



**CITY OF HOUSTON**  
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The Honorable Joe Moody  
Members of the House Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence  
Texas House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chairman Moody and Members of the Committee,

The City of Houston BARC Animal Shelter (Houston or City or BARC) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of HB 3660, a bill that would clarify that Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) programs in Texas are not considered abandonment under the Texas animal cruelty law. TNR is a common-sense, cost-effective solution to managing populations of unowned, free-roaming cats by preventing additional births.

For a long time, “catch and kill” was a widely accepted method of managing community cat colonies. The cats were trapped and removed from their established colony to be euthanized. While this method causes an instant decrease in the overall colony numbers, it is not effective over time. Colonies subject to “catch and kill” typically end up increasing in number back to their original size because of what is known as the “vacuum effect.”

What is the vacuum effect? Community cat colonies, like other populations of animals in the wild, have a certain population size at which they are most stable – its “stability” size. When the population size of a colony is drastically reduced over a short period of time, the colony reacts by trying to return to its stability size. The remaining members of the colony increase mating activities as they attempt to create sufficient offspring to stabilize the population of the colony. A reduction in size also opens the door for newcomers to the colony – other cats in the area may move in. Because of the vacuum effect, “catch and kill” has no lasting impact on the size of a community cat colony.

Community cats are not subject to the vacuum effect phenomenon. Once community cats within a colony are spayed and neutered, not only will the population size gradually decrease, but the cats will also be healthier and coexist more peacefully within a neighborhood. Female cats, prevented from having more litters, will be healthier. Male cats will gradually lose the urge to roam and fight and will be less prone to injury. Behaviors associated with unaltered cats, such as yowling and marking territory with urine, will disappear.

BARC operates a robust adoption program that is focused on saving lives by placing cats and kittens into forever homes. However, as an open-admission shelter, BARC takes in hundreds more felines annually than it can adopt out, most notably feral and semi-feral cats. BARC has incorporated an aggressive TNR program to provide the

shelter with alternatives to euthanasia for those cats that are not adopted. For example, in 2022 alone, BARC sterilized and returned 530 cats to their original colonies.

TNR is widely accepted and is a support effort that saves feline lives, not only in Houston but around the country. National organizations, such as Best Friends Animal Society and The Humane Society of the United States support the initiative.

The City of Houston appreciates your hard work in advancing the cause of homeless animals and we strongly support this legislation.

Respectfully submitted,



Tina Paez, Director  
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