spay and neuter, and another \$184,000 from the Prevention of Animal Homelessness and Cruelty Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund also for spay and neuter.

AB 2012 will give the state, local jurisdictions, and philanthropic organizations the visibility they need to ensure funds are most effectively and efficiently targeted, while giving lawmakers a complete picture of the pet overpopulation problem as they move forward with legislative solutions, as well as ensure animal shelter data is available in the unfortunate event of a zoonotic disease outbreak.

For these reasons, Social Compassion in Legislation is proud to sponsor AB 2012 and urge your colleagues to vote aye on this important measure.

Sincerely,

Nickolaus Sackett
Director of Legislative Affairs
Social Compassion in Legislation