

Submitter: Karen Green
On Behalf Of: Cat Adoption Team
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB3571

My name is Karen Green, and I'm the executive director of the Cat Adoption Team (CAT), a nonprofit organization in Sherwood, Oregon. CAT is the largest cat-focused organization in the Pacific Northwest, helping cats find new homes and stay with their families, and providing spay/neuter services to prevent unplanned litters. We celebrate our 25th anniversary and 60,000th adoption this year.

Cat Adoption Team fully and enthusiastically supports HB 3571. Across the state, municipal and private agencies take in stray cats, attempt to find their owners, provide the cats with shelter and veterinary care (including spay/neuter), and--if owners can't be found--seek adopters for them. Tens of thousands of cats and kittens each year rely on this support, as do the people in the communities where they live. Without stray services for cats, communities are left with sick, injured, and dying cats in their parking lots and yards; populations of unowned and unsocialized cats growing out of control; nuisances like fighting, spraying, and traffic hazards; and other challenges. Of course, a lack of services for stray cats also results in immeasurable and avoidable suffering and loss of life for those cats. Fortunately, many public and private organizations are helping by providing services for these cats. However, they are doing so at some risk due to a muddied legislative landscape. With the exception of only two counties that have ordinances providing clear pathways for stray cats, stray cats fall under found property laws. Depending on the value of a cat (which is difficult to establish), the current laws require that they be held for 90 days and advertised in a major print publication before the finder can take possession. It's not practical, healthy, or humane to hold a cat for 90 days in a shelter: this law is not appropriate for living animals. So shelters either rehome cats earlier (typically following the same stray hold periods used for dogs), which exposes the shelters to risk, or do not provide services because of that risk.

HB 3571 would protect licensed animal rescue agencies with brick-and-mortar facilities from risk associated with providing services to stray cats comparable to what is provided to dogs across the state. It does not mandate that shelters provide stray cat services. And by allowing only animal rescue entities with brick-and-mortar shelters open to the public to take in stray cats, it will limit the number of places an owner would need to look for their lost pet.

Ultimately, HB 3571 will benefit people and cats in communities by offering protection to the animal rescue entities who aim not only to help cats and people, but to protect their taxpayer- and/or donor-funded assets. Please vote "Yes!" on HB 3571!