

December 18, 2023

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson
Chairman
House Agriculture Committee
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Senate Agriculture Committee
United States Senate

The Honorable David Scott
Ranking Member
House Agriculture Committee
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
Senate Agriculture Committee
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Scott, Chairwoman Stabenow, and Ranking Member Boozman:

The undersigned organizations have come together in strong support of Goldie’s Act to improve Animal Welfare Act (AWA) enforcement, and we respectfully urge you to include this important legislation in the 2023 Farm Bill. Robust oversight of, and accountability on the part of regulated animal businesses is essential, not only for the millions of animal lives at stake, but also for the efficient use of taxpayer dollars that fund the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal Care Program, and cost-effective use of law enforcement, animal control, and non-profit resources when rescue assistance is necessary.

Nearly 60 years ago, Congress passed the AWA to “insure that animals intended for use in research facilities or for exhibition purposes or for use as pets are provided humane care and treatment.” 7 U.S.C. § 2131(1). To achieve this goal, Congress authorized the USDA to institute humane standards of care, inspect licensed facilities, investigate suspected abuse, penalize violators, and cooperate with relevant federal, state, and local agencies to bolster compliance.

However, the USDA’s Animal Care program focuses less on humane animal care and more on licensee interests. Licensed entities can go years without inspection, resulting in prolonged, undetected animal suffering. Further, certain agency policies prevent or discourage inspectors from documenting violations on inspection reports and from removing suffering animals, thereby allowing cruelty to persist. Additionally, the agency’s failure to levy meaningful penalties sends a strong message to the regulated community that violating the law is acceptable. Moreover, despite a clear nexus between federal, state, and local welfare laws, the agency’s failure to promote timely communication with law enforcement has resulted in preventable cruelty and necessitated large-scale rescues. These rescue operations divert limited resources away from law enforcement, animal control, and non-profits who must step in to assist when the USDA fails to address cruelty. Understandably, law enforcement agencies—including some of the signatories to this letter—strongly support Goldie’s Act.

The Farm Bill represents a pivotal opportunity for Congress to direct the USDA to reverse course toward the kind of meaningful enforcement Congress intended when it passed the AWA.

Goldie’s Act is a commonsense solution that closes harmful policy gaps and clarifies the USDA’s enforcement responsibilities to prevent further abuse of discretion. This legislation would require the agency to inspect all regulated entities with reliable frequency, properly record all violations, hold

violators accountable by assessing meaningful penalties, provide immediate assistance to suffering animals, and inform law enforcement of animal cruelty at regulated facilities in a timely fashion.

Thank you for considering our request to include Goldie's Act in the forthcoming Farm Bill to prevent chronic animal suffering and better steward taxpayer, government, and nonprofit resources.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)

Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF)

Animal Welfare Institute (AWI)

Best Friends Animal Society

National Animal Care and Control Association

Small & Rural Law Enforcement Executives Association

Alaska

Alaska SPCA

Alabama

Humane Society of Elmore County

RESCUES ON85TH

Arkansas

Good Shepherd Humane Society

Stone County Humane Society

Arizona

Arizona Humane Society

Fearless Kitty Rescue

Rover's Rest Stop

California

Fallbrook Animal Sanctuary

START Rescue

We Care Animal Rescue

Colorado

Colorado Citizens for Canine Welfare

Colorado Herding Dog Rescue

Colorado Voters for Animals

Humane Society of Boulder Valley

District of Columbia

Animal Rescue Corps

Association of Prosecuting Attorneys

Humane Rescue Alliance

Florida

**Florida Urgent Rescue
Halifax Humane Society
Humane Society of Manatee County
Humane Society of Tampa Bay
Second Chance Animal Rescue & Sanctuary
SPCA of Brevard**

Georgia

Adopt A Golden Atlanta

Iowa

**Animal Rescue League of Iowa
It Takes A Village Animal Rescue and Resources**

Illinois

Tails Humane Society

Indiana

**Brown County Humane Society, Inc.
HELP the Animals, Inc.
Vanderburgh Humane Society
Woodhaven Rescue Farm Inc.**

Kansas

**Pawnee County Humane Society
The Humane Society of Greater Kansas City**

Kentucky

**Daviess County Animal Care and Control
Grant County (KY) Friends of the Shelter
Shamrock Pet Foundation, Inc.**

Massachusetts

Boston Veterinary Clinic

Maryland

**Baltimore Humane Society
Four-Legged Forgotten Oldies Senior Animal Farm
Maryland SPCA
The Humane Society of Harford County, Inc.**

Maine

Animal Refuge League of Greater Portland

Michigan

**All About Animals Rescue
Friends for Animals of Metro Detroit
Humane Animal Treatment Society**

Humane Society of Huron Valley
Humane Society of Macomb
Michigan Anti Cruelty Society
Michigan Humane
VegMichigan

Minnesota

Borderland Humane Society
Minnesota Animal Services Alliance
Minnesota Humane Society
Ruff Start Rescue
Sundown Horse Rescue
The Rescue Crew
The Rescue Pack

Missouri

Owl Hollow Farm (501C.3)
Pet Resource Center of Kansas City

Mississippi

Mississippi Animal Rescue League

North Carolina

Feral Cat Coalition of Cumberland of County
North Carolina Animal Federation
Phoenix Rescue and Healing Farm

Nebraska

Dolly's Legacy Animal Rescue
Midwest Wheaten Rescue

New Hampshire

New Hampshire Humane Society

New Jersey

Eleventh Hour Rescue
Monmouth County SPCA
West Jersey Volunteers for Animals

Nevada

Washoe County Regional Animal Services

New York

Animal Rights Rochester
Coming Home Animal Sanctuary, Inc.
New York Cat Hospital
Phoenix Rising Equine Rescue & Rehabilitation
Veterinary Hospital and Clinic of East Hampton
Voters for Animal Rights

Ohio

**Cleveland Animal Protective League
Ohio Animal Advocates
Secondhand Mutts**

Oklahoma

**Bella SPCA
Best Friends of Pets**

Oregon

**Equamore Foundation
Lark Ranch Rescue and Rehabilitation
Senior Dog Rescue of Oregon**

Pennsylvania

**Animals Can't Talk
Animal Care Sanctuary
Heart of Glass Animal Rescue
Sheriffs' Association of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania**

South Carolina

LowCountry Animal Rescue

Tennessee

Kenzie Consulting

Texas

**Gulf Coast Humane Society
Mutley Crue Pet Sitting**

Virginia

**Animal Welfare League of Arlington
Yellow Dog Potter-Pots for Paw**

Washington

**Auburn Valley Humane Society
Motley Zoo Animal Rescue
Northwest Organization for Animal Help
Spokane Humane Society**

West Virginia

West Virginia Chiefs of Police Association