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COUNCIL MEMBERS MARTE AND SCHULMAN INTRODUCE “JUST PAWS EVICTION” BILL PACKAGE TO END RESTRICTIVE NO-PET HOUSING POLICIES

Legislation tackles shelter overcrowding and removes unnecessary barriers in New York City’s already challenging rental market

New York – Today at the New York City Council’s Stated Meeting, Council Members Christopher Marte and Lynn Schulman introduced the “Just Paws Eviction” legislative package, a two-bill effort to eliminate blanket no-pet clauses in both subsidized and unsubsidized rental housing across New York City.

The bill package responds to a growing crisis in New York City’s animal shelters, which are currently overcrowded and under-resourced. One of the leading reasons pets are surrendered, according to animal welfare advocates, is housing instability. Tenants are often forced to give up beloved pets when moving, or are prevented from adopting altogether, due to prohibitive lease restrictions that ban animals outright.

The Just Paws Eviction package includes:

- Legislation sponsored by Council Member Marte prohibiting no-pet clauses in unsubsidized rental housing, while preserving landlords’ ability to address legitimate concerns related to damage, nuisance, or safety; and
- Legislation sponsored by Council Member Schulman prohibiting developers who receive City financial assistance from imposing blanket pet bans in rental housing

Together, the bills ensure that tenants across the city, regardless of income or housing type, are protected from arbitrary pet prohibitions, while maintaining existing legal remedies when pets cause real harm or disruption.

Animal welfare advocates have long warned that restrictive housing policies directly contribute to shelter overcrowding, family separations, and unnecessary pet surrenders. By removing blanket bans, the City can reduce strain on shelters, support responsible pet ownership, and make housing searches less punitive for renters.

The Just Paws Eviction package reflects a broader commitment by the Council to reduce unnecessary barriers in the housing market and promote stability for both tenants and their families, human and animal alike.

“At a time when apartment hunting is already one of the most stressful experiences New Yorkers face, tenants should not be forced to choose between stable housing and keeping a companion animal,” **said Council Member Christopher Marte**. “Blanket no-pet clauses make an already brutal housing market even more restrictive, while pushing more animals into overcrowded shelters. The Just Paws Eviction package is about basic fairness, housing stability, and recognizing that pets are part of our families.”

“For so many New Yorkers, pets aren’t just animals — they’re family,” **said Council Member Lynn Schulman**. “No one should be forced to give up a beloved companion just to keep a roof over their head. When families are separated from their pets, our animal shelters feel the consequences immediately. The Just Paws Eviction package takes a common-sense approach by removing unnecessary pet bans while preserving accountability. This legislation helps keep families together, reduce shelter overcrowding, and make our housing system more humane and fair.”

“Housing barriers are one of the top reasons people surrender their pets to our city’s chronically overcrowded animal shelters, which operate far beyond capacity, **said Allie Taylor, President of Voters for Animal Rights (VFAR)**. “1 in 3 surrenders in NYC are due to a lack of pet-friendly housing. As rescuers, we see this on the front lines every day. No-pet clauses mean fewer potential adopters and more animals left without homes. Voters For Animal Rights applauds Council Members Marte and Schulman for introducing this legislation, an upstream solution that removes unnecessary barriers and allows more New Yorkers to provide loving homes to pets. No one should have to choose between losing their home or losing their companion animals.”

“The shortage of pet-friendly housing is regularly cited as one of the top reasons pet owners are forced to make the heartbreaking decision to surrender their pet to an animal shelter, and renters – especially low-income renters – often bear the brunt of hardship resulting from lack of affordable, pet-friendly housing options,” **said Michelle Villagomez, senior director of municipal affairs for the ASPCA**. “Removing barriers to pets in housing will help keep pets in loving homes and out of shelters, and we urge the City Council to prioritize legislation to make pet-friendly housing more accessible for New Yorkers so families can stay together.”

“New York City’s animal shelters face severe overcrowding and overcapacity crises, leaving far too many animals at risk”, **added Edita Birnkrant, Executive Director of NYCLASS**. “A major driver of this emergency is the lack of truly pet-friendly housing, which forces people to give up beloved companions or prevents them from adopting in the first place. We cannot meaningfully address shelter overcrowding or call ourselves a pet-friendly city until we make it far easier for New Yorkers to live with their furry family members. We thank Council Members

Christopher Marte and Lynn Schulman for introducing this critical package of “Just Paws Eviction” bills to prohibit no-pet clauses in leases and help keep families and their pets together.”

“I once left an apartment due to its “No Cats” policy, **said Kathy Nizzari, Founder and Chair of Lights Out Coalition.** “As a single woman it was an easy decision: Family comes first. Though it often isn’t so simple for many people, especially in today’s housing market. Forcing anyone to give up a beloved family member is not only cruel, but it places a burden on already overcrowded shelters and rescue groups. We know birds and exotics are particularly at risk, given that so few facilities are equipped to care for them as they often languish in carriers and are euthanized at a higher rate, or abandoned on the street. Lights Out Coalition is very grateful to Council Members Marte and Schulman for introducing these common sense compassionate bills designed to keep families together.”

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