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House Labor & Commerce Committee  
Barnes 124, Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK

**RE: HB 335 – Disaster Emergency Plan for Pets**

Dear Co-Chair Fields, Co-Chair Hall, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Reghan Lynch, and I am a legislative attorney with Best Friends Animal Society. I was involved in drafting this bill following the Typhoon that struck Alaska in October and worked directly with Alaska shelters and partners to identify what worked, what did not, and where gaps in preparedness and response were most apparent. I submit this testimony in support of this legislation.

To reduce uncertainty and avoid unintended consequences in drafting the bill, we reviewed established disaster response laws from other states and compared them with the specific concerns raised by Alaska shelters following the Typhoon. We looked to states with well-developed disaster preparedness frameworks that address the needs of animals, shelters, and evacuees with pets, including Louisiana, Florida, and Washington. This approach allowed us to incorporate language that has been tried, tested, and successfully implemented elsewhere.

Specifically, section 1 of the bill mirrors South Carolina Code § 40-69-30(B), which authorizes out-of-state licensed veterinarians and veterinarian technicians to assist in the state of an emergency. Similar authority already exists in numerous other states, including Texas, New York, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Nevada, New Arizona, Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Tennessee.<sup>1</sup> This authorization is well-established and has been successfully used to address staffing shortages during disasters across the country.

Section 2 is modeled on disaster response statutes in Louisiana, Florida, and Washington. Subsections (1) and (2), which require identification of evacuation plans and designation of pet-friendly shelters, reflect provisions in Louisiana, Washington, and Florida law.<sup>2</sup> Subsection (3), which requires development of identification and reunification systems for animals, mirrors

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<sup>1</sup> Tex. Occ. Code Ann. §115.004 (West 2013); 22 Tex. Admin. Code §571.13; N.Y. Educ. Law § 6705; Ark. Code Ann. § 12-87-104 (1987); O.C.G.A. § 38-3-163 (2024); 225 ILCS 140/1 (2025); Ind. Code § 10-14-3.5-17 (2025); KRS § 321.200; 37-B M.R.S. § 949-G (2025); N.R.S. § 415A.200 (2025); A.R.S. § 32-2216(D); NMSA 1978 § 12-12A-2; N.D.C.C. § 37-17.4-01; 63 Okla. Stat. § 684.27; Tenn. Code Ann. § 58-2-801.

<sup>2</sup> La. R.S. § 29:729(E)(13)(a); RCW 38.52.610; §252.3568, Fla. Stat. (2020).



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Louisiana state law prioritizing the safe and efficient return of pets to their owners in a disaster.<sup>3</sup> Subsection (4), which requires a publicly accessible information page, is based on statutes in Louisiana and Washington establishing clear, centralized communication for emergency preparedness.<sup>4</sup> Subsection (5), allowing transportation of animals on public transportation during evacuations, follows Louisiana’s model and addresses a critical barrier repeatedly identified by Alaska shelters during disaster response in rural areas.<sup>5</sup>

Sections 3 and 4 are directly informed by feedback we received from Alaska shelters following the Typhoon. Shelters consistently expressed the need to be included earlier and more meaningfully in emergency planning to appropriately prepare and manage companion animals to keep pets and people safe. These sections formalize that collaboration by integrating animal care experts into the work of the Alaska State Emergency Response Commission and local emergency planning committees.

This bill reflects the most pressing and practical needs identified by those with firsthand experience, while relying on proven policy solutions already in use across the country.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support HB 335.

Respectfully,

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<sup>3</sup> La. R.S. § 29:729(E)(13)(iii)(bb) (2025)

<sup>4</sup> La. R.S. § 29:729(E)(13)(vii) (2025); RCW 38.52.610(5).

<sup>5</sup> La. R.S. § 29:729(E)(13)(iv) (2025)