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March 18, 2015
Public Safety Committee
City Hall
200 E Wells St Ste 205
Milwaukee WI 53202

RE: Ordinance relating to a trap-neuter-release pilot program for feral cats.

To the Public Safety Committee:

I am writing in support of the continuation of the trap-neuter-release program in Milwaukee.

I would like to address the concerns submitted in the letter from the Department of Neighborhood Services with cited study results. The DNS' concerns include much speculation and are conflicting in themselves; they provide no sources nor do they cite any studies.

Their concerns:

-'Increase the likelihood of negative interactions among neighbors'.

I don't quite know how to approach such a speculative concern, but in a study by Hughes, Kathy L., Margaret R. Slater, and Linda Haller. "The Effects of Implementing a Feral Cat Spay/Neuter Program in a Florida County Animal Control Service." Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science 5 (2002): 285-289 they reported that 'the morale of those involved improved, and the residents who participated in the program felt empowered to make a positive impact on the lives of feral cats in their neighborhoods.'

-'Increase the complaints to Aldermanic offices and DNS about roaming and lounging cats as well as spraying/smell caused by cats onto private property'.

In the same study listed above they found that 'the number of call to animal control about cats decreased'. In turn, the calls made to Aldermanic offices and DNS are likely to decrease.

-'Increased damage to wildlife including song birds' and 'Encourage illegal feeding of the cats which will lead to the increase of rat populations.'

Not only are these concerns are in direct conflict. They seem to be stating that sterilized cats eat songbirds and not rats, while unsterilized cats do neither. They talk as if this is an issue of cat vs. no cat, but we are here to discuss sterilized cat vs. unsterilized cat. Food sources exist for cats and there will be cats either way. On a side note, aside from it being speculation, I can find no evidence of it being illegal to feed cats, as they stated.

-'Increase the threat to public health and safety by not having continually updated rabies vaccines.'

Again, this is not an issue of cat vs. no cat, but of sterilized (and vaccinated) cat vs. unsterilized (unvaccinated) cat. TNR cats will be receiving rabies vaccinations, though they would not be continuing. This can only reduce incidence of rabies, which is already extraordinarily low. The DNS' pointing to rabies as a source of concern seems to be a scare tactic for whatever reason. There are an average of 2 cases of rabies in humans per year in our nation, almost always from bats (none from cats), and a large percentage infected while traveling abroad (Source: The CDC <http://avmajournals.avma.org/doi/pdf/10.2460/javma.239.6.773>) We have vaccinations easily administered after infection. It is not a reasonable concern.

-'Increase cost of enforcement of the domestic animal control ordinance on the City's already limited funding.'

The pilot program has already proven otherwise, with WHS showing that the cost to trap, hold, and euthanize a cat is \$105, while the cost to trap, sterilize, vaccinate, and release a cat is \$56. Other studies show the reduction in aggressive behavior from sterilized cats lead to less complaints to animal control. The initial study mentioned, by Hughes, Slater, and Haller states, "Researchers compared data from four feral cat colonies: two that were cared for through Trap-Neuter-Return programs and two that were not and demonstrated that TNR reduces the behaviors associated with mating and can therefore address community concerns. They found that cats in the TNR colonies were less aggressive on the whole and that the neutered males were rarely aggressive towards each other at all, resulting in less yowling, fighting, and potential for injury than males in the intact colonies." It also mentioned all cats, including females, being less stressed and aggressive overall.

I hope I have adequately addressed all concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sara Dykstra". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sara Dykstra