



Senate Bill 258
Supporting Both Ends of the Leash
As Introduced on February 12, 2018

SUMMARY

SB 258 joins in on the fight against the homelessness crisis in California. This bill makes \$5,000,000 available, to homeless shelters to serve the needs of pets for people experiencing homelessness, such as shelter, food, and basic veterinary services. By supporting the animal side of the leash, individuals on the other end will be more inclined to obtain assistance.

ISSUE

California is in the middle of a homelessness crisis. On any given night in California, 130,000 people are without a home, which constitutes 25 percent of the entire nation's homeless population. Of those Californians experiencing homelessness, around 87,734 individuals are unsheltered, while only 20,227 have some form of shelter, according to [data](#) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

According to the non-profit Pets of the Homeless, an estimated five to ten percent of the 3.5 million Americans that are experiencing homelessness have dogs or cats. And according to the [British Journal of Occupational Therapy](#), Pets provide warmth, security, and companionship to many who sleep on the streets. Some also suggest that caring for a pet provides a much-needed feeling of normalcy; for many people, the simple act of providing food and water to their pet may even help to keep their humanity intact.

Unfortunately, many individuals experiencing homelessness refuse housing and services if doing so would require them to abandon their pet. This happens all too often: a majority of shelters, motels and other assisted housing programs do not permit animals on their property, pushing potential beneficiaries to live on the street, in their cars or RVs, and in tent camps.

Seattle University School of Law's Homeless Rights Advocacy Project found that if owners decide to indeed surrender their pet, they only reunite with their dogs 15 percent of the time. While 60 percent or more of animals are left to die in the animal shelter system.

By providing accommodations for pets, we provide for individuals who otherwise would not get services such as medical and living assistance, and the conditions for them and their pets will be improved.

SB 258 (HERTZBERG)

SB 258 will create a grant program out of the state general fund for homeless shelters that provide shelter, food, and basic veterinary services for pets of the homeless. Shelters must establish certain requirements, such as rules of conduct and responsibility regarding pets and their owners, crating or kenneling either near bunks or in a separate area, and food for people experiencing homelessness with animals. The shelter would also need to have access to a shelter vet, and offer spay and neutering services.