



**Potter League**  
*Enriching Lives*

**Animal Care & Adoption Center**

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February 11, 2026

Representative Stephen M. Casey  
Chairperson, House Committee on Municipal Government & Housing  
Room 135 - State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903  
**Re: House Bill - 7562**

Dear Chairperson Casey and Members of the Committee:

House Bill H7562 updates Rhode Island's animal-welfare laws by strengthening the procedures that govern how abandoned, neglected, or cruelly treated animals are taken into protective custody and cared for. The bill allows municipal animal control officers, in addition to officers or agents of the Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RISPCA), to take charge of animals that are found abandoned, neglected, or otherwise suffering from conditions such as injury, illness, lameness, or cruel treatment. This expansion ensures that local officials—who are often the first to encounter these situations—have clear authority to act immediately to safeguard animal welfare.

Most importantly, this bill separates decisions about the custody of animals from criminal cases, which can take months or years to make their way through the court system, placing a cost burden on animal care on municipalities. Once an animal is taken into custody, notice will be provided to the owner or guardian, if known, and clarifies the responsibilities of owners to pay for reasonable costs of care for their animal. If an owner does not pay or make payment arrangements within thirty days after receiving a written request, the responsible organization may initiate a civil action to recover expenses or take ownership of the animal. This ensures that shelters have a structured pathway to recoup costs associated with feeding, veterinary care, boarding, and related necessities, aligning those expectations with typical service expenses in the state.

H7562 also creates a clear process for owners seeking to regain custody of an animal. Owners have sixty days after receiving notice of the animal's seizure to petition the district court for its return. At the resulting hearing, the court evaluates the animal's condition, the level of care required, and the owner's ability to safely care for the animal—even while any related criminal charges are pending. If the court determines that the owner can provide or arrange adequate care, custody may be restored under reasonable conditions that the court finds appropriate. All decisions are based on a preponderance of the evidence, providing a consistent and recognizable legal standard.

If an owner fails to petition for return of the animal within the allotted sixty days—or fails to pay the required cost of care—the bill allows the city, town shelter, or RISPCA to petition for full transfer of ownership of the animal. If an owner does not respond to such a petition, the court must grant the transfer, ensuring that animals are not left indefinitely in legal limbo and can be placed in permanent homes when appropriate.

Taken together, H7562 modernizes Rhode Island’s approach to handling cases of animal neglect and cruelty by clarifying authority, establishing predictable procedures for custody and cost recovery, and ensuring the timely resolution of ownership questions. The bill supports the welfare of vulnerable animals while also providing a balanced structure for due process and responsible care management.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,



Brad Shear, CAWA  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
**Potter League for Animals**

