



# CITY OF HOUSTON

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The Honorable Senfronia Thompson  
Chairman, House Committee on Public Health  
Members of the House Committee on Public Health  
Texas House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, Texas 78768-2910

Dear Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

The City of Houston (Houston or City) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 921 which recognizes the importance of requiring all – both public and private animal shelters – to prepare, maintain, and release intake and disposition records of shelter animals in their care.

BARC—the City of Houston’s Animal Shelter and Adoptions Agency – is one of only two shelters in Houston required to accept every animal that comes through its doors regardless of shelter capacity or the behavior, breed or medical condition of the animal. BARC takes in over 25,000 animals annually, as does the Harris County Public Health animal shelter. While these shelters are the primary resources in their individual jurisdictions, they represent a small portion of the entire animal shelter community in Houston. At least four other non-profit shelters – including the Houston SPCA and the Houston Humane Society—each take in at least 10,000 animals each year, but the exact number and outcome of their shelter populations is unknown as they are not required to publish any intake information.

This lack of community-wide shelter data limits Houston’s ability to protect public safety by hindering our ability to apply for national grant funding. Most large national animal shelter grants require animal intake and final disposition data for all the major shelters in a region. Community-wide shelter statistics are the only fair and transparent way grantors can determine where the greatest needs are located across the country. Without access to this data, Houston and the surrounding areas miss out on much-needed grant funding and must rely on shrinking municipal budgets to fund essential shelter and animal control operations.

Additionally, the gathering of transparent, accurate and reliable data would also help public and private shelters collaborate on a solution to the region’s growing stray animal problem. The Houston area has one of the largest stray animal populations in the country and the magnitude of this challenge is larger than the public-operated shelters alone can handle. Only with an organized, collaborative effort across public and private shelters can we begin to reduce the stray population.

Requiring all shelters, public and private, to publish their annual intake and outcome statistics is essential not just to Houston, but for the health and welfare of the entire region. Animals do not recognize jurisdictional boundaries. With the additional data provided by other shelters, we would be better able to quantify the continually increasing stray population and, together with our neighbor shelters, enhance our ability to determine where resources need to be allocated throughout the area.

My staff and I are available should you have any questions. Thank you for considering this very important legislation that could help impact the thousands of shelter animals in Houston and surrounding areas.

Sincerely,



Greg Damjanoff, Shelter Director  
BARC Animal Shelter and Adoption Agency  
City of Houston