



Bringing back the birds

January 26, 2022

The Honorable Michael J. Webert
House Sub-Committee on Agriculture
Virginia General Assembly

Dear Chair Webert and Members of the Sub-Committee:

On behalf of American Bird Conservancy and our supporters across Virginia, I am writing to urge your **opposition to HB 373**, a bill “relating to county or city public animal shelters; return of animals after expiration of stray hold period.” This bill would undermine ongoing dialogues among stakeholders initiated at the request of the General Assembly to identify appropriate cat management solutions for Virginia.

At the request of the House Agriculture, Chesapeake, and Natural Resources Committee, former Secretary of Natural Resources Matthew Strickler convened a working group in late 2021. This working group was charged with developing legislation to “reduce and control the population of free-roaming cats and mitigate the impact of free-roaming cats on the Commonwealth’s native wildlife, natural resources, and public health.” Stakeholders representing public health, animal control, private animal shelters, wildlife rehabilitation, wildlife conservation, and animal welfare met to discuss the issues surrounding this charge and identify legislative solutions. Although consensus was not reached in 2021, the working group members believed that sufficient progress had been made to continue these discussions in 2022 and hope to have a bill ready for your consideration in the 2023 General Assembly.

HB 373 undercuts the ongoing discussions of the stakeholder working group. Should this bill move forward, it will only cement further discord among parties interested in cat management, resulting in emphatic conflict in this and future legislative sessions.

Consequently, I ask that you **please oppose HB 373** and provide the stakeholder working group with time to meet its charge.

Respectfully,

Grant Sizemore, M.S., CWB®
Director of Invasive Species Programs
American Bird Conservancy