











EF IR. O	Name & Title	Dr. Leana Wen	Health Department	SALTH DEPARTURE
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201	МЕМО	A CHE MARTIN
	Subject	17-0042R - Informational Hearing - Feral Cats	<u> </u>	112 141

To: President and Members of the City Council

of the City Council c/o 409 City Hall

September 21, 2017

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review 17-0042R - Informational Hearing - Feral Cats. The purpose of this resolution is to review the City's approach to feral cats and determine whether it needs to be modified.

Issues associated with stray cat populations are of national importance because of the animal welfare and public health concerns. The two options used to manage the overpopulation have been to either trap and euthanize or Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programs.

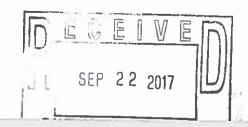
For many years, the Office of Animal Control trapped and euthanized thousands of cats in an attempt to control the steadily increasing population. This policy did not demonstrate success in reducing the number of stray and abandoned cats in the community. Concurrently, feeding bans — which were ineffective and difficult to enforce — were put in place. In addition to being ineffective, these bans were extremely inhumane, as they forced cats that were already dependent on a source to find a new, likely insufficient resource of food.

Ten years ago, BCHD, with the assistance of local residents and animal advocates, researched best practices to adopt a more humane and effective method in handling the City's stray cat population. This process emanated from the realization that mass euthanasia and feeding bans were not successful in actually reducing the stray cat population. Studies have been conducted to determine the efficacy of such programs, and found that euthanasia required greater effort and financial burden to control the population compared to comprehensive TNR programs.

As a result of this process, the City's Health Code was amended to allow for a TNR program. This program has been extremely effective in reducing the stray cat population by ending the cycle of breeding, which has reduced the number of free-roaming cats. TNR prevents unwanted litters, stops the growth of the population, and reduces nuisance behaviors like spraying, fighting, and roaming.

This program has been successfully utilized in other cities throughout the U.S. and has significantly progressed in Baltimore City over the years as more resources have been made







available to fully implement the program. In 2013, the City accepted a \$1 million grant from Petsmart Charities and Best Friends Animal Society to fund staff and resources to TNR thousands of cats each year, and the program continues to receive funding through State and private grants to continue its mission.

BCHD appreciates the opportunity to present this information to the Council, and highlight the success the TNR policy has demonstrated in the decade since its inception.





## BALTIMORE ANIMAL REJCUE & CARE SHELTER, INC.

September 19, 2017

Councilman Eric Costello, Chairman of the Judiciary & Legislative Investigations Committee 100 Holliday Street Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Re: 17-0042R- Informational Hearing- Feral Cats

Dear Councilman Costello,

Thank you for allowing our organization to have the opportunity to present testimony at the informational hearing 17-0042R- reviewing the City's approach to Feral Cats and determine whether It needs to be modified.

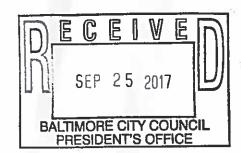
#### INTRODUCTION

The Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter, Inc. (BARCS) is a non-profit organization and the open-admission, high-volume shelter for Baltimore City. Our shelter takes in more than 11,000 dogs and cats each year. Since BARCS took over the operations of the city shelter in 2006, the number of animals saved annually has increased each year. From inception to present day, BARCS has found positive outcomes for 81,000 animals, with the goal to save more and more each year.

In animal welfare and sheltering, the standard way to track the overall health of a community is through capturing intake data—which animals are entering our shelter and why. In Baltimore City, the sheer volume of unwanted and abandoned pets, including thousands of unwanted litters of outdoor cats and kittens, presents a clear picture of the need for more spaying and neutering of all pets as well as outdoor cats.

#### HISTORY OF OUTDOOR CATS IN BALTIMORE

Here at BARCS, 56% of our shelter's intake is cats and kittens. More than half of these cats come from outdoors, including abandoned, stray, feral, and new litters of kittens born outside. Like every city, Baltimore use to trap and kill thousands of outdoor cats every year to try to decrease the volume of cats roaming in our city neighborhoods. What was learned through those practices was that even though cats were removed, more cats would move in. Furthermore, Baltimore City penalized residents for feeding outdoor cats. Citizens who needed assistance in caring for and managing the ever-growing population of cats in their neighborhoods were afraid





to ask for help. They feared that the cats they cared about would be killed and/or they would receive citations for feeding them. All of these issues resulted in a growing population of outdoor cats, and an overwhelming amount of cats being needlessly euthanized.

As shelter euthanasia numbers remained high and outdoor populations increased, it became clear that the practice of trapping and killing healthy cats in our communities was not only outdated and inhumane, but also not the answer to pet overpopulation. Additionally, the alternative method of flooding shelter cages with outdoor cats was not a practical or humane alternative to killing them. Holding outdoor cats in shelter cages meant that there wasn't space for highly-adoptable, owner-relinquished cats who needed the shelter as a haven while waiting to find a new home. In response to the failures of trap and kill, leading animal welfare groups began exploring alternative, humane methods of population control. In cities across the nation, Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programs proved to be successful in both managing and decreasing the population of outdoor cats, as well as opening shelter cages for owner-relinquished cats (cats that have always lived indoors and depended on people for physical and mental health).

In 2007, everything changed for Baltimore City when then Health Commissioner, Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, agreed to take this more proactive, humane and proven approach to tackling the issue of outdoor cats by making it legal to both feed and trap, neuter and return outdoor cats to the communities which they already resided. However, at that time, there were still no resources in Baltimore City to put toward the program. Only small nonprofit organizations and individuals were working on tackling this enormous problem.

In 2009, the City of Baltimore created regulations contingent with proven best practices for decreasing the outdoor cat population. (Regulations were revised in 2013). BARCS began TNR by partnering with a local group, Community Cats of Maryland, who was already doing TNR programs in Baltimore City. Our goal was to take healthy cats and kittens into the program that were already thriving outside, alter them, vaccinate them, and return them to their outdoor home. This process also helps to stabilize a colony by preventing new litters and to some extent keeping out rodents.

In 2013, the State of Maryland created the State Spay Neuter Task Force that provided abundant research on the volume of animals euthanized each year across our state and the costs associated with it. Instead of spending funds on euthanasia and relying on euthanasia as a solution to overpopulation of unwanted and abandoned animals, the state recognized the need to supply funding for low-or-no-cost spaying and neutering programs—including TNR—in order to provide a humane solution. Additionally, the state recognized that it has been proven that animals that are spayed, neutered and vaccinated are less likely to have behavior issues, roam, transmit diseases and less likely to bite.

Because of BARCS' influence and notoriety in the national animal welfare community, Baltimore City was selected to receive a \$1M in-kind grant for TNR. Over a three-year period (2013-2016), with financial support from Best Friends Animal Society and PetSmart Charities, BARCS launched and continues to run the BARCS Community Cat Program (BCCP), a high-volume TNR program serving Baltimore City. This program has resulted in more than 10,000 outdoor cats and kittens being vaccinated, altered and returned to their outdoor communities.



Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Councilman Robert Curran and several other Baltimore City Councilmembers showed their support of the program when they accepted the award at a press conference informing the community of its benefits.

#### BARCS' SUCCESSES AND DATA

Since the program's inception, BARCS has seen a 9.6% decrease in intake of adult cats and an impressive 54% decrease in intake of kittens under the age of six months. This decline in unowned cats being housed in our shelter has positively decreased feline euthanasia by 73%. BARCS' live release rate for shelter cats went from 60% prior to the program to over 90%. In addition, thousands of Baltimore City residents were provided with free assistance, over 1,500 colonies of healthy altered cats (ranging from 1-100 in each colony) have been through the program and are now managed by their Baltimore City resident caregivers, thousands of cats and kittens received additional medical care, and hundreds more were placed in alternative positive outcomes such as adoption and foster care when those options were available.

In 2016, when BARCS' initial three-year grant funding for the BCCP ended, the Maryland State Department of Agriculture and the Petco Foundation recognized the success of the program and committed to \$400,000 in continued financial support through 2017. Through this funding, BARCS will continue to spay and neuter 2,500 - 3,000 outdoor cats and kittens annually. Several other nonprofit organizations and individuals also continue to do TNR programs, all resulting in controlling the outdoor cat population in Baltimore City.

#### ADDRESSING CONCERNS

Through our history and data collected, we have seen firsthand the positive impact of a TNR program. However, on occasion, residents have questions or concerns about TNR that need to be addressed in order to fully understand its benefits.

Just prior to the hearing, there were two concerns that were shared with me by Councilman Henry and resulted in the hearing being requested. One concern is regarding the consequences of feeding outdoor cats and the other is about returning cats to their outdoor homes. Both of these practices are vital parts of any community cat program and programs will not be successful in lowering the population without them.

I'll begin by addressing the concerns of feeding outdoor cats. As stated above in the history, making it illegal to feed cats in Baltimore City (prior to 2007) did not result in a decrease or stabilization of feline populations. These provisions meant resources and education about outdoor cats weren't being provided to citizens. It is important that BARCS, neighboring shelters and TNR groups in our community, as well as Baltimore City government are united in this effort. Through our current community cat program, we work with thousands of compassionate Baltimore City residents who care about the cats and want to help provide for them. Many feel a connection to the cats and don't want to see them suffer. As a community, we should be embracing humane treatment of all living beings and not revert back to punitive action for compassionate acts. We want residents to continue to come to us for assistance, so we can



provide them with resources to combat the problem, rather than citizens shying away from seeking help.

Additionally, when feeding outdoor cats was illegal in Baltimore City, the city's rat problem was not any better than what it is today. Therefore, the concern of food provided to outdoor cats being an attraction for rats does not hold merit, and does not increase the rat population. The trash and sanitary issues we face in our city are not a result of the outdoor cat population—these are human issues. We need to instead work together to ensure all trashcans are sealed tight, dumpsters are closed and trash is properly disposed of. In addition, all Baltimore City agencies should be encouraging residents to follow proper feeding protocols for outdoor cats and discourage them from feeding any other wildlife.

The second concern as shared with me by Councilman Henry is that some residents do not want the cats returned to their neighborhood after trapping and neutering. This third step of "returning" is a vital part of the TNR program as there are little to no other options for the cats. In the past, shelters were flooded with outdoor cats trapped by Animal Control agencies and thus euthanasia rates for kittens and cats were at an all-time high. Through history, it has been proven that trapping and removing cats from an area does not stop the problem. More cats and/or other wildlife move into the area because of existing food sources. This is called the vacuum effect. However, if colonies are spayed and neutered and properly cared for in place, it has been shown that the colonies help displace the rodent population and/or may prevent new animals from moving into the area.

As a lifesaving organization, BARCS cannot condone returning to the old practices of killing of innocent animals, as per the protocol our city once followed. If an animal that lives outdoors is trapped, it should be returned to its home, since there are little to no humane alternatives. When an opportunity to place a kitten or cat into a foster or adoption program is appropriate, we provide that solution. However, this is not usually an available option for the majority of the outdoor cats due several factors such as lack of space in shelters, the cats' behavior which is only appropriate for outdoor living, and even the attachment a caregiver has for the animal.

Although there are some residents that do not want cats in the neighborhood, there are dozens of other neighbors that do. Every day we receive 20-30 emails, calls and text messages from community members that ask us for our assistance in educating, training, and providing BCCP's services for the cats in their neighborhood. Our focus is to continue to work with the community to educate them and get them involved in being part of the solution. For the minority of residents that do not want cats in their neighborhood, the BCCP provides deterrents for free to try to keep those cats off of their property.

Each situation needs to be a conversation. We need to work together for the best solution for everyone, with killing not being part of the answer.

#### CONCLUSION

BARCS is committed to serving the animals and members of our community. Each of our lifesaving programs and services are all working towards a day when all dogs and cats in our city



are cared for in homes or adoption agencies—each with medical care and spayed/neutered. But, at this present time, the reality in our city is that there are thousands of homeless animals. It is vital that we use our feline shelter cages to house once-owned, indoor cats, who cannot thrive without human care—not outdoor animals.

The outdoor cat population in our city is an enormous problem that would have only continued to grow if not for the implementation and sustaining of the TNR Baltimore Community Cat Program. This program is the most humane way to decrease the community cat population, provide cats with resistance to illness and disease, and to support the Baltimore citizens already caring for them.

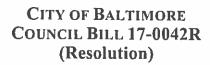
We sincerely hope that you will join us in creating a more humane environment for our community cats in Baltimore.

Sincerely,

Executive Director,

Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter, Inc.





Introduced by: Councilmembers Henry, Reisinger, Clarke, Middleton Introduced and read first time: September 11, 2017
Assigned to: Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee
REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Health Department

### A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1	A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
2	Informational Hearing – Feral Cats
3 4 5	FOR the purpose of requesting that representatives from the Health Department's Office of Animal Control appear before the City Council to discuss feral cats in Baltimore and whether the City's current approach to feral cats should be modified or remain the same.
6	Recitals
7 8 9 10	Feral cats, cats that are unsocialized to humans and have a temperament of extreme fear of and resistance to contact with humans, are a reality in all communities, and Baltimore is no exception. Over time, understandings about how they should be treated have evolved and a number of different approaches to managing their presence in urban areas have been tried.
11 12 13 14	Nearly 10 years ago Baltimore changed its laws on, and approach to, feral cats to encourage efforts by the City and private individuals to trap, alter, vaccinate, ear tip, and return feral cats. Provisions were also added to the law to allow feral cat caregivers to engage with feral cats and feral cat colonies without violating City law.
15 16 17 18	A decade into this approach it is appropriate to review how it is working in Baltimore and whether or not changes may be required. The effects of this policy on cats, communities, and Animal Control employees should be examined to see if it is succeeding in its goals or if modifications to the current approach would benefit everyone involved.
19 20 21 22	NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council requests that representatives from the Health Department's Office of Animal Control appear before it to discuss feral cats in Baltimore and whether the City's current approach to feral cats should be modified or remain the same.
23 24 25	AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Health Commissioner, the Director of Animal Control, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

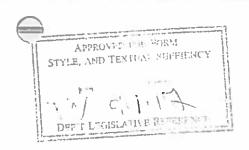
EXPLANATION: <u>Underlining</u> indicates matter added by amendment.

Strike out indicates matter deleted by amendment.





# CITY OF BALTIMORE COUNCIL BILL \_\_\_\_R (Resolution)



Introduced by: Councilmember Henry

#### A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

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### Informational Hearing - Feral Cats

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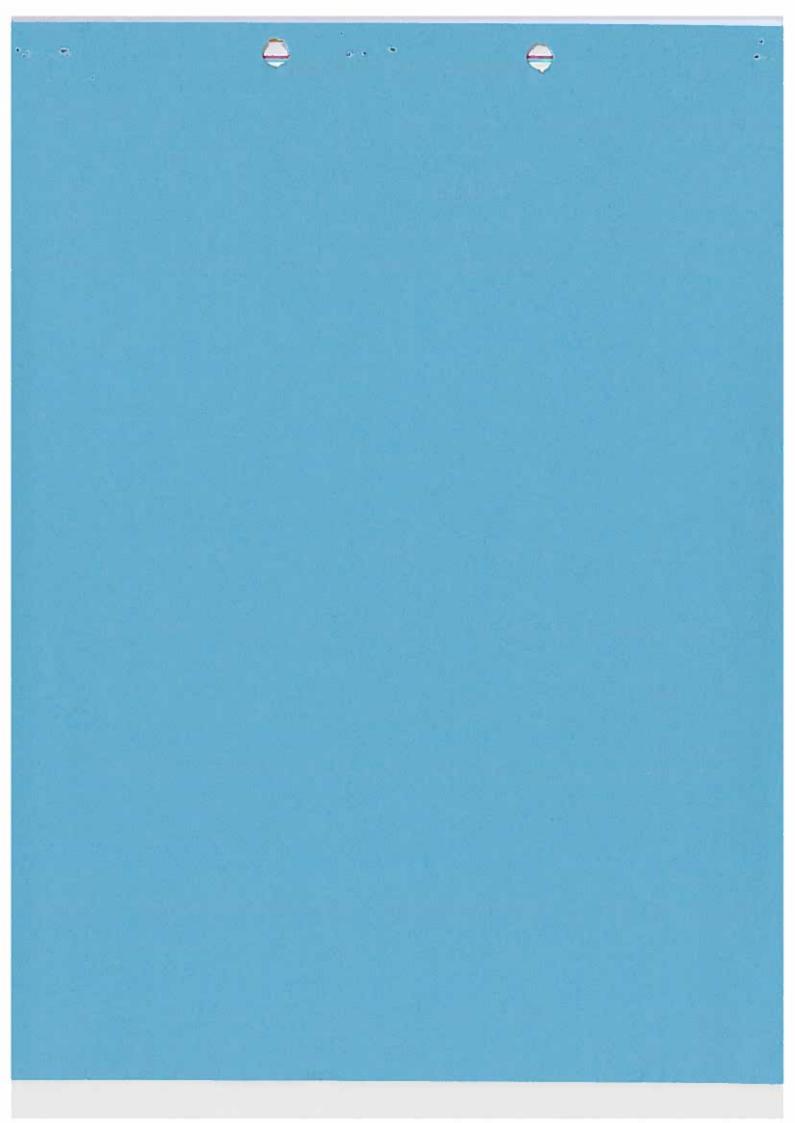
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AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Health Commissioner, the Director of Animal Control, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

\* WARNING: THIS IS AN UNOFFICIAL, INTRODUCTORY COPY OF THE BILL.
THE OFFICIAL COPY CONSIDERED BY THE CITY COUNCIL IS THE FIRST READER COPY.





## ACTION BY THE CITY COUNCIL

FIRST READING (INTRODUCTION	)		SEP 1 1 2017
PUBLIC HEARING HELD ON	SEPTEMBER	96	20 17
COMMITTEE REPORT AS OF	OCTOBER	16	20 17
FAVORABLEUNFA			WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION
		L-V.	ent
			Chair
COMMITTEE MEMBERS:		COMMITTEE MEMBERS:	
SECOND READING: The Council's a Third Reading of Amendments were read an	on:	dicated on the copy attached	OCT 1 6 2017
THIRD READING			20
Amendments were read an			
THIRD READING (ENROLLED)			
Amendments were read an			
THIRD READING (RE-ENROLLED			20
WITHDRAWAL			
There being no objections to the from the files of the City Council	request for withdrawal, it	was so ordered that this City	
President		Chief Clerk	



## BALTIMORE ANIMAL REJCUE & CARE JHELTER, INC.

September 19, 2017

Councilman Eric Costello,
Chairman of the Judiciary &
Legislative Investigations Committee
100 Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

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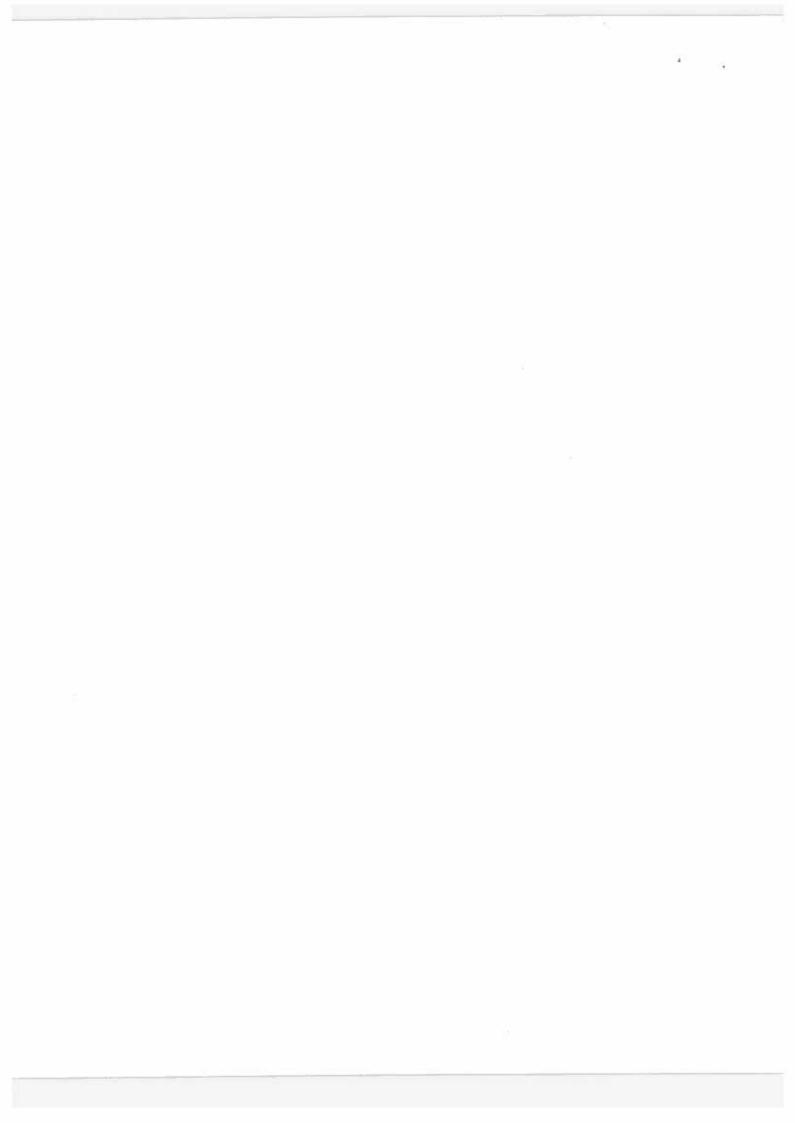
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We sincerely hope that you will join us in creating a more humane environment for our community cats in Baltimore.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Brause

Executive Director,

Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter, Inc.



F R O M	Name & Dr. Leana Wen W	Dr. Leana Wen	Health Department	STATE DEPLAYING
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201	МЕМО	S. C. MARKETT
	Subject	17-0042R - Informational Hearing - Feral Cats		

To: President and Members of the City Council

c/o 409 City Hall

September 21, 2017

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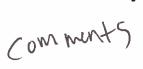
Issues associated with stray cat populations are of national importance because of the animal welfare and public health concerns. The two options used to manage the overpopulation have been to either trap and euthanize or Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) programs.

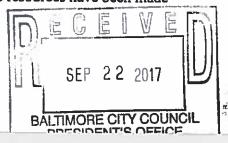
For many years, the Office of Animal Control trapped and euthanized thousands of cats in an attempt to control the steadily increasing population. This policy did not demonstrate success in reducing the number of stray and abandoned cats in the community. Concurrently, feeding bans — which were ineffective and difficult to enforce — were put in place. In addition to being ineffective, these bans were extremely inhumane, as they forced cats that were already dependent on a source to find a new, likely insufficient resource of food.

Ten years ago, BCHD, with the assistance of local residents and animal advocates, researched best practices to adopt a more humane and effective method in handling the City's stray cat population. This process emanated from the realization that mass euthanasia and feeding bans were not successful in actually reducing the stray cat population. Studies have been conducted to determine the efficacy of such programs, and found that euthanasia required greater effort and financial burden to control the population compared to comprehensive TNR programs.

As a result of this process, the City's Health Code was amended to allow for a TNR program. This program has been extremely effective in reducing the stray cat population by ending the cycle of breeding, which has reduced the number of free-roaming cats. TNR prevents unwanted litters, stops the growth of the population, and reduces nuisance behaviors like spraying, fighting, and roaming.

This program has been successfully utilized in other cities throughout the U.S. and has significantly progressed in Baltimore City over the years as more resources have been made





available to fully implement the program. In 2013, the City accepted a \$1 million grant from Petsmart Charities and Best Friends Animal Society to fund staff and resources to TNR thousands of cats each year, and the program continues to receive funding through State and private grants to continue its mission.

BCHD appreciates the opportunity to present this information to the Council, and highlight the success the TNR policy has demonstrated in the decade since its inception.



## CITY OF BALTIMORE COUNCIL BILL 17-0042R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmembers Henry, Reisinger, Clarke, Middleton Introduced and read first time: September 11, 2017 Assigned to: Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Health Department

#### A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1	A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
2	Informational Hearing – Feral Cats
3 4 5	FOR the purpose of requesting that representatives from the Health Department's Office of Animal Control appear before the City Council to discuss feral cats in Baltimore and whether the City's current approach to feral cats should be modified or remain the same.
6	Recitals
7 8 9 10	Feral cats, cats that are unsocialized to humans and have a temperament of extreme fear of and resistance to contact with humans, are a reality in all communities, and Baltimore is no exception. Over time, understandings about how they should be treated have evolved and a number of different approaches to managing their presence in urban areas have been tried.
11 12 13 14	Nearly 10 years ago Baltimore changed its laws on, and approach to, feral cats to encourage efforts by the City and private individuals to trap, alter, vaccinate, ear tip, and return feral cats. Provisions were also added to the law to allow feral cat caregivers to engage with feral cats and feral cat colonies without violating City law.
15 16 17 18	A decade into this approach it is appropriate to review how it is working in Baltimore and whether or not changes may be required. The effects of this policy on cats, communities, and Animal Control employees should be examined to see if it is succeeding in its goals or if modifications to the current approach would benefit everyone involved.
19 20 21 22	Now, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council requests that representatives from the Health Department's Office of Animal Control appear before it to discuss feral cats in Baltimore and whether the City's current approach to feral cats should be modified or remain the same.
23 24 25	AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Health Commissioner, the Director of Animal Control, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment. Strike out indicates matter deleted by amendment.



#### INTRODUCTORY\*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL \_\_\_\_R
(Resolution) /7- 6042

APPROVED FOR FORM

STYLE, AND TEXTUAL SUFFICINGY

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Introduced by: Councilmember Henry

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

Informational Hearing – Feral Cats

FOR the purpose of requesting that representatives from the Health Department's Office of Animal Control appear before the City Council to discuss feral cats in Baltimore and whether the City's current approach to feral cats should be modified or remain the same.

#### Recitals

Feral cats, cats that are unsocialized to humans and have a temperament of extreme fear of and resistance to contact with humans, are a reality in all communities, and Baltimore is no exception. Over time, understandings about how they should be treated have evolved and a number of different approaches to managing their presence in urban areas have been tried.

Nearly 10 years ago Baltimore changed its laws on, and approach to, feral cats to encourage efforts by the City and private individuals to trap, alter, vaccinate, ear tip, and return feral cats. Provisions were also added to the law to allow feral cat caregivers to engage with feral cats and feral cat colonies without violating City law.

A decade into this approach it is appropriate to review how it is working in Baltimore and whether or not changes may be required. The effects of this policy on cats, communities, and Animal Control employees should be examined to see if it is succeeding in its goals or if modifications to the current approach would benefit everyone involved.

Now, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council requests that representatives from the Health Department's Office of Animal Control appear before it to discuss feral cats in Baltimore and whether the City's current approach to feral cats should be modified or remain the same.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Health Commissioner, the Director of Animal Control, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

\* WARNING: THIS IS AN UNOFFICIAL, INTRODUCTORY COPY OF THE BILL.
THE OFFICIAL COPY CONSIDERED BY THE CITY COUNCIL IS THE FIRST READER COPY.



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STYLE, AND TEXT: AL SUFFIENCY

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DEP'T LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE

## AMENDMENTS TO COUNCIL BILL 17-0042R (1st Reader Copy)

By: The Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee {To be offered on the Council Floor}

## Amendment No. 1

On page 1, in the Introduced by line, after "Middleton" insert ". Stokes".

