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	Subject	17-0042R – Informational Hearing – Feral Cats		

To: President and Members  
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.