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**BUDGET TESTIMONY
FY 2027 BUDGET LANGUAGE – COMPANION ANIMAL CAPITAL FUND
(CACF)**

**Agriculture/ Joint Legislative Public Hearing
January 27, 2026**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and its 230,000 supporters in New York State. Your compassionate and forward-thinking actions over the last several sessions to protect our most at-risk animal populations are unprecedented and have established the Empire State as a true leader in animal welfare policy. We respectfully urge your favorable consideration of the budget items below, in the interest and support of that remarkable work.

Companion Animal Capital Fund

Governor Hochul's FY27 Executive Budget proposal includes \$5 million for the Companion Animal Capital Fund (CACF) – the fifth year in which the Fund has been proposed by the Executive. This initiative first became a reality in 2017 as a proposal advanced by the Legislature, it has delivered \$48 million to almost 100 shelter organizations for much-needed capital improvements since that time. *We ask that you renew this commitment with a legacy allocation of \$5 million to match the Governor's \$5 million line item, bringing the Fund to a total of \$10 million.*

With almost \$114 million in additional capital needs for animal shelters across the state – and with the Companion Animal Care Standards Act of 2022 finally effective in December 2025 – more organizations are applying for this funding. A \$10 million appropriation in FY27 for the CACF will mean that more animal shelters and rescue organizations will be able to make the capital changes needed to meet these comprehensive new standards.

To date, the ASPCA has dedicated approximately \$200,000 to support the New York State Animal Protection Federation's free on-site consultation services to assist any entity covered under the new law with compliance strategies. We also provided \$100,000 in direct grant support to such organizations for record keeping and veterinary care

assistance, but brick and mortar needs continue to be the most significant outstanding issue for New York shelters as they modernize their facilities for 21st century programming.

Animal Crimes Fund

Enforcing New York's criminal animal cruelty statutes comes with a series of significant challenges, beginning with the fact that the abused animal itself is evidence of the alleged crime. Unlike all other forms of evidence, however, they are also personal property and living, breathing, sentient creatures. They cannot be placed in secure storage unattended, or in an evidence locker until a criminal case is adjudicated.

Even when removed from severely neglectful or abusive situations, the quality of life for a seized dog, cat, horse or other animal can diminish significantly in a relatively short period of time without a permanent living situation. At the same time, shelters have no way of knowing when a criminal case will be resolved. Depending upon numerous factors beyond their control, a conviction or dismissal can take months, if not years. During this same period, costs borne by impounding organizations increase proportionally and quickly become prohibitive. Animals entrusted to their care require food, water, veterinary care, and behavioral, enrichment and volunteer services that must be continuously available to the shelter's entire population.

While some impounding organizations successfully use the security petition process in current law in an effort to require accused abusers to pay these sheltering costs or convince a court to order them to surrender their pet, many have found this process expensive and unreliable. While district attorneys are authorized to assist a sheltering agency in this regard, it is typically the shelter that bears responsibility for filing the security petition. The situation is especially dire in rural areas, where shelters often must weigh providing care for animals or paying a lawyer to prepare the petition and represent the shelter in court.

In consideration of this long-standing and costly problem, the New York State Animal Protection Federation's proposal to create a \$2.5 million NYS Animal Crimes Fund could begin to help eligible shelters offset the high costs of sheltering animals seized pursuant to criminal cases in all regions of the state. This problem is long-standing and well-known in municipal government, animal sheltering and law enforcement communities statewide. *We urge your serious consideration of NYSAPF's proposal, with the understanding that language must also be included to ensure efforts for recovering care costs are first directed at those accused of any animal crime before utilizing state funds for this purpose.*

Thank you for your time and consideration of these requests. We greatly appreciate your support, partnership and continued efforts on behalf of animal welfare.