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Chair, Animal Matters Hearing Board

Hello council members,

My name is Fran LoPresti and I am here today testifying as Chair of the Animal Matters Hearing Board. One of the duties of the Board is oversight of Animal Control and Adoption operations. This past spring, the Board started a review of section 17 of the municipal code, Animal Matters Hearing Board procedures, and standard operating procedures within Animal Control. That review is continuing and will be summarized in the Annual Report.

Animal Control and the Board looked at both adoption procedures and fees in Howard County and found our county is out of the norm of other jurisdictions around us. First, Animal Control is currently working through the current cumbersome adoption approval processes to make our adoption experience more in line with other counties. But the fees are exorbitant and require your attention. The shelter charges for the adoption plus additional services such as vaccinations, spay and neuter surgery, microchip, etc. Our maximum fee for a male dog is $246 as opposed to less than $100 in 3 other jurisdictions. Research across the United States shows that the fees charged for adoption are directly related to the number of adoptions. Streamlined procedures also improve adoption rates.

As a local example, in September, Animal Control had a 2-week event where procedures and the fees were reduced and they had their best adoption numbers ever. It costs money to keep animals at the shelter for longer periods. It is not good for animals to be confined for months at a time. The longer an animal is in a confined environment, the harder it is to adopt that animal out. Thus, these changes are both fiscally sound and animal friendly. I urge you to pass CR188.