



**RHODE ISLAND**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

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March 1, 2021

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey  
Chairman  
House Committee on Health and Human Services  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**RE: H 5462 An Act Relating to Animals and Animal Husbandry**

Dear Chairman Casey,

Thank you for providing the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) the opportunity to comment on H 5462, which would provide that the trapping and subsequent release of any unowned feral or free roaming cat for the purpose of spaying or neutering of the cat shall not be considered abandonment. DEM supports this legislation.

DEM is grateful that the sponsor of this bill has recognized that under existing law, any person or group that practices Trap, Neuter, and Release (TNR) as an attempted method to control the population of free-roaming or feral cats may be in jeopardy of criminal prosecution under the animal abandonment statutes. While the efficacy of TNR may be the subject of some debate, the fact is that those who are attempting to address the issue of unowned, free-roaming, and/or feral cats through the practice of TNR should not be subject to animal abandonment laws, as is possible under current law.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on this legislation and would be pleased to make ourselves available as needed. Please feel free to contact Scott Marshall, DVM (RI State Veterinarian) at [scott.marshall@dem.ri.gov](mailto:scott.marshall@dem.ri.gov) should you have any additional questions or wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Janet Coit", is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Janet Coit  
Director

CC: Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services  
The Honorable John G. Edwards