



***NYSAPF is the voice of New York's humane societies, SPCAs, non-profit and municipal animal shelters as well as animal welfare organizations which focus on homeless animals.***

**TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

**SFY 2022-23 STATE BUDGET and LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

**Presented by Libby Post, Executive Director of the NYS Animal Protection Federation**

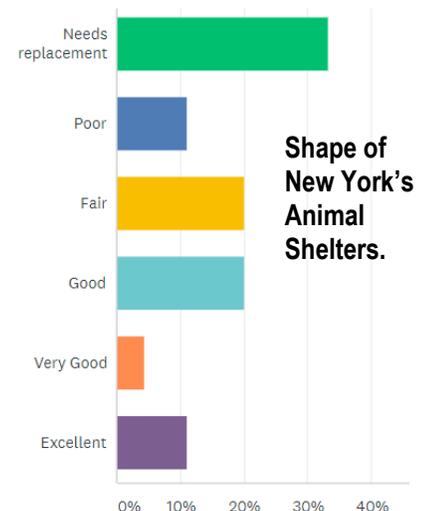
Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to you today on behalf of the New York State Animal Protection Federation (NYSAPF). The Federation represents all the humane societies and SPCAs as well as non-profit and municipal animal shelters across the state. From a policy perspective, our focus is two-fold—on the organizational strength and financial sustainability of our membership and on the health and well-being of companion animals—mainly dogs, cats, puppies and kittens but also other domesticated animals such as rabbits and birds. Our members also include animal welfare organizations such as the ASPCA, the Humane Society of the United States, Feral Cat Focus on Western New York, and the Animal Alliance of Greater Syracuse.

On January 25, 2022, the fourth RFP process for the Companion Animal Capital Fund closed. Since the Fund began in 2018, 38 shelters have been awarded grants totaling a \$20M commitment on behalf of the state. I had the privilege of touring two brand new shelters that were made possible by \$500,000 grants—Susquehanna SPCA and the SPCA of Westchester. This funding kickstarted their respective capital campaigns and they opened their new shelters this past summer and fall.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank the leadership in each house, Agriculture Committee chairs Assemblymember Donna Lupardo and Senator Michelle Hinchey as well as our champions Assemblymember Deborah Glick and Senator Joe Addabbo for their on-going support.

**This fall, the Federation's membership reached out to Governor Hochul with the crucial information that our 2022 Shelter Capital Needs Survey showed 34 shelters with capital needs of \$217,155,634. Four of these shelters are projects of the Animal Care Centers of New York City. We asked Governor Hochul to include \$5M for the fund in her first executive budget. The Federation is very thankful that the Governor did just that and has shown her commitment to homeless companion animals.**

**We now turn to the Legislature to renew your \$5M commitment to bring the fund to \$10M moving forward. As I've said to our champions and legislative leaders, I won't ask for any more money for this. I am confident that a \$10M annual commitment to shelter capital projects will be well subscribed and used.**



With the \$20M Companion Animal Capital Fund investment the state has made in the physical plants of shelters, it is time to also enhance the operational and care standards of both shelters and rescues. We are asking the legislature to pass the **Companion Animal Care Standards Act for Shelters and Rescues (Paulin A.6246/Addabbo S.6870)**. The proposed bill, which comes from the sheltering community with support from rescues, finally recognizes and defines the full scope of animal sheltering and rescue operations to ensure the protection of our state's homeless companion animals. It will require all entities to be licensed and overseen by the Department of Agriculture and Markets, which will ensure our state's homeless companion animals will live in safe and humane conditions, with proper cleaning, nourishment, and veterinary care. All of these organizations will be considered animal shelters under the law and all will be regulated.

Stories of animal cruelty and animal crimes continue to make headlines across the state. Shelters are tasked with caring for the animals seized in these cases. The cost for this care can range from thousands to millions of dollars. The present security posting law is simply not working. Shelters carry the financial burden and are forced to use philanthropic dollars to cover these costs. We are currently working with members of both houses to develop an **Animal Crimes Fund** to help offset this monetary strain on shelters. This would go hand in hand with creating an Unfit Owner/Animals in Distress civil procedure that would enable a court to deem an owner unfit and order a surrender.

**Stopping the Puppy Mill Pipeline (Gianaris S.1130/Rosenthal A.4283)** is still one of our top legislative priorities. This bill would stop the sale of puppies, kittens and rabbits in New York pet stores. Following a Humane Society of the United States investigation of American Kennel on Lexington Ave. in New York City which disclosed horrible conditions including sick puppies that are denied vet care and then sold to unsuspecting consumers, the store was shut down. In December, Attorney General Leticia James filed a lawsuit against Shake-a-Paw, which has two locations on Long Island, to selling sick puppies and misleading consumers on where the dogs were sourced from.

In 2020, pet owners across the country spent over \$103 billion on their animals. According to the American Pets Product Association, live animal sales figures (dogs and cats) are difficult to come by and are a relatively small contributor to overall sales. However, those sales are of animals that come from mills. It is time for New York to say no to these mills—actually dog, cat and rabbit factories. In the case of puppies, female dogs are placed in cages day in and day out purely to breed. They are impregnated. They deliver. Within weeks, they're impregnated again. When they are no longer "of use" to the puppy mill, they are usually euthanized.

Last year, the legislature passed a bill to prohibit discrimination in homeowners' insurance based on the breed of dog one owns. **We want to do the same for renters this year.** Assemblywoman Rosenthal carries the bill in her house and we should learn who the Senate sponsor will be this week. This measure would prohibit insurance companies from cancelling, refusing to issue or renew, or increasing premiums on renter's insurance for owning a specific breed of dog.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to you today. Of course, I am always available to discuss these and any of our other legislative priorities.