

April 4, 2016

Los Angeles City Council  
Personnel and Animal Welfare Committee  
Los Angeles City Hall  
200 North Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

*Re: Council File 16-0114*

Honorable Members of the Personnel and Animal Welfare Committee:

Thank you for your ongoing support for Los Angeles' animal population and the humans that care for them. The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), Best Friends Animal Society, FixNation, SNP LA, and Spay4LA urge you to support proposed legislation (CF 16-0114) which would allow residents to self-identify their income status to secure eligibility for the City of Los Angeles' free spay/neuter voucher program.

Currently, in order to qualify for the City's free spay/neuter voucher program a resident must provide proof of income in addition to proof of residence. However, for pet owners who are homeless or undocumented, providing documentation is often impossible. Many people have unsterilized pets because veterinary surgical costs are high, and there is a lack of access to and information about low cost alternatives. When these residents are unable to obtain the City's subsidized spay/neuter vouchers this ultimately leaves their pets vulnerable to reproducing unwanted litters, which further impacts an already overburdened and overcrowded shelter system.

According to HSUS's Pets for Life program, 88% of pet owners in underserved communities throughout the U.S. have never made contact with their local shelter or animal control department. Additionally, a staggering 91% of the pets met by Pets for Life staff in underserved communities are unaltered. This statistic is the complete opposite of U.S. altered incident rate which comes in at 88%. The good news is that through programs like Pets for Life - where spay/neuter is offered for free and there is no means testing, about 80% of those unaltered pets are sterilized. These numbers paint a clear picture as to why we should strive to remove all barriers to the City's free spay/neuter voucher program for low-income residents. The more people who can use the vouchers to sterilize their pets, the closer our City comes to reaching its goal of "no kill".

Easing up on the documentation requirements is a huge first step towards removing the red tape to obtaining the free spay/neuter voucher. Ultimately though, this will need to be followed up with clear policies and procedures for our licensing enforcement teams to take the vouchers with

them as they do door-to-door licensing enforcement in low income communities so that residents, when given a licensing citation, also receive the free S/N voucher.

With the exception of HSUS, all of the listed groups here accept the City's free spay/neuter voucher as payment. HSUS operates the Pets for Life program that conducts door-to-door outreach in low income neighborhoods to enroll Los Angeles residents in its free S/N program. The proposed policy change will increase the number of residents that can use the voucher and make the day-to-day work of these spay/neuter providers easier and more efficient thereby increasing the number of animals sterilized each month and reducing unwanted litters.

While there is no "magic bullet" to reduce the number of animals in our shelter system, this policy, if enacted, will be a key factor in providing everyone who resides in the City of Los Angeles the opportunity to spay or neuter their pets.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the proposed changes to the spay/neuter voucher policy. We stand ready to provide additional support to the City to advance this and related policies.

Sincerely,



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Karn Myers  
Executive Director, FixNation



Noel Jackson  
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