



House Bill 912

Local Government - Trap-Neuter-Return Policies for Community Cats - Requirements and Restrictions (Ash's Law)

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Environment and Transportation
Committee

Date: February 25, 2026

From: Karrington Anderson

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 912 as drafted. While counties recognize and often support humane management strategies for community cat populations, this bill represents a preemption of local authority and would disrupt well-established local programs that are tailored to community needs.

Under the bill, a local law establishing a Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) policy may not require any registration or certification process for a community cat caregiver. HB 912 also expressly supersedes and preempts any local law, ordinance, policy, or regulation that restricts or prohibits TNR practices.

Counties across Maryland have developed working TNR programs in collaboration with local shelters, animal control agencies, and nonprofit partners. These programs reflect local conditions, public health considerations, and community expectations. From an administrative perspective, having a registry allows local governments to track program effectiveness, allocate limited resources more efficiently, and demonstrate compliance with public health obligations. When designed as a low-barrier, nonpunitive process, registration can support coordination without undermining the goals of TNR. HB 912 would prohibit such registration requirements, removing a key accountability and public health tool that counties may rely on.

Local governments are best positioned to balance animal welfare, public health, nuisance complaints, and environmental impacts in their communities. MACo appreciates the intent to promote humane community cat management and is actively working with bill sponsors and advocates to address county concerns. Counties are aligned with recognizing TNR as an effective strategy in many contexts. However, any statewide framework should preserve reasonable local authority to design, administer, and oversee programs that meet community-specific needs.

If the Committee is persuaded that the mandates in HB 912 are necessary, MACo would offer that the following amendment language could lessen these county concerns:

On page 3, in line 8, strike "NOT", and in line 28, strike "OR RESTRICTS".

MACo respectfully urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 912 as drafted and looks forward to continued collaboration to craft a more balanced approach.