

BILL041(24)
Testimony

MISC. COMM. 452

COUNCIL

COUNCIL Meeting

Meeting Date: Oct 9, 2024 @ 10:00 AM

Support: 1

Oppose: 0

I wish to comment: 0

Name: Stephanie Kendrick	Email: skendrick@hawaiianhumane.org	Zip: 96826
Representing: Hawaiian Humane Society	Position: Support	Submitted: Oct 7, 2024 @ 11:20 AM



Hawaiian Humane Society

People for animals. Animals for people.

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Date: Oct. 7, 2024

To: Chair Tommy Waters
Vice Chair Esther Kia'āina
and Members of the City Council

Submitted By: Steph Kendrick, Director of Community Engagement
Hawaiian Humane Society, 808-356-2217

RE: Support for Bill 41, CD1 (2024),
Relating to the Public Spay and Neuter Clinic for Dogs and Cats
Wednesday, Oct. 9, 10 a.m., City Council Chamber

Mahalo for considering the Hawaiian Humane Society's support for Bill 41, CD1, Relating to the Public Spay and Neuter Clinic for Dogs and Cats.

The Hawaiian Humane Society has been a fierce advocate for the city's spay/neuter programs. We lobbied for their creation – of the owned pet program, Neuter Now, in 1985 and the Free-Roaming cat program, Feline Fix, in 2018. We have come before successive administrations and city councils over the years to advocate for increased funding for both programs, which have been made an enormous difference in our community.

Since its inception, more than 230,000 pets were spayed or neutered thanks to low fees supported by the Neuter Now program. In just seven years, more than 40,000 Free-Roaming cats were spayed or neutered under Feline Fix. These programs are popular and impactful.

As the administrator of these programs, we have shared with councilmembers our struggles to attract and retain participating clinics given the outdated reimbursement rates set by city ordinance. We are hopeful that this bill will address those concerns.

A decade ago, 25 clinics participated in Neuter Now. Today five participate, including the Ginny Tiu Community Spay/Neuter Center at the Hawaiian Humane Society. As one of the only remaining providers, our clinic is booked out months in advance, leading to frustration among pet owners who are trying to do their part to prevent pet overpopulation. Despite

being a nonprofit with a different overhead structure than for-profit clinics, even Hawaiian Humane is losing money at the current rates.

By moving the details of the public spay/neuter program from ordinance to administrative rules, making them easier to update as market conditions change, this measure is an important step toward rebuilding these vital programs. We need our local veterinary clinics to step up and help. To do so, they need reimbursement rates that better cover their expenses.

As the administrator of the animal services contract, the Department of Customer Services knows these programs well and it makes sense to move their parameters into its administrative rules.

Under this program, the city subsidizes surgeries for pet owners on government assistance and for Free-Roaming cat caregivers who are volunteering their time to help reduce the population of cats living outdoors. Pet owners on government assistance pay a set rate of \$20 for the spay/neuter of a dog or cat. Volunteer cat caregivers pay no fee for the spay/neuter of cats they trap to reduce breeding of the outdoor population.

Pet owners who are not on government assistance pay the fees established by the program directly to any participating clinic with no subsidy from the city. We will work with the department to make sure as this transitions into administrative rules that there will still be a subsidy for low-income residents and cat caregivers.

Mahalo to bill sponsor Councilmember Andria Tupola for clarifying in the CD1 that there will be no changes to the program until the administrative rules have been approved. We want to avoid changes during the current fiscal year that could reduce the number of pet owners and cat caregivers who are able receive services.

We urge you to support Bill 41, CD1, and allow for the establishment of reasonable reimbursement rates so that we can once again enlist our private veterinary clinics in supporting the vital work of reducing pet overpopulation. Mahalo for your consideration.