July 23, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

As you continue to negotiate and draft further legislation to respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we respectfully urge you to consider the funding needs of animal shelters and rescue organizations that are working diligently to provide emergency services that benefit animals and public health more broadly. Specifically, federal funding should be included in any upcoming aid package to help non-profit animal shelters and rescues as they face workforce issues and supply shortages in addition to financial distress, including those that are educating the public about the basic elements of pet care and welfare, and those that are providing emergency services and animal control or adoption services, which are recognized as public health services for the benefit of local communities.

We are a nation of pet lovers and these local institutions play a vital role in promoting public health by helping to keep pets with their families and in making every American community a better and safer place for people and animals. The 2017-2018 American Veterinary Medical Association Sourcebook states that 74.4 million American households have at least one pet. Some 80 percent of those households consider pets to be members of their families, and a large percentage of them have acquired their pets from animal shelters and rescue groups. Despite the workforce issues and supply shortages caused by this pandemic, many shelters still provide emergency services such as attending to injured or sick stray animals, cruelty and neglect complaints, bite complaints, and dangerous and aggressive dog complaints.

In this difficult time, the organizations that care for and adopt out animals are heavily engaged in disseminating information and providing direct services to citizens, designed to help them ensure the safety and well-being of their pets. Many of these organizations provide access to emergency pet food for families struggling to feed their pets, as well as basic services and veterinary care, and valuable counsel and support regarding pet health and nutrition. Amid this crisis, these services remain vital in keeping pets and families together and in helping to stave off an increase in pets being surrendered to shelters or abandoned in this time of crisis.

There are an estimated 3,500 brick and mortar animal shelters and 10,000 rescue groups in the United States providing services for pets in our communities. In addition, agencies and private authorities with animal control contracts spend approximately $800 million to $1 billion annually to pick-up, treat, and promote the adoption of stray animals. This too is an important public
health service and should have funding as such for the benefit of millions of Americans, their pets, and their communities.

As our country continues to respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to ensure that local and county governments have the resources they require to accommodate the immediate, increased needs of animal shelters and rescue organizations in any upcoming coronavirus response package. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

[Signature]
Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

The letter was also signed by the following Members of Congress.

Thomas R. Suozzi
Salud Carbajal
Donna Shalala
Jan Schakowsky
Dina Titus
Ann McLane Kuster
Bill Posey
Jerry McNerney
Lori Trahan
Madeleine Dean
David Trone
Kathy Castor
Chris Pappas
Ted Lieu
David N. Cicilline
Barbara Lee
Earl Blumenauer
Tony Cárdenas
Bennie G. Thompson
Peter A. DeFazio
Steve Cohen
Linda T. Sánchez
Andy Kim
Stephen Lynch
Tulsi Gabbard
Joe Neguse
Anthony Brindisi
Donald M. Payne, Jr.

Susan Wild
Christopher H. Smith
Vicente Gonzalez
Grace Meng
Stephanie Murphy
Raúl Grijalva
Yvette D. Clarke
Abby Finkenauer
John Katko
Juan Vargas
Joyce Beatty
John Yarmuth
Conor Lamb
Debbie Dingell
Ayanna Pressley
Colin Allred

Derek Kilmer
Darren Soto
James P. McGovern
Susan A. Davis
Brendan F. Boyle
Alma S. Adams, Ph.D
Adam Smith
Judy Chu
Scott Peters
Ami Bera
Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Charlie Crist
Cindy Axne
Cheri Bustos
Lisa Blunt Rochester
Anna G. Eshoo
Ro Khanna
Daniel W. Lipinski
Josh Gottheimer
Jamie Raskin
Bill Foster
Katherine M. Clark
Jimmy Panetta
Mike Quigley
David Price
John B. Larson
Veronica Escobar