



**FY 2027 BUDGET TESTIMONY
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION/ENERGY
Brian Shapiro, New York Director, Humane World for Animals**

January 28, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on budgetary issues pertaining to environmental conservation in our state. I'm presenting on behalf of Humane World for Animals, formerly called the Humane Society of the United States.

We thank and acknowledge the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Commissioner Lefton, Assemblymember Glick, and Senator Harckham for their commitment to advancing environmental protection in our state.

Humane World for Animals respectfully asks the Department and Legislature to allocate support aimed at improving the Rabies Vector Species (RVS) licensing program. It's essential for public safety to have professional wildlife rehabilitators with RVS endorsement or authorization in our communities, particularly in our rural counties with a limited number of rehabbers. Having an appropriate number of RVS approved rehabilitators available prevents the general public from making "bare-handed" contact that could necessitate expensive and painful post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).

Within NYS Environmental Conservation Law (ECL), sections 11-0515 and 11-0919, there's room for revising or establishing programs to increase the number of vetted and licensed wildlife rehabilitators approved to take raccoons. The purpose of a state RVS license is to protect human health while also providing humane, qualified care for wildlife. We are perhaps falling short of this goal without modernizing the program - and a shortage of qualified rehabilitators available to assist the public with RVS situations will inevitably put additional pressure on the Department.

New York's wildlife rehabilitators, a solid group of DEC stakeholders, are a community represented by the New York State Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (NYSWRC). This is a professional and long-established organization, respected by the DEC, with members trained and educated with the most effective tools and methods available. We respectfully urge the Department work with NYSWRC to help address this and other obstacles, and to allocate funds as needed on this matter, to help improve public safety.

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