



## **WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET HEARING ON HOUSING**

Submitted to the New York State Legislature  
Regarding the FY 2026–2027 Budget

### **Re: Inclusion of \$5 Million for a Co-Sheltering Grant Program**

Submitted by:  
Christine Kim  
Founder & Executive Director  
My Dog Is My Home  
[christine@mydogismyhome.org](mailto:christine@mydogismyhome.org)

Good afternoon Chairpersons and Members of the Legislature:

My name is Christine Kim, and I am the Founder and Executive Director of My Dog Is My Home, a national nonprofit organization based in New York working to increase access to shelter and housing for people experiencing homelessness with companion animals. I am also a resident of Ridgewood, Queens in New York City. I respectfully submit this testimony to urge the Legislature to include **\$5 million in the FY 2026–2027 State Budget to establish and fund a co-sheltering grant program** that supports housing and shelter providers in accommodating people experiencing homelessness with their companion animals.

For more than a decade, My Dog Is My Home has partnered with local and state governments, service providers, and national organizations to expand pet-inclusive emergency housing options. New York has been a leader in many areas of housing innovation. With a modest investment, it can also become a national leader in co-sheltering.

### **Why This Matters: Barriers to Shelter Entry**

Research confirms what we consistently hear from people with lived experience: the inability to stay with a companion animal is a major barrier to shelter entry.

A study conducted by researchers at New York University examining the top reasons people experiencing unsheltered homelessness refuse to enter shelter found that among the primary factors were:

1. Inability to bring a partner or family member;
2. Inability to bring personal belongings;
3. Concerns about safety;
4. Restrictive shelter rules; and
- 5. Inability to bring a companion animal.**



For many individuals, pets are not property—they are family. Companion animals provide emotional stability, protection, routine, and a sense of purpose. Animals can also serve as a source of safety and social connection.

When human shelter systems are not pet-inclusive, individuals are forced to choose between a roof over their head and their animal family member. Many choose to remain unsheltered.

If New York is serious about reducing unsheltered homelessness, improving public health outcomes, and increasing successful human shelter engagement, pet-inclusive options must be part of the solution.

### **Lessons from California's Pet Assistance and Support (PAS) Program**

California has demonstrated that state investment in pet-inclusive homelessness services is both feasible and impactful. The Pet Assistance and Support (PAS) program—administered by the California Department of Housing and Community Development—provides funding to homelessness service providers to pay for the pet-related expenses of sheltering people experiencing homelessness with their companion animals.

My Dog Is My Home conducted a policy analysis of the PAS program in partnership with the University of Southern California and the ASPCA. Our major findings include:

- **High demand for pet-inclusive services:** Grantees reported strong uptake and clear evidence that pet-related support increased engagement with housing and shelter programs.
- **Relatively modest cost impact:** Pet-related expenses—such as supplies, veterinary partnerships, facility modifications, and staffing adjustments—were generally manageable and cost-effective relative to overall program budgets.
- **Improved housing stability and program participation:** Providers reported that allowing clients to remain with their animals increased trust, program retention, and progress toward permanent housing.
- **Clear state-level guidance accelerates implementation:** Dedicated funding and explicit policy authorization reduced hesitation among providers.

The PAS program demonstrates that with targeted state investment, co-sheltering can be implemented effectively and responsibly.

### **Why New York Needs a Co-Sheltering Grant Program**

Pet-inclusion is sometimes a matter of life and death. In a study of domestic violence survivors in shelter, 71% of women reported their abuser threatened to injure or had killed their companion animal. In a survey completed in partnership between the National Domestic



Violence Hotline and Urban Resource Institute, it was found that 50% of respondents would not consider shelter for themselves if they could not take their pets with them.

New York's animal shelter system is also under strain. Animal shelters are experiencing severe overcrowding, and housing instability remains a leading driver of animal surrender. Without pet-inclusive shelter and housing options, individuals face traumatic choices that destabilize both families and animals.

A \$5 million state investment would:

- Support emergency and domestic violence shelters in modifying facilities and policies to allow co-sheltering;
- Fund pilot programs across diverse regions of the state;
- Build cross-sector partnerships between homeless services and animal welfare organizations;
- Reduce animal surrenders linked to housing instability;
- Increase shelter utilization among unsheltered individuals; and
- Promote housing stability for vulnerable New Yorkers.

This is not solely an animal welfare issue—it is a housing access, public health, domestic violence, and human services issue.

Co-sheltering is a cost-effective, humane, and evidence-informed intervention that removes a well-documented barrier to shelter entry.

We respectfully urge the Legislature to include **\$5 million in the FY 2026–2027 State Budget to establish a co-sheltering grant program.**

This investment will save lives, strengthen families, reduce barriers to shelter entry, and advance New York's leadership in innovative housing policy.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome the opportunity to provide any additional information.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Kim  
Founder & Executive Director  
My Dog Is My Home

Resident of Senate District 12 and Assembly District 37.