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May 17, 2023

The Honorable Chris Holden
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 O St., Ste. 5650
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: OPPOSE, AB 595 (Essayli) Animal Shelters, 72-Hour Public Notice, Study, as Amended April 12, 2023

Dear Chairman Holden,

On behalf of the Solano County Board of Supervisors, I write in opposition to AB 595, which would require all animal shelters to provide public notice on their website at least 72 hours before euthanizing an adoptable dog, cat, or rabbit.

Solano County opposes AB 595 as the bill does not give animal shelters the flexibility to manage large influxes of animals, for example after a disaster, without having to manage an exhaustive list of animals on the list for euthanasia. Additionally, while shelters typically use euthanasia as a last resort for unsafe conditions, disaster situations and over-crowding, this bill could increase the need for euthanasia because of the need to manage for space based on a rolling list of animals.

In its totality, this bill perpetuates the idea that shelters are bad actors in animal welfare. Shelter staff members and volunteers conduct extensive outreach to rescue organizations to encourage transfers; agencies run frequent adoption promotions and have robust foster programs to get animals out safely. Sadly, when outreach efforts fail, there are days when shelter staff must make the single most difficult decision in their job – to euthanize an animal. These jobs are hard and emotionally difficult, rarely well-paid, and subject to easy burn-out. Those who choose careers in animal welfare do so because they care deeply about animals. Imagine caring for dogs and cats for weeks, trying to find them homes or other options just to then must euthanize them. It is highly distressing for animal shelter workers to euthanize animals, particularly those that are healthy and adoptable. The threat of criminal sanctions will almost surely drive these humane workers from their jobs for fear of being punished despite their best efforts at saving animals who end up in shelters.

Though the state trusts animal shelters to uphold the law, staff are often treated as evil professionals that do not care about animals. Death threats, restraining orders, and social media hate campaigns have become commonplace for animal shelters both public and private – by fringe groups without any appreciation of the reality of running a shelter. Given the legislature's affirmative grant of faith, respect, and funding to California shelters through the California for All Dogs and Cats program, it would be entirely contrary to that sentiment to have the legislature now reinforce false and hateful ideologies with legislation like AB 595.

Animal shelters do not contribute to the proliferation of homeless animals in our state. The reasons that animals end up in shelters are caused by societal factors. Government and non-profit shelters are a haven for animals, but when societal problems place an overwhelming burden on existing systems,

Honorable Chris Holden

May 17, 2023

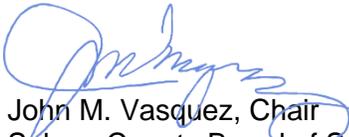
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shelters are stretched beyond their lifesaving capacity. Insurance limitations, rental barriers, job loss, inflation, and a pervasive lack of access to affordable veterinary care statewide are all contributing factors in California animal shelter intake. These factors also impact the public's ability to adopt. Animal shelters receive no federal or state funding to operate but are expected to provide industry-leading care with inadequate support. Most government animal shelters are significantly underfunded to serve the animals and meet community expectations.

Lastly, in 2001, the Commission on State Mandates determined that large portions of the 1998 Hayden Act were not in effect because the state was not reimbursing shelters for the additional cost of holding animals longer than current law allowed. This bill will trigger the same requirements and therefore must be re-evaluated to include a realistic fiscal impact. There are hundreds of public and non-profit shelters in California, and the vast majority are government entities or shelters that will unquestionably incur additional costs under the bill's requirements. Added costs will only serve to exacerbate shelters' operational limitations and are a disservice to the professionals who work tirelessly to preserve life and treat animals with the humane care and dignity they deserve.

For these reasons, Solano County must oppose AB 504, and respectfully encourages you to vote NO on this measure.

Sincerely,



John M. Vasquez, Chair
Solano County Board of Supervisors

CC:

Members, Assembly Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Bill Essayli, Assemblymember
The Honorable Bill Dodd, Senator
The Honorable Lori D. Wilson, Assemblymember
The Honorable Solano County Board of Supervisors
Karen Lange, SYASL Partners