

## LETTERS CONTINUED

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open its transfer programs for applicants.

In closing, please note that HB 4496 does not impact either the higher education budget or the community college budget. Funding for Michigan's universities is uniquely specified in the Michigan Constitution, and nothing in the bill would grant a community college additional state funds to pursue these programs.

Your attention to these facts would be greatly appreciated when you consider this subject in the future.

**John Walsh**

Speaker pro-tem  
Michigan House of Representatives  
Livonia

and owner surrenders.

As at MHS, the former director claimed only one-third to one-half of its animals were savable. However, when the city put the no-kill plan in place, the save rate soared to 90 percent.

Traditional shelter practices continue to result in high kill rates. Embracing the no-kill philosophy that changed these and other cities requires a substantial change in thinking.

In each of these successful shelters, there was also a change in leadership that was not entrenched in traditional practices, that was open to running the operation with a passion for saving lives, and that welcomed transparency, communication and collaboration.

For example, most shelters kill a dog with heartworm, adult parvo or parvo exposure, diabetes, mange, dental issues, blindness, seizures, arthritis, allergies, hip dysplasia and many other such conditions, classifying them as untreatable.

The litmus test of treating the animal's condition is to provide the same medical treatment that is reasonable and would be provided by a caring pet owner/guardian in the community and the quality of life the animal would have after treatment.

The same is the case for behavioral issues: The cat stopped using the litter box or the dog is food aggressive, suffers from separation anxiety or is aggressive with other dogs or cats. A shelter embrac-

ing the no-kill philosophy successfully corrects all mild and moderate behavior problems using staff and volunteers/foster homes trained in reversing such behaviors.

Saving lives can be done. It has been done in other large open-admission shelters in Michigan. But it is not easy and requires commitment, dedication, a plan and the support of the community.

Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida is one of the leaders in shelter education and research. UF has the knowledge and skill to assess the Michigan Humane Society and help it develop a life-saving plan.

The Michigan Pet Fund Alliance joins the MHS board members who resigned in urging the MHS

board to reconsider the proposal to have UF conduct an independent, comprehensive review of MHS operations.

Implementing the action plan from such an assessment positions MHS to receive grant funds similar to New York City, which has received \$29 million to reduce its kill rate.

This year, 17 million families will bring a new pet into their home. At the same time, we are killing between 3 million and 4 million dogs and cats in shelters. There are enough homes.

Michigan Pet Fund Alliance stands ready to assist the Michigan Humane Society in increasing its save rates.

**Deborah Schutt**  
Chair, Michigan Pet Fund Alliance

## MHS should embrace higher save rates

Editor:

This is in response to the June 13 story "Two Michigan Humane Society board members resign after request for euthanasia inquiry is voted down."

In March, the Michigan Pet Fund Alliance convened the first No Kill Conference ever held in Michigan. More than 250 representatives from animal shelters, rescue groups and animal welfare organizations from around the state attended. The conference focused on the No Kill Equation, which is a set of programs proven successful in bringing shelter save rates to 90 percent or better.

In preparation for this conference, MPFA compiled the save rates for dogs and cats in each of the 170 shelters reporting to the Department of Agriculture, the first time such a comparison list had been done. In an effort to be totally fair, MPFA volunteers called all 170 shelters to determine their size and see if they were an open or limited-admission shelter.

For the first time, this list gave Michigan taxpayers and charitable donors a measure to assess shelter performance and rankings compared to other Michigan shelters.

The rankings placed the Michigan Humane Society, with shelters in Rochester Hills, Westland and Detroit, and with the largest open-admission shelter budget, at 127th on the list. The MHS save rate for 2009 was 28.35 percent, virtually the same as their 2007 percentage and a 2 percent reduction in animals saved in 2008. Their just-released 2010 save rate is 29.84 percent.

This means that over the past four years, the Michigan Humane Society has consistently killed seven out of 10 animals in its care and made no progress in improving those numbers, although other large open-admission urban shelters, such as Austin, Texas (90 percent); Reno, Nev. (91 percent); Denver (76 percent) and even New York City (73 percent) have made major improvements in their save rates, using the no-kill formula.

For instance, Austin's intake of 23,000 animals annually is close to that of MHS. They have the further challenge of providing animal control, with responsibility for dog fighting, hoarding, biting and abuse cases, in addition to strays

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