



Senator Sydney K. Kamlager (District 30)

AB 553: Pet Insurance Coverage for Spaying and Neutering

IN BRIEF

AB 553 would require pet insurance policies sold and renewed in California to fully cover spaying and neutering of pets and any veterinary expenses associated with these services. This bill would also require cancellation notices for pet insurance policies to be mailed at least 20 days prior to the cancellation date, or 10 days prior when a policy is cancelled for fraud or non-payment of premium by the policyholder.

BACKGROUND & PROBLEM

According to Best Friends Animal Society, 711,000 cats and dogs entered California shelters and 100,000 were euthanized in 2019. Access to veterinary care is a major driver of this problem, as 87% of pets living in underserved communities are not spayed or neutered.

California has various laws meant to incentivize the spaying and neutering of animals: shelters are required to spay and neuter their animals; pet dealers are required to promote spaying and neutering; cities and counties are allowed to mandate spaying and neutering; and, there are several programs which subsidize the associated costs. Yet pet insurance companies still consider spaying and neutering an elective surgery and typically do not cover the costs, instead requiring consumers to purchase an additional wellness plan with extra costs for this type of coverage.

Pet insurance companies should be encouraging spaying and neutering not only to help control the pet homelessness crisis but also because these surgeries provide medical and behavioral benefits to animals. Cats and dogs that are spayed or neutered live longer, healthier lives. Benefits of spaying and neutering include preventing uterine infections and breast tumors for females and

preventing testicular cancer and prostate problems for males.

SOLUTION

AB 553 would require pet insurance companies to join the combined efforts of shelters, animal owners, pet breeders, and veterinarians to tackle the problems caused by dog and cat overpopulations by requiring pet insurance policies to fully cover spaying and neutering and any associated veterinary expenses. This effort will help to ensure that the recent surge of animal adoptions spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic will not further exacerbate animal overpopulation and pet homelessness in our state.

AB 553 would also align pet insurance with other types of insurance in California by requiring cancellation notices for pet insurance policies to be mailed at least 20 days prior to the cancellation date, or 10 days prior when a policy is cancelled for fraud or non-payment of premium by the policyholder. This would provide consumers with a reasonable amount of time to make a decision regarding their pet insurance policy.

SUPPORT

California Department of Insurance

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Howard Quan

916-651-4030 or Howard.Quan@sen.ca.gov