



*Distinctive Communities
Powerful Alliance*

February 11, 2026

The Honorable Stephen M. Casey, Chair
House Municipal Government and Housing
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: BILL NUMBER H-7562 – A N A C T RELATING TO ANIMALS AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY -- CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Dear Chair Casey and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, we are writing this legislation provides important clarity and structure for municipalities when animals are abandoned, neglected, or hazardedly accumulated. Cities and towns are often placed in difficult situations when animal control officers must intervene to protect the health and safety of animals and the community, yet ownership disputes or procedural gaps can delay permanent resolution.

House Bill 7562 establishes a clear legal pathway when an owner or guardian fails to petition for custody within sixty (60) days of notice of the taking or fails to pay within sixty (60) days of written demand. In those instances, municipal shelters or the Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals may petition the court for transfer of ownership. If the owner fails to respond, the court shall transfer ownership accordingly. This structured process protects due process rights while preventing animals from remaining in prolonged legal limbo.

For municipalities, this bill offers several key benefits:

- Reduces long-term shelter costs by allowing cities and towns to seek timely transfer of ownership rather than housing animals indefinitely at taxpayer expense.
- Provides procedural certainty for animal control officers and municipal shelters, ensuring consistent enforcement statewide.
- Clarifies enforcement authority by explicitly including municipal animal control officers as authorized agents to take charge of and provide adequate care to animals found abandoned, neglected, or hazardedly accumulated.
- Improves public health and safety, particularly in cases involving animal hoarding or dangerous conditions.
- Most importantly, this legislation safeguards animal welfare. By empowering municipal animal control officers to lawfully intervene and ensuring a defined process for ownership transfer, House Bill 7562 helps ensure that animals receive prompt care, stability, and, where appropriate, placement in safe and permanent homes.

Municipalities regularly shoulder the operational and financial responsibility of animal control. This bill supports their ability to carry out that responsibility effectively while protecting the wellbeing of vulnerable animals.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the perspective of Rhode Island's municipalities and for your thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Rossi", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Municipal Government and Housing