STATE OF NEW YORK

7612

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

April 23, 2025

Introduced by Sen. MARTINEZ -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Social Services

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to establishing a statewide co-shelter toolkit

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Legislative findings and intent. The legislature hereby finds there is a statewide need for sheltered housing that accommodates companion animals for victims of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness. Victims of domestic violence historically remain in abusive situations to curtail abuse against their companion animal, placing an additional burden on individuals already in a dangerous and taxing situation. Results from a survey conducted by the Urban Resource Institute yielded that 48% of respondents were fearful of abusers harming their companion animals and 50% indicated they would not seek shelter for themselves if their companion animal could not be accommodated. While housing providers may currently impose no-pet policies for legitimate concerns related to health, safety and cost there are successful models across the nation that can be replicated. It is thereby the intent of the legislature to produce a co-shelter toolkit to assist housing providers in creating, implementing and sustaining co-sheltering models to fill this critical gap and service those in need in New York state.

§ 2. The social services law is amended by adding a new section 459-bb to read as follows:

§ 459-bb. Statewide co-shelter toolkit. 1. The office of temporary and disability assistance, in consultation with the office for the prevention of domestic violence, shall establish a comprehensive toolkit inclusive of best practices, resources, case studies and other information deemed helpful to inform and encourage the implementation and sustenance of co-shelter models. Such toolkit shall support new and

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

LBD02506-01-5

existing efforts by housing providers, organizations and municipalities to reduce existing sheltered housing barriers for victims of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness with companion animals.

2. For the purposes of this section, co-sheltering shall mean housing people and companion animals together.

3. Such co-shelter toolkit shall include, but not be limited to the following components:

(a) Introductory information on homelessness and circumstances of domestic violence involving companion animals;

(b) Partnership and coalition building with veterinarians, animal welfare organizations, housing providers, law enforcement and any other organization deemed helpful to co-shelter implementation and sustained operations;

(c) Systems-level response including, but not limited to, data collection, coordinated entry, outreach, prevention and diversion, interim and permanent housing;

(d) Program response including, but not limited to, low barrier pet-inclusive policies, housing design, and animal health and supply needs;

(e) Worker response including, but not limited to, training in animal behavior, hygiene, and applicable animal cruelty law;

(f) Case studies of existing successful co-shelter programs; and

(g) Prospective grant opportunities to reduce financial costs.

4. The commissioner of temporary and disability services shall consult applicable housing providers, non-profit organizations, veterinarians and any other agency throughout the development of the guide to provide evidence-based recommendations.

5. The co-shelter toolkit shall be made accessible via multiple formats, including but not limited to, posted on the website, social media outlets, and newsletters. The office shall conduct outreach to ensure such toolkit is widely shared.

§ 3. This act shall take effect on the one hundred twentieth day after it shall have become a law.