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FY 2021 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing **Environmental Conservation** **Tuesday, January 27, 2020**

Testimony by
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American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Good morning Senator Krueger, Assemblymember Weinstein and members of the joint committee. On behalf of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and our 120,000 New York State supporters, I appreciate the opportunity to urge restoration of the \$5 million line item for the Companion Animal Capital Fund (CACF) in the FY 2021 State Budget.

The ASPCA is pleased that this one-of-a-kind initiative received bipartisan support for three years running to help New York's animal shelters address critical infrastructure in the enacted Capital Projects budget. We are especially grateful to Assembly Agriculture Committee Chair Donna Lupardo and her committee members, Assemblymember Deborah Glick, Senate Domestic Animal Welfare Committee Chair Monica Martinez, Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Jen Metzger and members of their respective committees, and Governor Cuomo for championing this program.

The RFP for the third round of CACF funding closed on January 21, 2020, state government will have invested \$15 million in animal shelters across New York, making a real difference in the lives of the animals in their charge by enhancing their physical plants. By providing financial assistance for the construction, renovation, rehabilitation, installation, acquisition, or expansion of buildings, equipment, or facilities, this fund has begun to address the overwhelming need to assist municipal governments and their sheltering partners as they seek to maintain and improve capacity to carry out their mandated goal to provide sheltering services to the public.

As anticipated however, demand for this funding continues to far exceed available dollars. Coupled with the fact that numerous other shelters are preparing

to launch capital improvement programs in the near future, the need is clear to make CACF a recurring source of capital funding. With this in mind, we respectfully urge you to continue your support for this unprecedented program in FY 2021 by including an additional \$5 million so that many more shelters can meet their infrastructure needs in service to homeless animals in their communities.

Undoubtedly, this is an investment that saves taxpayer dollars. While they receive no direct state funding, not-for-profit humane societies, societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals (SPCAs) and animal shelters provide an important resource for the residents and local governments they serve. Every municipality in the state outside of New York City is required to maintain an animal shelter to harbor lost, strayed or surrendered animals for its residents. In many cases these entities – with very little or no state support – provide this service under contract with local governments, saving them both time and money. Indeed, the cost of a municipal sheltering contract costs far less than establishing and maintaining a government-operated animal facility.

In addition, many of these sheltering entities provide much more. Good community spaces, “safe harbor” pet retention programs for victims of domestic violence, agility and training programs and holders of animals as evidence in criminal animal abuse cases. The importance of the latter cannot be understated, as such responsibility is ultimately a public, not a private, charge. Yet, sheltering operators have the skill and commitment to care for animals in jeopardy have stepped in voluntarily to help their localities and law enforcement provide this service.

With these points in mind, the ASPCA feels it is sound public policy to establish recurring state support for these entities. We applaud your work in helping to meet their need for essential capital improvements, and hope you will continue this commitment in the coming year to ensure their ability to help animals in need and serve local governments and their communities for many years to come.